

Police forecast up to 3.7 million border crossers during 5-day Labour Day holiday



This photo taken early this month shows border crossers at the Hengqin border checkpoint.

– Photo: Tony Wong



Public Security Police (PSP) spokeswoman Lai In Hong (centre) and representatives from the Macau Customs Service, Macau Government Tourism Office (MGTO), Transport Bureau (DSAT) and the Macau Consumer Council (CCM) look on during yesterday's press conference at the Barrier Gate border checkpoint's arrivals hall.

– Photo: GCS

Armindo Neves

Various local authorities hosted a press conference at the Barrier Gate border checkpoint arrivals hall yesterday morning about their preparations for the upcoming Labour Day holiday.

Public Security Police (PSP) spokeswoman Lai In Hong forecast between 3.6 and 3.7 million border crossers passing through Macau's border checkpoints, equating to 720,000 to 740,000 border crossers per day. The Chinese mainland's Labour Day holiday runs from May 1-5.

In Macau, only May Day is a public holiday, but many locals will be able to enjoy a long weekend between Friday and Sunday.

The press conference was also attended by representatives from the Macau Customs Service, the Macau Government Tourism Office (MGTO), the Transport Bureau (DSAT), and the Macau Consumer Council (CCM).

According to a statement released during the briefing, the Public Security Police will "dynamically adjust" resources at Macau's nine border checkpoints, open additional inspection lanes based on passenger flow, and

implement crowd-diversion measures. Patrols will also be increased in popular tourist areas. The Macau Customs Service has prepared contingency plans to coordinate the opening of extra vehicle lanes during peak traffic and will collaborate with authorities in the Chinese mainland to combat smuggling.

The Macau Consumer Council has launched a "Consumption Tips for Macau Travel" guide and will remain open from May 1-3. The council added that tourists can seek assistance via its "Consumer Online" platform and the CCM hotline 8988 9315.

Meanwhile, MGTO is encouraging visitors to use its "Smart Application for Visitor Flows" to check foot traffic at tourist attractions and has advised the tourism industry to refer to data on the "Macau Tourism Data Plus" platform.

The statement noted that the Transport Bureau has coordinated bus and light rail (LRT) services, improved transport facilities at border checkpoints, and will release real-time transport information through mobile applications. The public is encouraged to use public transport and stagger their travel times. ■

Starmer avoids parliament probe over Mandelson

LONDON – Embattled UK Prime Minister Keir Starmer yesterday survived a bid by opposition politicians to subject him to a parliamentary probe over his controversial appointment of Peter Mandelson as envoy to the US.

Members of parliament voted against referring Starmer to a committee to consider if he misled parliament over giving Mandelson, an ex-associate of late US sex offender Jeffrey Epstein, the plum diplomatic post.

It was the latest development in an unrelenting scandal that has plagued Starmer's Labour government for months, hampering its work and leading to calls for him to resign.

After a debate lasting more than five hours, 335 lawmakers voted against launching an investigation compared to 223 for – a majority of 112 in the 650-seat parliament.

The probe would have been held by the cross-party privileges committee, which investigates potential breaches of parliamentary conduct.

Opposition Conservative party leader Kemi Badenoch who led the move for the probe, said it was "very obvious" that what Starmer had told the House of Commons regarding Mandelson's 2024 appointment was "not correct".

"It's clear that full due process was not followed," she told MPs. – AFP

Airbus profits slide as deliveries drop

PARIS – Airbus said yesterday that its first-quarter profit fell as it delivered fewer planes to customers, falling behind rival Boeing for the first time in years.

The drop in deliveries to 114 in the first quarter, compared to 143 for Boeing, was primarily due to a shortage of Pratt & Whitney engines.

Net profit slumped 26 percent from the same quarter last year to 586 million euros (US\$686 million), with revenues sliding seven percent to 12.65 billion euros.

The first quarter results "reflect the lower level of commercial aircraft deliveries", said Airbus chief executive Guillaume Faury.

"In commercial aircraft, we continue to ramp up and produce as per our plan while navigating the shortage of Pratt &

Whitney engines," he added.

Investors and analysts follow delivery figures closely as Airbus and Boeing receive the bulk of the payment when they hand over aircraft to buyers.

Airbus said the availability of Pratt & Whitney engines "remains the key pacer of the ramp-up trajectory" for its top-selling mid-range A320 family of single-aisle aircraft.

The company maintained the target of 70 to 75 A320 family aircraft per month through 2025.

It also kept its 2026 target of 870 aircraft, which would beat its record year in 2019 of delivering 863 planes to customers.

Net orders of 398 aircraft during the quarter took its order book to 9,037, a backlog of nearly 10 years of production at current rates. – AFP

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China to grant zero-tariff treatment to all African countries with diplomatic ties

China will expand zero-tariff treatment to all African countries that have diplomatic relations with it starting this Friday, Chinese authorities announced yesterday. – Story on p. 7

UAE pulls out of OPEC oil cartels citing 'national interests'

The United Arab Emirates will withdraw from the OPEC and OPEC+ oil cartels to focus on "national interests", it announced yesterday, causing fresh shockwaves as energy prices soar over the Middle East war. – Story on p. 10

Trump hails British as 'friends' as king visits amid Iran tensions

President Donald Trump said yesterday that the US has "no closer friends" than the British, as he welcomed King Charles III to the White House on a state visit overshadowed by tensions over the Iran war. – Story on p. 12

Macau Hotel Association 'quite confident' about Spanish market

Rui Pastorin

Macau Hotel Association Chairman Jocelyn Wong (王淑欣) said that she is "quite confident" in Macau being able to draw the Spanish market, she told the *Post* yesterday during an interview with Portuguese- and English-language media on the sidelines of a tasting event at Hotel Royal Macau.

Wong, who joined the Macau

government-led delegation during a trip to Portugal and Spain last week, highlighted the encounter of exchanges as well as the things that the Spanish market might find attractive in Macau.

Remarking on last week's visit to Spain's capital Madrid, Wong, who also serves as the managing director of Hotel Royal, particularly highlighted a visit to a centre in Spain

that promotes Chinese culture and delicacies, pointing out that these can all be experienced in Macau. Moreover, she noted Macau's Portuguese culture and cuisine for some of the similarities shared with the Spanish culture, making it also "very suitable for them", while there are also many places similar to those in Madrid.

"As compared to last year, the tourists from Spain coming to Macau increased by double digits. So we are quite confident that Macau is also a destination for them to come over", she said.

Meanwhile, Wong was also asked by reporters about her expectations in terms of hotel occupancy over the Labour Day Golden Week holiday, which lasts a total of five days in the Chinese mainland.

"We are expecting around 70 percent occupancy at this moment. Of course, for the first three days, we expect full occupancy", adding that hotel room occupancy in Cotai was currently at 90 or 100 percent.

Room rates have meanwhile remained around the same as last year. But in the first quarter compared to the same period in 2025, Wong highlighted that occupancy has increased while room rates have dropped. She noted that with many tourists coming to Macau, prices are being lowered by businesses, particularly in the peninsula, to attract tourists. The high occupancy and lower room rates could also be attributed to the many events happening in Macau, noting that it is "quite competitive right now". ■



Macau Hotel Association Chairman Jocelyn Wong (王淑欣) poses after yesterday's interview at Hotel Royal. — Photo: Rui Pastorin

FADO Portuguese Restaurant highlights flavours from Porto, Goa

Rui Pastorin

A media tasting event was held at the FADO Portuguese Restaurant at Hotel Royal yesterday, highlighting flavours from Porto and Goa.

The four hands event saw a first-time collaboration between FADO Executive Chef Luís Américo and Michelin Bib Gourmand Chef Justin Paul, who also leads and owns Indian restaurant Justindia Macau. A selection of Portuguese wines by Vinomac were also featured at the event.

The wine-pairing menu featured flavourful highlights from both chefs, ranging from Chef Justin's chicken dish "Kandari Murgh Tikka" to Chef Luís's Carne de Porco à Alentejana ("Pork Alentejo Style").

Speaking with the *Post* prior to the start of the tasting

event, Chef Luís highlighted the significance of the exchange of flavours, highlighting the trade of spices along with history and cultural exchanges.

"So, this has historical meaning, but also it's interesting because of the food", noting that the food representing Goa, which is a former Portuguese colony, at the event carries a bit of Portuguese influence while the dishes he presented also have some influence from elsewhere in India due to the spices, creating "a kind of bridge". Beyond the food, the chef also hopes that this could lead to an enjoyable dinner that might trigger conversations and engagement with both chefs, which could also enable them to "talk about our vision about this moment of gastronomy". ■



Hotel Royal Managing Director Jocelyn Wong (from right to left), FADO Executive Chef Luís Américo, Michelin Bib Gourmand Chef Justin Paul and Hotel Royal General Manager Gary Mak propose a toast during the media tasting event at the hotel yesterday. — Photo: Rui Pastorin

Police nab mainlander for trying to cheat illegal currency dealer

Armindo Neves

The Judiciary Police (PJ) nabbed a man from the Chinese mainland for attempting to defraud an illegal currency exchange dealer on Sunday, PJ spokesman Lei Chi Hou said during a special press conference yesterday.

Lei identified the suspect as a 39-year-old man surnamed Zheng, who claimed to be jobless. Lei said that the victim is a middle-aged man from the Chinese mainland suspected of involvement in illegal currency exchange activities in local casinos, because of which the Judiciary Police have launched a separate case to investigate the matter.

According to Lei, the victim was approached by Zheng in a casino in Cotai. Zheng said he wanted to exchange HK\$120,000 (124,000 patacas) worth of chips into yuan. The victim later agreed to exchange chips worth HK\$100,000 into yuan, but requested that the chips be taken to the casino cage for verification of authenticity, Lei said.

Zheng refused and hastily left. The victim became suspicious and alerted security, who then

intercepted Zheng, according to Lei.

Upon arrival at the scene, Lei said that PJ officers searched Zheng and found 12 HK\$10,000 chips and 86 HK\$1,000 banknotes, adding that casino staff verified that all of them were bogus chips and fake currency.

According to Lei, the counterfeit chips were similar in size and weight to genuine ones but differed in colour and anti-counterfeiting stickers, and lacked UV labels and embedded chips; the counterfeit banknotes

were of average authenticity, lacked watermarks, had rough paper texture, and bore the words "prop" printed on them in English.

Zheng admitted to smuggling the batch of counterfeit chips and banknotes from the Chinese mainland to Macau, with the intention of seeking individuals engaged in illegal currency exchange at casinos.

Zheng has meanwhile been transferred to the Public Prosecutions Office (MP), facing a fraud charge. ■



Judiciary Police (PJ) officers escort the hooded fraud suspect from the PJ headquarters to a PJ vehicle in Zape yesterday. — Photo: Armindo Neves

主辦單位: 贊助單位: 澳門基金會 協辦單位: 大哪三吃 潮宴

蓮關三宴 · 潮宴

時間
TIME
18-19/04 11:00
25-26/04
01-03/05 20:00

壹 文創市集
貳 占卜水晶
參 傳統美食
肆 新穎打卡

Published since Aug 2004

- Director & Chief Editor – Harald Brüning
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- Chief Graphic Designer – Simon Wang
- Graphic Designer – Colin Zhong
- Administrative Assistants – Ester Mak, Carl Leong
- Printed by Tipografia Welfare Lda., 82-86 Rua dos Pescadores
- Chatbots: DeepSeek, Gemini, Poe
- Wire services – AFP, Xinhua

Macau Weather

CLOUDY. SHOWERS, HEAVY AT TIMES. OCCASIONAL THUNDERSTORMS. FORCE 3 TO 5 SOUTH TO SOUTHWESTERLY WINDS WITH GUSTS, BECOMING NORTHERLIES. MAXIMUM RELATIVE HUMIDITY WILL RANGE BETWEEN 80% AND 99%. 20°C~25°C

Source: SMG

'May Fourth' Youth Day commemorative activities to run through June

Armando Neves

The Education and Youth Development Bureau (DSEDJ) held a press conference yesterday at its headquarters on Avenida de D. João to announce a raft of "May Fourth" Youth Day commemorative activities that will run through June.

DSEDJ Director Kong Chi Meng said in a speech that to commemorate the 107th anniversary of Youth Day, the bureau – in collaboration with the Preparatory Committee for the Series of Commemorative Activities for Youth Day (which comprises 83 youth groups) – will launch a comprehensive programme of events running through June.

Kong noted that these activities aim to promote the spirit of "patriotism, progress, democracy, and science" while fostering a sense of mission and responsibility among young people.

According to a DSEDJ statement, a flag-raising ceremony will be held next Monday (Youth Day) at the Macao Polytechnic University (MPU) Multisport Pavilion, with around 2,000 participants registered



Education and Youth Development Bureau (DSEDJ) Director Kong Chi Meng (centre), Preparatory Committee for the Series of Commemorative Activities for "May Fourth" Youth Day President Tang Man Kei (second from left) and other representatives look on during yesterday's press conference at the bureau on Avenida de D. João. – Photo: Armando Neves

to attend. The ceremony will be conducted by a flag-raising team composed of students from three higher education institutions and 40 schools in Macau. The programme will also include a rendition of the national anthem by a choir of primary and secondary school students, alongside dance and martial arts performances.

Tang Man Kei, president of the committee, said in a speech that the series of commemorations

will feature a variety of formats, including forums, study tours, exchanges, historical tours across Macau, online quiz games, art creation competitions, and campus lectures. Kong added that total participation is expected to exceed 6,000 people.

On the morning of May 4, a forum will be held at the Macau Science Centre in Nape, where experts and scholars will share insights on topics such as the

nation's 15th Five-Year Plan and the legacy of the May Fourth spirit. Tang noted that this year also marks the launch of the inaugural "May Fourth" youth patriotic tour, which will see Macau youngsters visit patriotic education bases in Beijing and Shandong for observation and exchange.

Furthermore, exchange tours in the Greater Bay Area (GBA) will also be organised. Tang said that these initiatives are designed to

enable young locals to witness the nation's innovative development and ignite their enthusiasm to engage in national construction efforts. ■

**The May Fourth Movement was a massive intellectual and sociopolitical upheaval in China that began on May 4, 1919. It is often cited as the birth of modern Chinese nationalism and was sparked by the Treaty of Versailles. After World War I, Chinese citizens expected the Allied powers to return German-occupied Qingdao in Shandong Province to China. Instead, the Treaty of Versailles awarded Qingdao to Japan. This perceived betrayal by the West and the weakness of the Chinese government triggered an explosion of student-led protests in Beijing. While it started as a diplomatic protest, it evolved into a broader cultural shift known as the New Culture Movement. It also resulted in anti-imperialist struggle, i.e., a push for national sovereignty and an end to foreign dominance. – Gemini, MPD*

4 outdoor swimming pools to open Friday

Khalel Vallo

Four outdoor swimming pools managed by the Sports Bureau (ID) will open to the public this Friday, May 1, providing residents with more options for leisure and exercise during the warmer season, the bureau announced in a statement yesterday.

The facilities consist of the Dr. Sun Yat Sen Swimming Pool on Avenida do Comendador Ho Yin, Taipa Central Park Swimming Pool, Hac Sa Park Swimming Pool and Cheoc Van Swimming Pool in Coloane, the statement said.

According to the statement, the pools will operate daily with opening hours divided into three sessions.

For Dr. Sun Yat Sen Swimming Pool, the sessions will open from 7 a.m. through 11 a.m., 12 p.m. through 4 p.m., and 5 p.m. through 8 p.m., while pool cleaning will take place every Monday.

Meanwhile for Taipa Central Park Swimming Pool, the sessions will open from 7 a.m. through 11 a.m., 12 p.m. through 4 p.m., and 5 p.m. through 9 p.m., while pool cleaning will take place every Wednesday.

Moreover, for both pools in Coloane, the sessions will open

from 8 a.m. through 11 a.m., 12 p.m. through 4 p.m., and 5 p.m. through 9 p.m., while pool cleaning in Hac Sa will take place every Thursday, whereas every Monday for Cheoc Van.

In order to facilitate access, users can purchase tickets up to two days in advance or on the day of use through multiple channels, including the Macao One Account, the Sports Bureau website (<https://www.sport.gov.mo>) and its mobile application, the statement noted.

On-site ticket purchases are also available at each swimming pool counter, the statement said, adding that real-time information on the number of remaining tickets for each session will be provided via its website, mobile app and on-site displays at the swimming pools, helping users better plan their visits.

The reopening of the outdoor pools aims to enhance public access to sports facilities, encouraging residents to stay active during the summer months, the statement said, adding that the pools will be open until October 31. ■



This undated handout photo courtesy of the "Macao Lifestyle" website shows the Cheoc Van Swimming Pool in Coloane.

36th Macao Arts Festival to start next Friday

Khalel Vallo

The 36th Macao Arts Festival (MAF) will run from next Friday to June 27 themed "New Streams of Inspiration", featuring a wide range of performances and exhibitions across the city, the Cultural Affairs Bureau (IC) announced in a press conference at the Macao Cultural Centre (CCM) in Nape yesterday.

A total of 15 programmes and exhibitions, along with nine outreach activities, will be presented. The line-up includes local, national and foreign productions spanning theatre, dance, music and visual arts, aiming to offer audiences a broad artistic experience.

Addressing the press conference, IC President Deland Leong Wai Man noted that this year's festival celebrates the 2026 China-Kazakhstan Year of Cultural Exchange, with a Kazakh group invited to deliver the opening performance, striving to showcase Central Asian cultural aspects.

The festival will open with "Lotus on the Silk Road – Traditions in Motion", performed by the BIRLIK Song and Dance Ensemble from Kazakhstan. Another Kazakh group, the Jolda Dance Theatre, will also stage a double bill featuring "Tamyra" and "Timeless". Several productions highlight the fusion of tradition and innovation in Kazakhstan.

Meanwhile, the musical theatre production "The Starry Night – The Musical", by the Hong Kong-based Actors' Family troupe, incorporates aspects of Cantonese opera and ceramic art, while "1014 – Nanyin x Jazz" blends traditional Nanyin* music with jazz to explore themes of memory and technology.

Local cultural heritage will also be showcased through the Patuá**



Cultural Affairs Bureau (IC) President Deland Leong Wai Man (fourth from right) poses with other representatives at the Macao Cultural Centre (CCM) during yesterday's 36th Macao Arts Festival press conference in Nape. – Photo: Khalel Vallo

theatre production "Como Agora?" ("Now What?"), as well as the Cantonese opera "Lotus Heart", which integrates AI into stage design. Meanwhile, international productions include "Between the Lines", a solo play directed by Portuguese theatre-maker Tiago Rodrigues, to be staged at the UNESCO World Heritage-listed Dom Pedro V Theatre.

Another highlight is "The Night of Zheng Guanying", an environmental dance theatre performance to be held at the – also UNESCO World Heritage-listed – Mandarin's House, aiming to offer an immersive experience within a historic setting. Classic and contemporary works will also take to the stage, including an interpretation of Dante's "Divine Comedy" by Italy's NoGravity Theatre and a large-scale production of "Swan Lake" by the Shanghai Ballet.

Moreover, the play "Her Dynasty" by Beijing's Nine Theatre will revisit the life of Empress Wu Zetian (624-705) through a circular narrative structure.

Leong also noted that five local

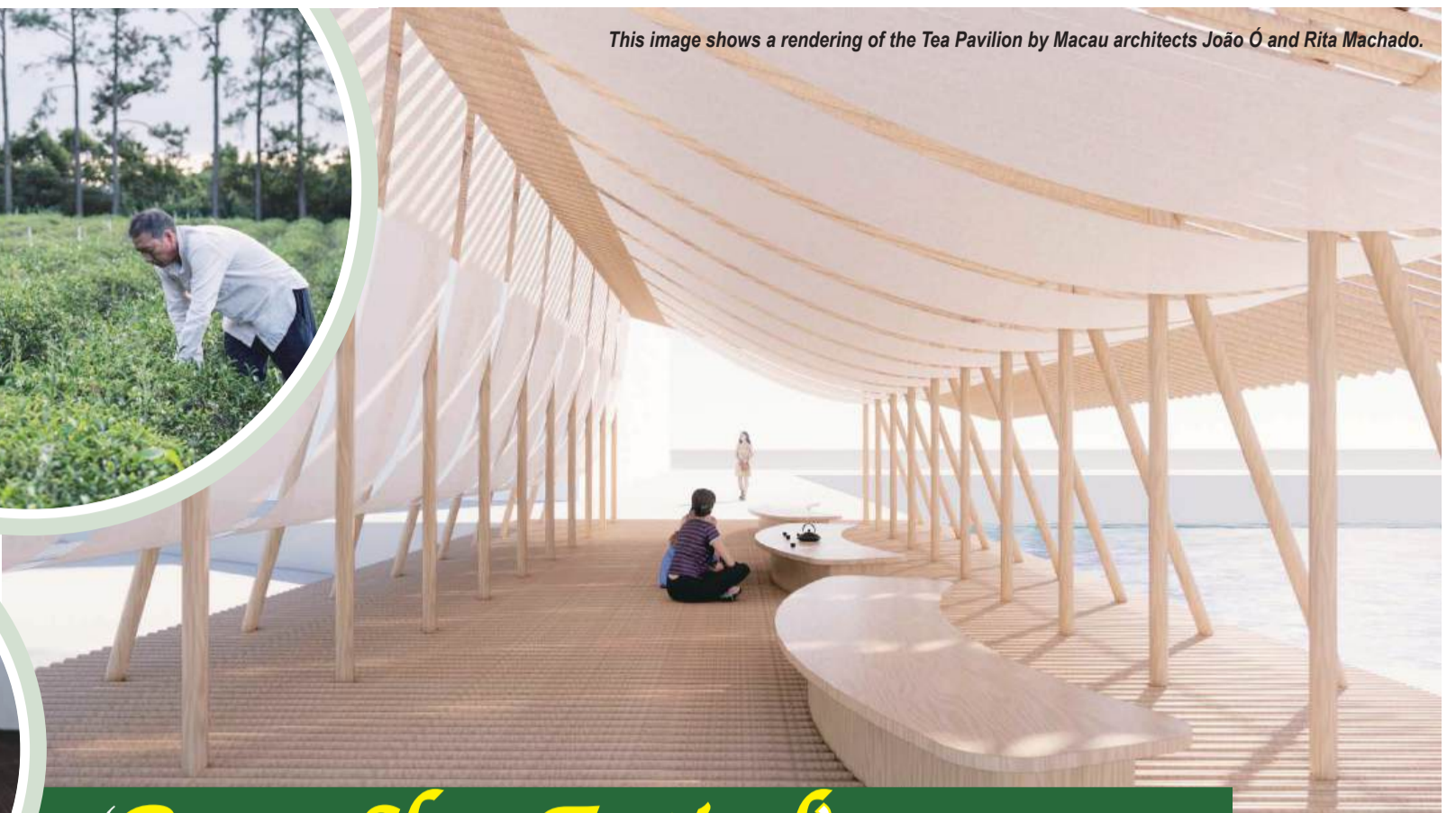
original productions are included, aiming to reflect Macau's cultural identity and urban memory, adding that outreach initiatives will extend performances into the community, with workshops, talks and activities designed to engage audiences of different ages.

Running for nearly two months, the festival aims to bring arts closer to the community while strengthening Macau's position as a cultural hub, inviting residents and visitors to engage with diverse artistic expressions.

Tickets will go on sale on Saturday at ticketing.enjoymacao.mo. ■

**Nanyin ("Southern Sounds") is a 1,000-year-old traditional musical art form from Quanzhou, Fujian Province, renowned as a "living fossil" of Chinese musical history. – DeepSeek*

*** Patuá is a critically endangered language, spoken fluently by only a small number of families in Macau and the Macanese diaspora (primarily in Hong Kong, North America, and Australia). – Gemini*



This image shows a rendering of the Tea Pavilion by Macau architects João Ó and Rita Machado.

'Barra Slow Festival' returns to celebrate tea, heritage & 'slow living'

二零二六 05/01 - 05/03

媽閣慢活節

A BARRA SLOW FESTIVAL

SIP OF TEA

亞洲茶文化市場 Asian Tea Culture Market

一念茶時

非遺拾光

A GLIMPSE OF HERITAGE

Interview William Chan

The three-day "Barra Slow Festival" is slated to run from Friday through Sunday (May 1-3), from noon to 8 p.m. daily, at the No.1 and No.2 Navy Yard and Outdoor Plaza in Barra, also known as the Harbour Entrance district.

Organised by the District Development Centre, this year's edition is themed "A Sip of Tea, A Glimpse of Heritage", bringing together nearly 40 tea brands from across Asia.

Lam Sio Man, director of the centre, told the *Post* that the inaugural Barra Slow Festival last November* was met with an overwhelming response and successfully fostered a slow-living atmosphere in Macau. "This year, we plan to host multiple slow-living festivals with different themes," she said.

According to Lam, the goal is to allow participants not merely to pass by history, but to step into artistic spaces built from intangible cultural heritage (ICH) bamboo scaffolding – the "Tea Pavilion" and the "Tea Performance Stage" – where they can rediscover tranquillity and focus amid the interplay of bamboo shadows and light. "Asian tea culture has a long and rich history," Lam noted. "For the first time in Macau, we have gathered 40 tea brands from across Asia, covering tea drinks, tea snacks, tea with coffee, tea wine, and tea-related products. From mellow traditional tea to innovative tea-infused beverages, we are showcasing the diverse role of tea in daily life. Whether you are a seasoned tea connoisseur or a beginner, you will find joy in both the old and the new."

The festival debuts the "Asian Tea Culture Market," "Intangible Cultural Heritage Market," and Guizhou's "Village T" ethnic fashion showcase. Special highlights include the "Water Mirror: Tea Tasting Ceremony" guided by tea masters, the chef-driven "Infuse & Indulge: Culinary Tea Ceremony," and two bamboo installations – the "Tea Pavilion" and "Tea Performance Stage" – designed by Macau-



A young model showcases the ornate gold headwear and jewellery of the Yi people from Guizhou's "Village T". (file photo) – Photos provided by the District Development Centre

based architects João Ó and Rita Machado. The programme also features hands-on workshops, masterclasses, design exhibitions, and musical performances.

Lam emphasised the importance of engaging younger audiences. "To attract young people, traditional culture must have a sense of fashion and interactivity," she said. "Guizhou's 'Village T' – an ICH-meets-fashion IP that has appeared at London and New York fashion weeks – breaks the boundaries between professionalism and tradition, perfectly matching contemporary aesthetics."

She added that last year's coffee festival prompted a shift to exploring Asia's tea culture. "Through 'A Sip of Tea,' we show the multi-faceted nature of tea in modern life," Lam said. "We invited brands from South Korea, Malaysia, Thailand, Indonesia, the Chinese mainland, Hong Kong, Macau, and [China's] Taiwan [region] to break the stereotypes about tea drinking."

Looking ahead, Lam envisions the Slow Festival as a long-term city brand asset. The bamboo "Tea Pavilion" and "Tea Performance Stage" are expected to remain for a year, creating ongoing cultural and community spaces in the Barra district. The festival also partners with Bank of China (BOC) Macau to offer a dual-consumption reward scheme covering over 300 businesses across multiple districts. "Through collaboration with 'Village T,' which has gained international fame, we aim to amplify Macau's stories and elevate the city's global profile," Lam said. "Our goal is to turn the Barra district into a benchmark for cultural tourism that integrates history, festive events, and contemporary aesthetics, leaving a sustainable creative legacy."

* www.macaupostdaily.com/news/26771



This photo taken yesterday shows preparations for the upcoming Barra Slow Festival. – Photo: William Chan



This file photo shows crowds attending last November's "Barra Slow Festival" at Outdoor Plaza in Barra.

Lawmakers pass outline of bill proposing concessions or permits for coastal waters' use

Tony Wong

The Legislative Assembly (AL) yesterday unanimously passed the outline of a government-initiated bill regulating the use of the Macau Special Administrative Region's (MSAR) coastal waters, proposing the formal establishment of a system on granting private entities a concession or permit to use designated maritime areas for a certain period of time.

The bill proposes that a concession will be granted to private entities, through public tender, to use a maritime area for a long period of time, for up to 15 years, involving major investment projects, while a "temporary" permit will be granted to private entities to use a maritime area for a short period of time. The bill proposes that they will be required to pay to use maritime areas.

After yesterday's passage of its outline, the bill will be passed to one of the legislature's standing committees for an article-by-article review, after which it will be resubmitted to another plenary session for its second and final debate and article-by-article vote.

Secretary for Transport and Public Works Raymond Tam Vai Man introduced the outline of the bill during a plenary session of the legislature's hemicycle yesterday.

On December 20, 2015, i.e., the

16th anniversary of the establishment of the MSAR, the Central People's Government granted Macau formal jurisdiction over its coastal waters covering 85 square kilometres. Previously, unlike Hong Kong, Macau did not have formal jurisdiction over its coastal waters. Macau's current land area amounts to 33.4 square kilometres.

Afterwards, in July 2018, Macau enacted its current framework law on the management of its coastal waters, officially known as Maritime Areas Management Framework Law.

During yesterday's plenary session, Tam noted that the current framework law lists the objectives of the local government's management of the MSAR's coastal waters as well as the principles with which the local government must comply when managing the maritime areas.

The 2018 framework law stipulates that Macau's coastal waters are owned by the nation and that the Central People's Government authorises the MSAR government to exercise its administrative power to manage the coastal waters.

Tam also noted that the framework law requires the local government to draft laws and regulations on the management of Macau's coastal waters. The framework law also enables the MSAR government to allow certain



Flanked by officials including Marine and Water Bureau (DSAMA) Director Susana Wong Soi Man (left), Secretary for Transport and Public Works Raymond Tam Vai Man (centre) addresses yesterday's plenary session in the Legislative Assembly's (AL) hemicycle. — Photo: GCS

entities to use designated maritime areas by granting a concession or permit or through other official means, which is to be regulated by a specific piece of legislation, i.e., the bill with its outline passed yesterday, the policy secretary pointed out.

Consequently, Tam said, the local government has drafted the bill, officially known as Law on the Use of Maritime Areas, establishing a legal system formally governing the use of the MSAR's coastal waters and listing various rules with which the respective entities must comply when using the maritime areas.

Tam said that the bill aims to optimise the management and use of Macau's maritime resources and promote the sustainable

development of the marine economy, while ensuring the protection of the marine environment.

According to the bill, a concession will be granted to private entities to use a maritime area for launching a long-term project, such as those involving public interest, those involving the provision of public services necessary for members of the general public, and those determined by the chief executive as being set to make major contributions to Macau's socioeconomic development.

Tam said the bill proposes that a concession to use a maritime area will last between 2 and 15 years and that such a concession will be granted through public tender except in special circumstances.

According to the bill, a concession can be renewed for up to five years each time.

The government, according to the bill, will only grant a "temporary" permit to private entities which apply to use a maritime area to launch a "short-term" project, in which case they will be only allowed to set up the respective facilities "on a temporary basis".

The bill proposes that a temporary permit will last up to two years and that it can be renewed for also up to two years each time.

Tam also pointed out that activities such as sailing races are classified as maritime activities in general where the respective organisers or entities are only required to file an application under the current regulations governing maritime activities, because of which such activities will not be regulated by the future Law on the Use of Maritime Areas.

Tam also underlined that the protection of the marine environment will be the top priority when the government assesses any projects to use Macau's maritime areas in the future. Any projects to use the maritime areas must not violate this principle, he said.

Tam also underlined that all projects to use the maritime areas must undergo the government's environmental impact assessments. ■

Vivienne Westwood & Jewellery Exhibition 2026 Macau opens today

Rui Pastorin

The Vivienne Westwood & Jewellery Exhibition 2026 Macau opens today at Grand Lisboa Palace (GLP) in Cotai, marking the fourth stop of the exhibition's global tour and the first in southern China.

Vivienne Westwood (1941–2022) was a British fashion designer and one of the most influential figures in modern fashion. She is largely responsible for bringing modern punk and new wave fashions into the mainstream, as noted in Wikipedia.

The dedicated exhibition was previously held in New Zealand, Shanghai and Chengdu.

Held until July 15 and curated by the Vivienne Westwood team, the exhibition located on Level 1 of the integrated resort features eight rooms and offers "an immersive look at Vivienne Westwood's extensive history of jewellery design – encompassing Westwood's sensibilities for historical reference and culture, past and present", according to a statement recently provided by integrated resort operator SJM Resorts. Among the exhibits showcased are a collection of four decades of special archive and runway jewellery.

"With a design record spanning over 50 years, Vivienne Westwood is now recognised as a global brand and Westwood herself is



This poster recently provided by SJM Resorts promotes the Vivienne Westwood & Jewellery exhibition at Grand Lisboa Palace (GLP) in Cotai.

remembered as one of the most influential fashion designers, and activists, in the world", the statement pointed out.

The statement said that the exhibition will continue to tour across Asia, the US, and Europe.

Admission tickets to the exhibition are free, but require advance booking. It is open daily from 11 a.m. to 8 p.m. For details, visit <https://art.sjmresorts.com/en/exhibitions-and-events/vivienne-westwood-n-jewellery-exhibition> ■

Stay tuned for an upcoming Page 4

Macau's crimes drop 5.9 pct in 2025

Tony Wong

Macau's total number of crimes reported last year dropped by 5.9 percent to 13,458 from the 14,298 reported in 2024, the Office of Secretary for Security Chan Tsz King announced yesterday.

The office (GSS) announced Macau's 2025 crime statistics on its website yesterday, when it also said in a statement that the office, from now on, will only announce Macau's crime statistics regularly on its website, but with a press conference to be held to announce the data "whenever necessary".

Previously, the office customarily held a press conference four times a year to announce Macau's crime statistics, with the data also released on its website, except during the COVID-19 pandemic that affected Macau for three years from early 2020 through 2022, during which the office only announced Macau's crime statistics regularly on its website – four times a year.

Yesterday's GSS statement said that "with the aim of enhancing information transparency, the regular dissemination of crime statistics will henceforth be processed electronically, but the relevant information will also be presented through press conferences whenever necessary".

The statement described the new arrangements as "the new model" for announcing Macau's crime statistics.

According to the statistics announced on the GSS website, the



This file photo released in November last year shows police officers conducting an operation to prevent and combat crime at a local casino in October last year.

— Photo: SPU

police recorded 262 violent crimes last year, down 9.7 percent from 2024.

Three homicides were reported last year, up by two from 2024 when only one was recorded.

Two grievous bodily harm cases were reported in 2025, down by three from 2024 when five cases were recorded.

According to the website, 32 rape cases were reported in 2025, a 33.3 percent decrease from the 48 cases recorded in 2024, while 39 cases of child sexual abuse, i.e., involving minors under the age of 14, were reported in 2025, up 77.3 percent from 2024 when 22 cases were recorded.

The police recorded 51 robbery cases last year, up by three from 2024, while 63 drug trafficking cases were reported last year, up 23.5 percent from 2024.

The number of fraud cases recorded last year decreased by 19.5 percent to 2,255 from the 2,800 reported in

2024, according to the website.

The police investigated 2,373 gaming-related crimes last year, a 63.0 percent increase from 2024 when 1,456 cases were investigated.

The GSS website underlined that the large year-on-year increase in the number of gaming-related crimes reported in 2025 was primarily due to the implementation of the new law criminalising illegal currency exchanges on and in the vicinity of casino premises, which took effect at the end of October in 2024.

The website underlined that only a small number of cases of gaming-related serious crimes, and gaming-related organised crimes were recorded in 2025. For instance, the police last year recorded 194 cases of providing illegal gambling loans, and 28 cases of false imprisonment resulting from the illegal provision of gambling loans, down 23.0 percent and 40.4 percent respectively from 2024. ■

World's largest car carrier delivered in China, boosting global auto transport capacity

Analysis

GUANGZHOU – A car carrier with a maximum capacity of 10,800 car equivalent units, described as the world's largest of its kind, was delivered yesterday in Guangzhou.

The vessel, named Glovis Leader, was built by Guangzhou Shipyard International Company Limited under the China State Shipbuilding Corporation (CSSC), together with China Shipbuilding Trading Co., Ltd. It was delivered to HMM, a leading shipping company in the Republic of Korea (ROK). After delivery, the vessel will be operated by Hyundai Glovis Co., Ltd., a logistics company also based in the ROK.

Lee Kyoo-bok, CEO of Hyundai Glovis, said at the delivery ceremony that the new-generation ultra-large vessel is more than an ordinary means of transport. With its large capacity and enhanced green operating system, it is expected to set a new benchmark for global seaborne automobile transport and mark an important milestone for the shipping industry.

Industry insiders say the delivery demonstrates China's growing capabilities in high-end shipbuilding and reflects broader efforts by the global shipping industry to move toward lower-carbon operations.

Classified as a pure car and truck carrier, the ship is 230 meters long and 40 meters wide, with a design draft of 10.5 meters and a cruising speed of 19 knots. It features 14 vehicle decks and can carry a range of cargo, including electric vehicles, hydrogen-powered vehicles and heavy trucks.



A staff member guides a vehicle onto the car carrier Glovis Leader in Guangzhou yesterday. The car carrier with a maximum capacity of 10,800 car equivalent units, described as the world's largest of its kind, was delivered yesterday. – Xinhua

In recent years, Chinese-built vessels have renewed the record for the world's largest car carrier. In late April 2025, BYD Shenzhen, with 9,200 standard vehicle spaces, made its maiden export voyage. Less than a month later, Anji Ansheng, with 9,500 vehicle spaces, set off from Shanghai for Europe on its maiden voyage. Both vessels were independently built by Chinese shipyards.

The Glovis Leader is powered by a dual-fuel system using liquefied natural gas and conventional fuel, meeting the International Maritime Organization's Tier III emissions standards. It also incorporates energy-saving technologies, including optimized hull design, waste heat

recovery systems and shore power capability.

A shaft generator developed by a research institute under the CSSC enables the vessel to generate electricity while sailing, reducing fuel consumption.

Car carriers are typical high-value-added vessels with a high technical threshold. The vessel type poses technical challenges in areas such as multi-layer thin-plate structures, vehicle fire safety, roll-on/roll-off systems and high-stability design.

Zhou Xuhui, general manager of Guangzhou Shipyard International, said the company has overcome a number of key technical challenges

through the batch construction of car carriers while production efficiency has also improved significantly.

Industry insiders said the large number of orders placed by overseas shipping giants with Chinese shipyards, especially for high-end vessels, shows that the technical maturity and product reliability of relevant Chinese-built vessels have been widely recognized by the global market.

Guangzhou, one of China's major shipbuilding bases, has developed a complete supply chain. Local authorities have pledged to continue building Guangzhou into a hub for marine innovation, targeting cutting-edge sectors such as the

deep sea, green and smart marine industries.

Guangzhou Shipyard International highlighted its commitment to innovation and efficiency with the delivery of its latest car carrier. The company has secured more than 40 orders for car carriers and delivered 26 to date. All vessels delivered so far were completed ahead of schedule, with 11 ships delivered in 2025 averaging 151 days early.

The company currently holds orders worth about 100 billion yuan with overseas contracts accounting for more than 95 percent of the total. Production is scheduled through 2030.

China's ocean economy withstood pressure and maintained high-quality development in 2025, with faster shifts toward quality and efficiency, innovation-driven growth, and integrated marine development and conservation, said Shen Jun, an official with the Ministry of Natural Resources, in March.

The country's shipping volume and container throughput each exceeded one-third of the global total, while China held more than 50 percent of the global market share in shipbuilding and offshore engineering equipment, according to data released by the ministry.

In 2025, the country's three major shipbuilding indicators – completed shipbuilding output, new orders and orders on hand – accounted for the largest share of the global market for the 16th consecutive year, according to data released by the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology. – Xinhua

Photo exhibition in Russia's Far East showcases Chinese modernization

VLADIVOSTOK – In front of a wall of historical photographs, Oleg Kozhemyako, governor of Russia's Primorsky Krai in the Russian Far East, paused for a long moment.

His eyes lingered on images depicting China's First Five-Year Plan (1953-1957).

"China's persistent efforts and commitment to its fine traditions and development path have brought about extraordinary development," he said.

The remarks came at a photo exhibition titled "A Shared Future, A Long Road Ahead – Achievements of Chinese Modernization," held on Monday in Vladivostok, capital of Primorsky Krai. The event attracted more than 300 participants from various walks of life.

Inside the exhibition hall, 30 carefully selected Xinhua photographs trace China's transformation across decades – from early industrial foundations to advances in science, technology, culture and youth exchanges.

Vyacheslav Kozhukhov, deputy mayor of Yuzhno-Sakhalinsk, was struck by the visual contrast between tradition and modern life.

Among the images that

impressed him most was a scene of children playing in the snow at Beijing's Temple of Heaven Park.

"This is a well-planned, systematic process of economic development," he said. "It has been implemented clearly and consistently, and it has delivered remarkable results."

Another photograph that attracted a lot of attention showed the first Jiefang ("Liberation") truck rolling off the assembly line at Changchun First Automobile Works in 1956 – a landmark factory built with Soviet assistance, symbolizing early industrial cooperation.

Yevgeny Vlasov, vice-rector for International Relations at Far Eastern Federal University (FEFU), noted that Russia and China have long learned from and supported each other throughout their shared history.

"Russia-China relations are now at their highest level in history. They are the warmest and friendliest ties, and bilateral cooperation enjoys broad prospects. Every year our relations grow stronger," Vlasov told Xinhua.

Innokentiy Kichkin, a postgraduate student at FEFU, expressed deep

admiration for the remarkable achievements of the Chinese people and their tremendous efforts. He said Chinese modernization has delivered impressive results, adding that "the Chinese people share a common goal of national rejuvenation, and they have achieved it."

Denis Druzhin, a trader engaged in Russia-China commerce, highlighted China's rapid progress in fields such as new energy, green development and artificial intelligence, all featured in the exhibition.

"Chinese modernization brings opportunities to Russia, drives economic growth and improves the lives of people in both countries," he said.

Daria Mishukova, a Russian scholar specializing in East Asian studies, said the Chinese people are good at taking steady and practical steps, which is a key reason for the success of Chinese modernization. She also expressed optimism about the future of Russia-China relations, saying cooperation between the two sides will continue to grow stronger.

The exhibition was co-organized by the Consulate General of China in Vladivostok and Xinhua News Agency's Eurasia Bureau. – Xinhua

Beijing unveils 'GO BEIJING' platform to better serve inbound visitors

BEIJING – Beijing has launched "GO BEIJING," a comprehensive online service platform offering a full range of services for inbound visitors across different scenarios, local authorities said yesterday.

The platform was jointly built by the Beijing Municipal Administration of Government Services and Data Management and payment services platform Alipay, in cooperation with other local government departments, such as the Beijing Municipal Bureau of Culture and Tourism, the Beijing Municipal Commerce Bureau and the Beijing Municipal Tax Service.

Overseas visitors can access the platform via the international version of Alipay and enjoy 39 services in 16 languages, including ride-hailing, ticket booking and hotel reservations. The platform also features digital services such as an "AI tour companion."

International visitors can open a "travel wallet" account on the platform, transfer funds

into the account via cross-border remittance, and use it to make payments in the Chinese mainland. The service is available to users from 40 countries and regions.

Beijing has been continuously improving services for foreigners. For example, one-stop service counters have been operational since last year in the international arrival areas of Beijing Capital International Airport and Beijing Daxing International Airport, offering over 20 types of essential services in areas such as finance, communication, transportation, culture and tourism.

Beijing had recorded more than 7 million border crossings in 2026 as of Sunday morning, representing a year-on-year increase of 13 percent. The recent surge in Beijing's inbound tourism is partly attributable to the continuous optimization of visa-free policies. To date, China has introduced unilateral visa-free policies for 50 countries and implemented 240-hour transit visa-free arrangements for 55 countries. – Xinhua

China to grant zero-tariff treatment to all African countries with diplomatic ties

BEIJING – China will expand zero-tariff treatment to all African countries that have diplomatic relations with it starting on May 1, 2026, Chinese authorities announced yesterday.

The inclusion of an additional 20 African nations under the zero-tariff treatment policy has demonstrated the nation's active commitment to expanding high-standard opening up, according to the authorities.

From May 1, 2026 to April 30, 2028, China will grant zero-tariff treatment, in the form of a preferential tariff rate, to 20 African countries that have established diplomatic ties with China and are not classified as the least developed countries, according to an announcement by the Customs Tariff Commission of the State Council.

The announcement specified that for products under tariff quotas, only the in-quota tariff rate will be reduced to zero, while the out-of-quota tariff rate will remain unchanged.

During the two-year implementation

period, China will continue to promote the negotiation and signing of the agreement of China-Africa Economic Partnership for Shared Development with relevant African countries, it said.

China's latest move to apply zero-tariff treatment to an additional 20 African nations came after the country had granted zero-tariff treatment on 100 percent of tariff lines since December 1, 2024 for 33 least developed African countries with which it maintains diplomatic relations.

The commission added that this move will play an important role in strengthening the economic and trade cooperation bond between China and Africa as well as advancing joint efforts to build an all-weather China-Africa community with a shared future for the new era.

Calling it a "significant measure," China's commerce ministry said yesterday that with the expanded policy taking effect on Friday, China will become the first major economy

to provide unilateral, full-coverage zero-tariff treatment to all African countries with diplomatic ties, and to all least developed countries with diplomatic relations.

In a statement, the ministry said that the zero-tariff arrangement is also an innovative and phased step as China and relevant African countries work toward the signing of the China-Africa Economic Partnership for Shared Development agreement.

It said that at a time when unilateralism and protectionism are on the rise, China's move will expand the opening up of its market through zero-tariff treatment, creating development opportunities for African countries. Meanwhile, by negotiating and signing the China-Africa Economic Partnership for Shared Development agreement, China aims to ensure stable benefits for African countries and provide long-term, stable and predictable institutional safeguards for deepening China-Africa economic and trade relations.

As a concrete step demonstrating China's unwavering commitment to expanding high-standard opening up and its initiative to open wider, the implementation of zero-tariff treatment for the 53 African countries will inject strong impetus into China-Africa trade and investment cooperation as well as Africa's development, it said.

China's policy announcement yesterday aligns with its broad efforts to build a new system of a higher-standard open economy through mutually-beneficial and open cooperation and expansion of institutional opening up over the coming years.

According to the outline of the nation's 15th Five-Year Plan (2026-2030), the country will actively take the initiative to open wider and create a transparent, stable and predictable institutional environment. It has also pledged to improve the quality and level of trade and investment cooperation in the years through 2030. – Xinhua

Lai Ching-te's aborted visit affirms global consensus on one-China principle

Analysis

BEIJING – "Taiwan independence" forces have suffered a major setback as a trip to Eswatini by Taiwan regional leader Lai Ching-te, a diehard separatist, was recently canceled after several African countries denied his plane overflight rights.

As Taiwan regional authorities groundlessly blamed the failed attempt on the Chinese mainland, officials in Seychelles, Mauritius and Madagascar made it clear that their countries made the decisions independently in line with their commitment to the one-China principle.

Lai's planned visit to Taiwan's only so-called "diplomatic ally" in Africa was nothing but a provocative act of political manipulation aimed at promoting "Taiwan independence." It is both just and right for relevant countries to safeguard the one-China principle by refusing to provide any convenience for Lai's fraudulent actions which are against the tide of history.

This latest incident serves as a strong reaffirmation of a fundamental reality: the one-China principle is a basic, unshakable norm in international relations and a prevailing consensus in the world, while space for "Taiwan independence" activities is bound to continue shrinking.

The Taiwan question is a scar left over from a full-blown civil war fought between forces led by the Communist Party of China (CPC) and the Kuomintang (KMT) about eight decades ago. In 1949, remnants of the defeated KMT retreated to Taiwan, and the People's Republic of China (PRC) was founded under the leadership of the CPC. The unresolved civil war and foreign interference have left the two sides of the Taiwan Strait in a prolonged state of political confrontation.

However, both sides of the Taiwan Strait belong to one and the same China. The core meaning of the one-China principle includes three aspects: there is but one China in the world, the Taiwan region is an inalienable part of China's territory, and the Government of the People's Republic of China is the sole legal government representing the whole of China. The United Nations General Assembly Resolution 2758 of 1971 solemnly confirms and fully embodies the one-China principle. After the adoption of this historic resolution, all official UN documents have referred to

Taiwan as "Taiwan, Province of China."

The Taiwan question is an internal affair of China and at the center of the country's core interests. The prevailing consensus of the one-China principle is evident in the number of countries recognizing it. To date, 183 countries have established and developed diplomatic relations with China on the basis of the one-China principle. Over the past decade, 10 countries have severed "diplomatic relations" with the island and established or resumed diplomatic ties with China, underscoring the expanding global consensus on this matter.

Meanwhile, a growing number of countries have stated that they support all efforts made by the Chinese government to achieve national reunification. In the Beijing Declaration adopted at the 2024 Summit of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation, 53 African countries and the African Union reaffirmed firm commitment to the one-China principle, and expressed solid support for all endeavors by the Chinese government aimed at achieving national reunification. During his state visit to China earlier this month, Mozambican President Daniel Francisco Chapo said his country attaches great importance to its relations with China, unconditionally abides by the one-China principle, and supports China in achieving national reunification.

Such firm adherence to the one-China principle is a growing trend globally. For example, Cameroon listed the island as "Taiwan, province of China" in pre-travel documentation issued for a World Trade Organization summit in late March, while the Danish government lists the nationality of people from Taiwan as "China" on residence permits.

"All these developments indicate a significant global trend, amounting to firm support for the one-China principle and opposition to 'Taiwan independence' in any form," Chen Guiqing, a research fellow at the Institute of Taiwan Studies of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, told Xinhua.

The complete reunification of China is unstoppable. The one-China principle is where the arc of history bends and public opinion trends, and upholding it is clearly the right thing to do. Such consensus will gain even more robust support through concrete actions from the international community. – Xinhua



Tourists queue to taste local delicacies in the old quarters of Changsha, capital of Hunan Province, on Saturday. Changsha at night features diverse modes of business: live-streaming, band performances, period costume photography and night-market cuisine, all contributing to the nighttime economic vitality of the city. – Xinhua

All peace-loving countries must firmly resist Japan's reckless moves of neo-militarism: FM spokesperson

BEIJING – All peace-loving countries in the world must remain highly vigilant and firmly resist Japan's reckless moves of neo-militarism, said foreign ministry spokesperson Lin Jian yesterday.

Lin made the remarks at a regular press briefing when answering a query related to Japanese Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi's claim to be prepared for a "long-term conflict" during a panel tasked with reviewing her country's security and defense policies.

The Takaichi administration recently has been pushing to rebuild Japan's war machine, and now calls for preparing for a long war, Lin noted, adding that Japan, having once launched the war of aggression several decades ago, now makes scare-mongering remarks.

"Is Japan's militarist past returning? Is Japan speeding down the path of 'remilitarization'?" Could Japan once again become the bane of East Asia?" Lin asked.

He pointed out that during their aggression and expansion last century, Japanese militarists committed horrendous crimes against China, Japan itself and other neighboring countries in Asia.

Given the history of aggression and to prevent the revival of Japanese militarism, the Cairo Declaration, the Potsdam Proclamation, the Japanese Instrument of Surrender and

a series of documents with full legal effect under international law explicitly require Japan to be "completely disarmed" and not to maintain industries that "would enable it to re-arm for war," Lin said, adding the Japanese Constitution also contains strict restrictions on Japan's military strength, right of belligerency and right to war.

Lin stated that from the "exclusively defense-oriented" principle and declaration to preparedness for a long war, Japan's latest moves point to an accelerated shift onto a much more dangerous, adventurist and provocative path in the military and security fields. "Japan seems to be tearing up its 'pacifist' rulebook," noted Lin.

He said that many with insights suggest that recent rhetoric of certain Japanese officials sound rather like war propaganda and remind people of wartime Japanese militarists.

Noting this year marks the 80th anniversary of the beginning of the Tokyo trials, Lin said that clearly, the Takaichi administration has no intention of honoring the occasion by reflecting on Japan's militarist past, as it gets into gear to re-arm Japan. "The international community will never allow that," Lin said.

"The lesson of history is not far gone. All peace-loving countries need to stay vigilant and firmly stop the rise of Japanese neo-militarism," said the spokesperson. – Xinhua

Indonesian police charge 13 in daycare abuse scandal

YOGYAKARTA – Indonesian police have arrested 13 people after shocking images of alleged abuse against small children at a daycare centre went viral, sparking outrage across the nation, officials said Monday.

Police last Friday raided Little Aresha, a daycare centre in Yogyakarta on Java island, following a report from a former employee.

CCTV footage circulating on social media showed children, most under the age of two, lying on the floor wearing only diapers, their hands and feet bound with rags. The police have confirmed that the footage is authentic.

Police said they also found 20 kids crammed into a room just three by three metres.

“So far, 13 people have been named suspects” and arrested in the case, city police chief Eva Guna Pandia told reporters in Yogyakarta Monday.

Those in custody include 11 child carers, as well as the headmaster and the head of the foundation that ran the centre.

They will face a rash of charges including child neglect. Other charges may be added as the investigation unfolds.

Pandia said the suspects told police they had tied up some of the kids to prevent them disturbing others.

They claimed the centre was understaffed, with not enough personnel to bathe and dress the children, said Yogyakarta detective Riski Adrian.

The daycare centre accommodated about 100 children, more than half of whom are believed to have been maltreated, according to police.

Parent Noorman Windarto told AFP he was shocked when he received a phone call from a fellow parent last Friday, urging him to pick up his two-year-old son.

He later learnt from police that the boy, who had been attending the centre since he was three months old, was among those to have been tied up.

“My heart was shattered,” the 42-year-old civil servant said.

“My wife cried. Most of them

(caregivers) were women, and their body language was so tender, so soft-spoken, and appeared to be religious.”

Noorman paid about 1.1 million rupiah (about US\$64) – half the minimum wage in Yogyakarta – for each of his two children to attend the centre, since shuttered.

His oldest child, a daughter now aged six, stopped going recently.

She sometimes came home with bruises which the daycare centre said she must have got elsewhere, playing, recalled Noorman.

His son had been repeatedly hospitalised with pneumonia, which the father now suspects may have had something to do with him being made to sleep on a cold floor without clothes.

“I am very angry, furious,” Noorman said. “They must be punished as severely as possible.”

Under Indonesia’s child protection law, the suspects risk up to five years’ imprisonment and a 100 million rupiah fine. –AFP

Death toll rises to 15 in Indonesian train accident



Rescuers work at the site of a train collision after a passenger train locomotive pierced through the rear car of a commuter train at Bekasi Timur station in Bekasi, West Java, Indonesia yesterday. –AFP

JAKARTA – The death toll from Monday night’s collision between two trains in Bekasi, West Java, Indonesia, has risen to 15, with dozens of others injured, police said yesterday.

Greater Jakarta police spokesman Budi Hermanto said seven families had reported missing relatives at a Jakarta police hospital, urging others to come forward to speed up identification.

Indonesian President Prabowo Subianto visited the victims at a hospital in Bekasi yesterday morning,

saying that he extended condolences on behalf of the government and himself, and promising a quick investigation into the tragic event.

A commuter train on the Jakarta-Bekasi route collided with a long-distance train operating on the Jakarta-Surabaya route at around 8:50 p.m. local time on Monday.

An investigation into the cause of the incident is being conducted by the rail operator and the National Transportation Safety Committee. –Xinhua



People take part in a protest against the US-Israel military actions in Iran, in Manila yesterday. –AFP

Russian yacht, cruise ships ferry seafarers out of Gulf: Philippines

MANILA – A Russian super-yacht trapped in the Gulf by the Middle East war carried stranded Filipino seafarers out through the perilous Strait of Hormuz, the Philippines government said yesterday.

The Russia-flagged Nord, a 142-metre-long yacht reportedly linked to the Russian billionaire Alexei Mordashov, passed the strait on Saturday, the Department of Migrant Workers (DMW) said in a statement.

On board the yacht and a bulk

cargo ship that also passed that day “were 36 Filipino seafarers, bringing the total Filipino crew of vessels out of the Strait to close to 1,200”, it added.

The department’s secretary Hans Leo Caddac told a news conference last week that about 800 of them had been taken through the strait in cruise ships that escaped the strait with passengers.

Maritime trackers indicated that several cruise ships managed to make

it through the route on April 18, after Iran briefly announced it was lifting its closure of the strait in the war.

Caddac said 15 other Filipino seafarers were on board two container ships that were later seized by Iranian forces on April 22: the Epaminondas and the Francesca.

“We have been assured that all 15 Filipino seafarers are safe, unharmed, and it will be a matter of time for their ships to be cleared,” he said. –AFP

ASEAN energy ministers urge coordinated action amid geopolitical tensions

MANILA – Energy ministers from the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) have stressed the urgency of coordinated regional action amid ongoing geopolitical tensions in the Middle East, which continue to roil global energy markets and supply chains, particularly for oil and gas, the Philippines’ Department of Energy said yesterday.

In a special virtual meeting on Monday, the ASEAN Ministers on Energy Meeting warned that the evolving conflict could heighten price volatility and disrupt supply flows, posing risks to the region’s energy security and economic stability.

Discussions focused on the latest developments in the Middle East and their potential impact on both

regional and global energy systems, including supply availability and market stability.

The ministers reaffirmed the bloc’s collective responsibility to safeguard energy security through stronger regional cooperation, timely policy responses, and closer engagement with dialogue partners via ASEAN-led mechanisms. –Xinhua

Japanese prosecutor who accused boss of rape to resign

TOKYO – A Japanese prosecutor who publicly accused her boss of rape said yesterday she will resign after her office rejected a request for an independent probe into harassment within the organisation.

Very few women in Japan speak out about sexual assault but the prosecutor, who uses the pseudonym Hikari, came forward in 2024 to accuse Osaka’s then top prosecutor of raping her six years earlier.

Kentaro Kitagawa, who retired after serving as head of the Osaka District Public Prosecutor’s Office, was arrested and admitted the assault but later withdrew his statement, saying the sex was consensual.

“I feel it’s hopeless to return to work,” Hikari, who has been on leave since before coming forward, told AFP.

“So this is a painful decision I have to make to protect my life,” she said, adding that she will submit a resignation letter on April 30.

Hikari has made a request to the justice ministry and the prosecutors’ office that a third-party panel be set up to investigate cases involving others in the legal profession, and to implement measures to prevent harassment.

She has previously said she was “certain that there are other instances of harassment and additional offences” besides those involving her.

But the prosecutors’ office said authorities would “refrain from responding” as Hikari also filed a suit against the state last month, seeking compensation.

Public records show that 21 people at prosecutors’ offices

have been disciplined for sexual violence in the past 16 years, according to Hikari.

She said people close to Kitagawa, especially an assistant prosecutor – whom Hikari says is his lover – have spread malicious rumours.

These included identifying the victim, whose name had not been made public, and claiming she had been attracted to Kitagawa, consented to sex and was sober.

Hikari was diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and has been seeing a psychiatrist.

She filed a criminal complaint against the assistant prosecutor in 2025, but the Osaka prosecutor’s office dismissed it, only imposing a reprimand.

Hikari said she planned to file a petition with the prosecutorial review commission tomorrow.

Hikari has said she was not used to drinking strong alcohol and lost her memory halfway through an office gathering in 2018.

The next thing she knew, she said, she was in Kitagawa’s home and was being raped.

Hikari kept quiet after it happened, as Kitagawa had pleaded with her not to go public, saying it would be a damaging scandal for the organisation and threatening to harm himself, she said.

“It fills me with such bitterness that I, the victim, am forced to resign, while people who commit harassment continue working as if nothing had happened,” she said.

“I will keep on pushing for change at the prosecutor’s office so that it will truly serve the public.”

–AFP

N Korean executions rose dramatically during COVID: report

SEOUL – North Korea dramatically increased executions during the COVID-19 pandemic, particularly for consuming South Korean dramas, K-pop and other foreign culture and political offences, a report published yesterday showed.

Pyongyang closed its borders in January 2020 to stop the spread of the coronavirus, with research and media reports indicating that the diplomatically isolated nation spent subsequent years bolstering security along its frontiers.

Campaigners have said the shutdown worsened longstanding human rights abuses in North Korea, whose government is widely seen as one of the world's most repressive.

The report by the Transitional Justice Working Group, an advocacy NGO, found that the number of executions and death sentences more than doubled in the nearly five years after the border closure, compared to the same period before it.

The number of condemned people also more than tripled over the same time frame, according to the findings.

The group drew data from hundreds of North Korean escapees and several media outlets that maintain networks of sources inside the secretive nation, where there is no independent media and little international presence.

It analysed 144 known cases of executions and death sentences, involving hundreds of people in total.

Since the pandemic, authorities have ramped up the use of capital punishment for offences such as consuming South Korean movies, dramas and music, it said.

Death penalty cases related to foreign culture, religion and "superstition" jumped by 250 percent after the border closure.

Another major spike in executions for political crimes, such as criticising leader Kim Jong Un, may suggest the government is "responding to growing internal dissatisfaction or intensifying state violence to suppress political discontent", the report said.

Nearly three-quarters of the executions were carried out in public, with most people shot to death, it said.

It added that killings had taken place in dozens of cities and counties since Kim rose to power in the early 2010s.

They included several sites in the capital Pyongyang, as well as public grounds such as defunct airfields, riverbanks, farmland and open-storage yards for mine waste.

The North Korean government is accused of rights abuses including torture, forced labour and severe restrictions on freedom of expression and movement.

It is said to operate four political prison camps where up to 65,000 people are subjected to hard labour, according to a 2025 report by the Korea Institute for National Unification.

The United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights said last year that the overall human rights situation in North Korea over the past decade had shown no improvement and in many cases had worsened.

North Korea has consistently rejected allegations of abuses, accusing the United Nations of politicising human rights to undermine the regime. –AFP

Google breaks ground on Indian AI megahub

BENGALURU – Tech giant Google yesterday marked the ceremonial start of work on its largest artificial intelligence hub outside of the United States with a groundbreaking ceremony in India.

The firm promised in October 2025 to spend US\$15 billion over five years to construct the vast centre in Visakhapatnam, a southeastern port in Andhra Pradesh state of around two million people, popularly known as "Vizag".

"Today marks the first concrete milestone in Google's largest commitment to India's digital future," Bikash Koley, Google's Vice President for Global Infrastructure, told the ceremony.

"This project represents a US\$15 billion blueprint to deliver a full stack AI ecosystem," he added.

"At its core is our gigawatt scale data centre campus, purpose built for the immense computational demand of the AI era, powering services like Gemini and Google Search."

Nara Lokesh, information technology minister for Andhra Pradesh state, said he was "excited as we embark on this journey to build India's most coveted AI and deep-tech hub".

Vizag is being pitched as a landing point for submarine internet cables linking India to Singapore.

"By establishing Vizag as an international subsea gateway, we will add vital diversity from the existing landings, in Mumbai and Chennai, increasing the resilience of India's digital backbone and improving economic security," Koley added.

"New strategic fibre optic routes will further connect India with the rest of the world."

Globally, data centres are an area of phenomenal growth, fuelled by the need to store massive amounts of digital data, and to train and run energy-intensive AI tools.

"This is a pivotal moment for India, Vizag, and for Google," Koley added. –AFP

Monk ends barefoot Sri Lanka trek with a dog and plea for peace

COLOMBO – A saffron-robed Buddhist monk ended a gruelling barefoot walk across Sri Lanka yesterday with an impassioned appeal for world peace and kindness towards animals.

Accompanied by a rescued stray dog, Texas-based Vietnamese monk Pannakara walked 210 kilometres to reach the capital Colombo, where he was received by President Anura Kumara Dissanayake.

Hundreds of thousands of Sri Lankans lined the route from the north-central town of Dambulla during the week-long walk to offer Pannakara and his 12 fellow monks flowers and gifts.

They were accompanied by their mascot, a stray named Aloka, meaning "light" in Sanskrit.

"If we cannot govern our own inner world with wisdom, how can we expect the outer world to remain peaceful?" Pannakara said at a ceremony at Colombo's Independence Square.

The foreign monks were also presented with a sapling of the Sri Maha Bodhi, which according to tradition has grown from a cutting of the original tree under which the Buddha attained enlightenment in India.

The Vietnamese monks had attracted international attention during a longer 108-day walk of 3,700 kilometres from Texas to Washington, travelling through



Vietnamese Buddhist monk Pannakara (right) arrives with his pet dog Aloka, a stray rescued from India, along with other monks for a ceremony at Independence Square in Colombo, Sri Lanka yesterday, during the final day of their 210-kilometre 'Walk for Peace'. –AFP

freezing temperatures and along ice-covered roads and ending on February 10.

In sharp contrast, they walked on Sri Lanka's roads at the hottest time of the year, when temperatures reached 40C.

Devotees sprayed water on asphalt roads and placed banana leaves and flowers for them to step on, helping them avoid the sweltering heat of the tarmac.

Elite army and police commandos were deployed to protect the group, and veterinarians were placed on standby to care for Aloka, who was kept on a leash held

by security personnel taking turns.

"Aloka has no voice to speak our language. Yet he has communicated something very profound to all of us," Pannakara said.

"Through his presence, we were reminded that loving kindness and compassion must not be limited. It must extend to all living beings."

Aloka had followed the monks in India and remained with them even after being hit by a car.

The monks then took the dog to the United States, where he accompanied them on their peace walk, drawing global attention and donations that helped fund his travels. –AFP

S Korean court increases ex-first lady's graft sentence

Jin-kyu

SEOUL – A South Korean appeals court increased the corruption sentence for former first lady Kim Keon Hee yesterday to four years in jail after finding her guilty of stock manipulation and bribery.

Kim, the wife of jailed ex-president Yoon Suk Yeol, was handed 20 months in jail for bribery at an initial trial in January, but was acquitted of acting to rig stock prices and other charges.

She appealed the verdict in the hope of clearing her name, while prosecutors also did arguing that the sentence was too lenient and the acquittals were wrongful.

Yesterday, the Seoul High Court overturned her acquittal for stock price fraud and maintained her initial graft conviction, resulting in a much heavier penalty.

"The court sentences the defendant to four years in prison and imposes a 50 million won (US\$34,000) fine," the court said in a televised verdict.

It found Kim guilty of manipulating the share price of Deutsch Motors, a South Korean car dealer, which it ruled a "collusive... trading act constituting market manipulation".

"The defendant appears to have participated in such conduct," the court said as it overturned her acquittal.

Kim, who appeared in court wearing a white face mask, kept

her head lowered as the verdict was announced.

The court said the 53-year-old had "failed to acknowledge her culpability and has instead consistently resorted to excuses".

As a result of her accepting bribes, "public trust in the transparency of state affairs and the fair execution of national policy was undermined", it added.

The court said it had taken Kim's lack of a prior criminal record into account in its sentencing.

Lawyers for Kim told AFP they would appeal the verdict to the Supreme Court.

Dogged by scandals

Kim, a self-proclaimed animal lover known for her campaigns to ban the dog-meat trade in South Korea, was at the centre of several scandals that often eclipsed her husband's tenure in office.

In 2023, covertly filmed footage emerged that appeared to show her accepting a luxury Dior handbag, in an episode that further eroded Yoon's already low approval ratings.

The furore fed into a defeat for Yoon's party in the April 2024 general elections, when it failed to regain a parliamentary majority.

Yoon subsequently vetoed three opposition-backed bills seeking investigations into allegations surrounding Kim, including the

Dior bag case, with the final veto cast in November 2024.

A week later, he declared martial law – but failed, leading to his impeachment, removal from office and sentencing in February this year to life imprisonment for insurrection.

He has appealed against the conviction, insisting his martial law declaration was "solely for the sake of the nation".

The verdict in another appeal, against his five-year sentence for obstructing justice and other crimes linked to the declaration, is expected today.

Chanel bags, Graff jewellery

Kim's bribery case has also implicated Han Hak-ja, leader of the cult-like Unification Church, which claims 10 million followers worldwide and runs a vast business empire.

The 83-year-old is standing trial on bribery and other charges while in custody, although she has been temporarily released to hospital for medical treatment.

Kim was found to have accepted two Chanel handbags and a Graff necklace from the church, with the court ruling yesterday that all three items were bribes.

In the lower court ruling, one of the handbags was not recognised as a bribe because it had been gifted to Kim before her husband's presidential inauguration. –AFP

UAE pulls out of OPEC oil cartels citing 'national interests'

DUBAI – The United Arab Emirates will withdraw from the OPEC and OPEC+ oil cartels to focus on “national interests”, it announced yesterday, causing fresh shockwaves as energy prices soar over the Middle East war.

The UAE, one of the world’s top oil producers, which has previously chafed at OPEC production quotas, will pull out on Friday, a statement carried by the official WAM news agency said.

The UAE has been an OPEC member through the emirate of Abu Dhabi since 1967, four years before the former British protectorate became a country.

The last OPEC member to withdraw from the cartel was Angola in 2024.

“This decision reflects the UAE’s long-term strategic and economic vision and evolving energy profile,” the UAE statement said.

“During our time in the organisation, we made significant contributions and even greater sacrifices for the benefit of all,” it added.

“However, the time has come to focus our efforts on what our national interest dictates.”

The decision, in the midst of the biggest oil shock since the 1970s, is

likely to weaken OPEC, dominated by the UAE’s neighbour and rival Saudi Arabia, indicating further turbulence for markets, analysts said.

Gulf oil shipments are currently being strangled by Iran’s blockade of the Strait of Hormuz, which flows past the UAE and normally carries one-fifth of the world’s oil.

Given the restrictions on oil shipments in the strait, the UAE did not want to be constrained by quotas once the situation was back to normal, a source close to the energy ministry told AFP.

The UAE, hard-hit by Iranian attacks, has also faced trouble in its relationship with Saudi Arabia, the world’s top oil exporter, after a stand-off between rival forces backed by the two countries in Yemen.

‘More volatile oil market’

Pre-war, the UAE was the fourth biggest producer in the 22-member OPEC+, behind Saudi Arabia, Russia, and Iraq.

Jorge Leon, an analyst at Rystad Energy, said its withdrawal may not immediately impact oil markets while Hormuz shipments remain on hold.

But the UAE will now be free to raise production, “raising broader questions about the sustainability of

Saudi Arabia’s role as the market’s central stabiliser – and pointing to a potentially more volatile oil market as OPEC’s capacity to smooth supply imbalances diminishes”.

Jamie Ingram, managing editor for the Middle East Economic Survey, posted that OPEC is losing 13 percent of its production capacity with the UAE’s departure, citing the International Energy Agency (IEA).

Founded in 1960, the 12-member OPEC cartel in 2016 partnered up with 10 other producers to form OPEC+ to gain more clout.

The Vienna-based group drew international attention in 1973, when it imposed an oil embargo against Israel’s allies in the midst of the Yom Kippur War, triggering the first oil crisis.

Within just a few months, prices quadrupled, highlighting the cartel’s dominance.

Faced with rising competitors in the 1980s, it introduced its famous quota system that enabled it to exert more control over the market.

This strategy meant the group fared relatively well during the 2008 financial crisis and the price shock in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, despite increased internal tensions. – AFP

New evacuations in Lebanon as Israel says ‘no territorial ambitions’

JERUSALEM – Israel yesterday said it was not seeking to take territory in Lebanon, as its military issued a wave of new evacuation warnings for towns and villages in the battle-scarred south.

Israel has been fighting Hezbollah since early March, sending troops into south Lebanon to battle the Iran-backed militant group, with the violence ongoing despite a shaky April 17 ceasefire.

“Israel has no territorial ambitions in Lebanon. Our presence... serves one purpose: protecting our citizens,” Foreign Minister Gideon Saar told a news conference.

“No country would be willing to live in such a way with a gun pointed to its head,” he said, as the military pressed its operations in Lebanon against Iran-backed Hezbollah.

After the ceasefire began, Israel declared a so-called “yellow line”, marking out a strip of Lebanese territory by the border, 10 kilometres deep, where its troops were operating.

“In a reality where Hezbollah and other terror organisations – including Palestinian terror groups – are dismantled, Israel will have no need to maintain its presence in these areas,” Saar said.

Despite the truce, Israel and Hezbollah have both engaged in fighting, trading blame over their alleged violations.

Yesterday’s evacuation warning was aimed at residents in more than a dozen villages and towns, urging them to immediately head northwards.

“Out of concern for your safety, you are required to evacuate your homes



Israeli police disperse ultra-Orthodox Jews, who are largely exempt from military service, protesting against conscription by blocking a highway near the centre of the Israeli city of Bnei Brak yesterday. Israel’s Supreme Court on Sunday ordered the government to cut financial benefits to ultra-Orthodox Jews who refuse to answer conscription call-ups. There is a long-standing exemption from compulsory national service for ultra-Orthodox men who engage in full-time religious study, which dates back to Israel’s founding in 1948. – AFP

immediately and move... towards the Sidon District,” the military’s Arabic-language spokesman Avichay Adraee wrote on X.

Shortly afterwards, Lebanon’s state media said Israel carried out airstrikes across the south, hitting targets including the named areas.

It also said at least one Israeli demolition operation was taking place in the south.

All the areas listed for evacuation appear to be outside or on the border of the “yellow line”.

On three separate occasions yesterday, the military said it sought to intercept “a suspicious aerial target” where troops were operating, without saying what it was.

It also said Hezbollah had launched a number of explosive drones that detonated adjacent to IDF soldiers, but nobody was hurt.

In a similar incident the day earlier, a soldier was severely wounded and another lightly hurt “as a result of an explosive drone impact”, it said.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on Monday said Hezbollah’s rockets and drones remained a key threat requiring ongoing military action.

Hezbollah drew Lebanon into the Middle East war on March 2 by firing rockets towards Israel to avenge the killing of Iranian supreme leader Ali Khamenei. – AFP

New pirate group behind latest Somali hijacking: officials

MOGADISHU, SOMALIA – A pirate attack off Somalia is the work of a new group of “opportunistic criminals”, security officials said yesterday, complicating a threat that costs the shipping industry billions of dollars.

Piracy was rampant off the coast of Somalia in the 2000s, peaking in 2011 with hundreds of attacks, but was significantly reduced by international naval deployments and new tactics by commercial shipping.

Yet the past week has seen oil tanker HONOUR 25 and cement carrier SWARD hijacked in the first major incidents in months.

The SWARD seizure was the work of a group operating from the port town of Garacad in Puntland state of northeastern Somalia, a Puntland security official told AFP.

That is further south than the usual piracy hotbed focused on a cluster of three coastal towns – Hafun, Bander Beyla and Eyl – which is where the HONOUR 25 oil tanker has been taken.

The new group is mostly formed of “rural youth” from an area “awash with weapons”, motivated by poverty, and anger over illegal fishing by ships from Yemen, Iran and beyond.

“Nearly everyone in this region is poor and nearly everyone is armed. Illegal fishing, especially from the trawlers, is making things worse,” the official told AFP.

“If they are not countered, they will evolve into entities like those at war with the government,” he said, referring to Islamist groups like Al-Shabaab and the Islamic State (IS) that have been fighting Somalia’s federal government for years.

Clan dynamics

As often in Somalia, the situation is complicated by clan

dynamics, which are central to the country’s politics and society.

A second Puntland security official told AFP the group that seized the SWARD were all from the same clan and sub-clan.

That complicates countermeasures by the state, which could be seen as an attack on the clan as a whole.

“These men on the ship hail from particular sub-clans, which differs from the [Puntland] president’s sub-clan.

“So if we strike and some of them are harmed, then it could lead to revenge killings between locals,” said the official.

“That’s why negotiations are best to diffuse this kind of situation but it also plays into the hands of the pirates,” he added.

The Puntland government has yet to release a statement on the hijackings.

For locals, renewed piracy can cause long-term problems, said analyst Jethro Norman, of the Danish Institute for International Studies.

“Some households may see short-term cash.

“But the wider effect is higher prices for imported food and especially fuel, suppressed legitimate fishing and potentially heavier external naval patrols that complicate ordinary maritime life,” he told AFP.

He said the international community needed to do more to prevent foreign trawlers operating illegally in the region, aggravating locals.

“Puntland has raised the alarm about illegal foreign fishing for years,” he said.

“Unless the international community directly resources the Puntland institutions that police this coastline, neither the immediate threat nor the political economy sustaining it gets resolved.” – AFP

Sweden warns of potential jet fuel shortage

STOCKHOLM – Sweden’s government warned yesterday of a potential jet fuel shortage in the Scandinavian country due to supply disruptions caused by the Middle East war and the closure of the Strait of Hormuz.

“We want to provide an early warning that there is a risk of a jet fuel shortage. This is based on an assessment by the Swedish Energy Agency,” Energy Minister Ebba Busch said at a press conference.

“Even if a lasting peace deal [between the United States and Iran] were to be in place tomorrow, it would likely still take time before oil and gas supplies are restored,” Busch said, speaking alongside Prime Minister Ulf Kristersson and Energy Agency director Caroline Asserup.

There is currently no systemic shortage of jet fuel in the European Union. But concerns are rising as 20 percent of the jet fuel used by the EU normally transits through the Strait of Hormuz.

Kristersson said Sweden was less affected by the current energy crisis than many other countries, noting Swedish electricity production was largely based on nuclear, hydro and renewable energies.

But it could be affected down the road if the conflict were to deteriorate and continue for a long time.

“It is also important to distinguish between different types of fuel, as they have different markets and conditions,” Asserup said.

When it comes to jet fuel, “we are no longer in a normal situation.”

“We have seen no delivery disruptions” for now, she said.

“What we are seeing, however, are price fluctuations, and it is due to these price movements that some companies, for commercial reasons, may sometimes decide to cancel flights,” Asserup said.

Sweden and the Nordic countries have a relatively large refining capacity, mainly thanks to North Sea oil. This oil is now in higher demand, which has led to higher prices. – AFP

Kimmel hits back at Trump criticism of Melania joke

WASHINGTON, DC – US comedian Jimmy Kimmel has hit back at Donald Trump's call for him to lose his job over a joke about First Lady Melania Trump days before an attempt to assassinate the US president.

Trump said Kimmel – who said the joke was about the couple's age difference – should be fired for likening the first lady to an "expectant widow."

In a show last week, Kimmel had portrayed himself in as the MC of upcoming White House Correspondents' Dinner in Washington on Saturday, addressing the first lady and saying "Mrs Trump, you have a glow like an expectant widow."

Trump turns 80 in June and is the oldest president to take office in the United States. His wife, a former model who was born in Slovenia, is 56.

The first lady also lashed out at Kimmel in a statement, calling on broadcaster ABC to "take a stand" against the late-night host.

Kimmel brushed off the criticism on his show on Monday, saying that the gag was

"obviously... a joke about their age difference."

"It was a very light roast joke about the fact that he's almost 80 and she's younger than I am," Kimmel said. "It was not by any stretch of the definition a call to assassination, and they know that."

The White House went back on the attack yesterday, with communications director Steven Cheung on X describing Kimmel as a "shit human" for "doubling down on that joke instead of doing the decent thing by apologising."

The suspect accused of attacking Saturday's media gala was charged in court on Monday with trying to assassinate the president.

As a prominent late-night comedy host, Kimmel has been at the heart of the debate over constitutionally protected speech.

He was briefly suspended from his show last September following government pressure after he said Trump's MAGA movement was trying to make political capital from the assassination of conservative influencer Charlie Kirk. – AFP, MPD

Germany to introduce sugar tax: draft bill

Berlin – The German government plans to introduce a sugar tax as part of measures to address its growing budget deficit in the coming years, according to a draft bill seen by AFP yesterday.

Under the scheme, which is expected to be included in the 2027 budget, consumers of sweet drinks like Coca-Cola could be expected to cough up for the public purse.

Some manufacturers of sodas and other sweet drinks have responded to similar taxes in other countries by reducing sugar content and ramping up artificial sweeteners.

Berlin plans to borrow 110 billion euros (US\$128 billion) in 2027 for its core budget, compared with 98 billion euros this year and 66.9 billion euros in 2025, according to new budget projections.

Under Chancellor Friedrich Merz it is also going on an additional borrowing spree in a bid

to revamp its infrastructure and boost its economy, with money from a special fund designed to pay for new investments outside of the core budget.

A sluggish economy and planned rises in defence expenditure amid a perceived threat from Moscow while it continues its military operation in Ukraine on Europe's eastern flank have meanwhile put pressure the core budget.

German defence spending is projected to rise to 3.7 percent of GDP by 2030, according to the finance ministry, up from 2.8 percent this year.

The proposed sugar tax was reviewed in March by a working group bringing together lawmakers from the ruling conservative CDU/CSU and centre-left SPD.

Several countries have introduced taxes on sugary or sweetened drinks, including Saudi Arabia, France and the United Kingdom. – AFP

Trump hails British as 'friends' as king visits amid Iran tensions



US President Donald Trump (right) shares a lough with Britain's King Charles III in the Oval Office of the White House in Washington, DC, yesterday.

– AFP

Danny Kemp

WASHINGTON, DC – President Donald Trump said yesterday that the United States has "no closer friends" than the British, as he welcomed King Charles III to the White House on a state visit overshadowed by tensions over the Iran war.

In speech during a pomp-filled welcome featuring a 21-gun salute, Trump's tone was a world away from the recent broadsides aimed at Britain's government for failing to join the conflict with Tehran.

"In the centuries since we won our independence, Americans have had no closer friends than the British," said Trump, referring to the fact that the visit marks the 250th anniversary of the US colonies declaring their freedom from British rule.

Using a phrase prized by British governments since Winston Churchill first used it after World War II, Trump said that the two countries had a "special relationship, and we hope it will always remain that way."

The US leader also praised the British military, saying that "nobody fought better together" with the United States – despite recently deriding Britain's two aircraft carriers as "toys."

After his speech, four US jets roared over the White House in a noisy flypast as Trump, Charles, Queen Camilla and First Lady Melania Trump watched.

On the second day of the four-day state visit, Charles was slated to

later address the US Congress. He was expected to call in his speech for "reconciliation and renewal" amid the recent strains in ties.

'Beautiful British day'

A long-term fan of the British royals, Trump appeared in a jovial mood on a rainy Washington morning as he looked to the sky and quipped: "What a beautiful British day this is."

The 79-year-old president even joked about how his late mother "had a crush on Charles", who is now 77.

Cannons rang out while a military band played "God Save the King," the British national anthem, and the Star Spangled Banner, the anthem of the United States.

Charles shook hands with top Trump administration officials including Vice President JD Vance and Secretary of State Marco Rubio.

The king and the president – who received his own state visit to Britain last September – inspected troops from different branches of the US armed forces.

A band of soldiers dressed in uniforms from the Revolutionary War that drove the British out of America two and a half centuries ago then marched past, playing fife and drums.

As the ceremony unfolded, construction noise could be heard from the site of the huge US\$400 million ballroom that Trump is building at the White House.

The Trumps were next due to host the royals in the Oval Office

behind closed doors. In the evening they were scheduled to return to the White House for a grand state dinner.

Tight security

Security has been tight for the visit, which comes just days after a shooting at a White House Correspondents Dinner attended by Trump.

The first day of the trip featured a more informal welcome, with the Trumps treating Charles and Camilla to tea and cakes in the White House before showing them beehives on the famed lawn.

But the second day will feature perhaps the most public-facing moment, when Charles becomes the first British monarch to address Congress since his mother, queen Elizabeth, in 1991.

It comes at a delicate moment after Trump raged over London's refusal to help with his war in Iran.

In the 20-minute speech, Charles is expected to appeal to Trump in guarded terms, saying that defending common democratic ideals is "crucial for liberty and equality."

"Time and again, our two countries have always found ways to come together," he is expected to say.

But he will have his work cut out to placate the mercurial Republican in the longer term.

Trump has repeatedly lambasted British Prime Minister Keir Starmer over his Iran war opposition, alongside the country's immigration and energy policies. – AFP

Macron urges Andorra to 'move forwards' on decriminalising abortion

ANDORRA LA VELLA – French President Emmanuel Macron called on Andorra yesterday to "move forwards" on decriminalising abortion during a visit to the principality, which maintains one of Europe's last total bans on abortion.

His comments come as the micro-state, nestled in the Pyrenees mountains between France and Spain, is considering reforming its

abortion laws which currently ban the procedure in all cases.

"I hope this debate moves forward," Macron said during a visit to Andorra, where he shares the symbolic title of "co-prince" with a Catholic bishop in Spain.

In a world first, France in 2024 enshrined the right to terminate a pregnancy in its constitution, and Macron has since pledged to make the procedure a European basic right.

Women in Andorra have no legal right to abortion – even in cases of rape, incest, or danger to their life – and the procedure remains punishable by prison for both patients and doctors, though no trials have ever been held.

The Andorran head of government, Xavier Espot Zamora, yesterday acknowledged there was "demand" to reform the micro-state's abortion laws, stating that

his government is working toward a "negotiated solution".

Zamora in March voiced hope that abortion would be decriminalised within a year in the non-EU state, though he clarified there were no plans for full legalisation.

But any such reform would require negotiations with the Vatican, which enforces Europe's only other ban on abortions in all cases.

Pregnancy termination is legal in almost all European countries, the Centre for Reproductive Rights (CRR) advocacy group says.

A handful of countries have near-total bans, broadly only allowing it when a woman's life is in danger, it says.

The latter include the principalities of Monaco and Liechtenstein, as well as EU states Malta and Poland. – AFP

Xi, Cape Verdean president Neves exchange congratulations on 50th anniversary of ties

BEIJING – President Xi Jinping and his Cape Verdean counterpart José Maria Neves have exchanged congratulations on the 50th anniversary of diplomatic ties between the two countries.

In a message last Saturday, Xi noted that China and Cape Verde share a traditional friendship that has stood the test of time and continues to flourish.

Over the past five decades, the two sides have understood and supported each other on issues concerning their respective core interests and major concerns, and cooperation in development and

livelihood sectors has yielded positive results, he said.

China-Cape Verde relations, he said, set a fine example for mutual respect and friendly cooperation between large and small countries.

Xi said that he attaches great importance to the development of China-Cape Verde relations and stands ready to work with Neves to seize the opportunity of the 50th anniversary of diplomatic relations to carry forward the time-honored friendship, deepen practical cooperation, and enhance multilateral coordination, to continuously enrich the strategic partnership between

the two countries and bring greater benefits to the two peoples.

For his part, Neves said Cape Verde highly appreciates its friendly cooperation with China over the past half-century and thanked China for its valuable contributions to the sustainable development of the nation.

Cape Verde is ready to work with China to take the 50th anniversary of diplomatic relations as an opportunity to consolidate political mutual trust and deepen mutual beneficial cooperation so as to deliver more benefits to the two peoples, added Neves. – *Xinhua, MPD*

Mexico captures top ally of drug kingpin ‘El Mencho’



This handout picture released by the Mexican Secretariat of National Defence shows Audias Flores Silva (fourth from left), one of the closest allies of Nemesio “El Mencho” Oseguera, leader of the CJNG cartel, posing next to Mexican Navy soldiers in the Western state of Nayarit, Mexico, on Monday. The suspect’s identity has been masked with a black bar by the Mexican authorities for privacy reasons. – AFP

MEXICO CITY – Mexican authorities announced on Monday the capture of two top criminals, one of them a close ally of the slain founder of the Jalisco New Generation Cartel (CJNG) and his potential successor.

Nemesio “El Mencho” Oseguera died in February after being wounded in a shootout with Mexican soldiers in the western state of Jalisco, unleashing a wave of highway blockades and shootouts with security forces that left over 70 people dead.

Audias Flores Silva was El Mencho’s “right-hand man” until the latter’s death, security analyst David Saucedo told AFP.

He had been charged with forging an alliance between the CJNG and the “Chapitos,” the faction of the Sinaloa cartel led by the family of Joaquín “El Chapo”

Guzmán, Saucedo added, citing US and Mexican intelligence sources.

The think tank Insight Crime described Flores Silva, nicknamed “El Jardinero” (“The Gardener”), as one of El Mencho’s possible successors.

Special forces of the Mexican navy captured Flores Silva in the western state of Nayarit, Security Secretary Omar García Harfuch said on X.

The captured man is “sought by US authorities with the goal of extradition,” Harfuch added.

Earlier, the government of northeastern Tamaulipas state reported the arrest of Alexander “N,” member of a criminal gang that acts near the US-Mexico border.

His capture provoked at least eight highway blockades by criminal groups on the highways surrounding the border city of Reynosa.

The spokesperson of Tamaulipas security forces said the authorities reestablished control, and that no one was wounded during the attacks.

Mexican news outlets identified the criminal as Alexander Benavides Flores, or “R9,” the head of Los Metros.

Los Metros are one of the factions of the Gulf Cartel, weakened over the course of the last decade following the capture of their leaders.

The city of Reynosa has 690,000 inhabitants and sits across the river from McAllen, Texas.

The administration of US President Donald Trump has pressured his Mexican counterpart Claudia Sheinbaum to crack down on organised crime gangs.

Sheinbaum has repeatedly rejected US offers of drone strikes or ground troops for fighting Mexican cartels. – AFP

China’s zero-tariff policy opens new export opportunities for Guinea-Bissau

BISSAU – The Chinese Embassy in Guinea-Bissau held this week a seminar on China’s zero-tariff policy for 53 African countries with diplomatic relations, attracting more than 70 local and Chinese enterprises.

The event on Monday briefed participants on the details of the policy and included business matchmaking exchanges between companies from the two sides.

Lassana Fati, director general of foreign trade of Guinea-Bissau, said in a speech on behalf of Minister of Trade and Industry Jaimentino Cò that China’s zero-tariff policy brings “important economic and trade opportunities to African countries” and represents a “concrete move” by China to support Africa in improving people’s livelihoods, reducing poverty, and advancing development and revitalization.

Fati said agriculture is a pillar of Guinea-Bissau’s economy, but limited market access and insufficient export channels have long constrained the sector’s development.

He described China’s zero-tariff policy as “substantial economic support” and a form of practical cooperation based on sincerity, mutual trust, and mutual benefit.

Chinese Ambassador to Guinea-Bissau Yang Renhuo said China had already taken the lead in granting zero-tariff treatment to 33 least developed African countries, including Guinea-Bissau, which

commenced on December 1, 2024, and the expansion to 53 countries is not only a widening of policy coverage, but also a concrete action by China to support African integration and the development of the African Continental Free Trade Area.

The zero-tariff treatment granted by China to Guinea-Bissau will help facilitate exports of the country’s quality products, such as cashew nuts, fishery products, sesame and peanuts, to the Chinese market, and inject strong momentum into deepening bilateral economic and trade cooperation and advancing their strategic partnership, he said.

Saliu Ba, secretary general of the Chamber of Commerce, Industry, Agriculture and Services of Guinea-Bissau, told Xinhua that China’s zero-tariff policy is a “major boost” for Guinea-Bissau’s domestic products, especially those from the fishery and agricultural sectors.

Ba said local businesses are ready and hope to use the policy to bring more Guinea-Bissau products into the Chinese market.

During the event, the Association of Chinese Enterprises in Guinea-Bissau and the Chamber of Commerce, Industry, Agriculture and Services of Guinea-Bissau signed a joint initiative, pledging to help enterprises make good use of the benefits of the zero-tariff policy and deepen bilateral economic and trade cooperation. – *Xinhua*

Namibia, Angola telcos strengthen regional, int’l digital connectivity

WINDHOEK – The national telecommunications operators of Namibia and Angola strengthened regional and international digital connectivity with the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding and Commercial Terms Agreement (CTA) last week.

According to Namibia’s national telecommunications operator Telecom Namibia, the agreement will enable Angola Telecom to access international capacity via Telecom Namibia’s Equiano Subsea Cable landing in Swakopmund while laying the groundwork for deeper collaboration linked to the Southern Africa Regional Submarine Cable System (SARSSy), a new undersea internet cable being developed by Angola Telecom.

The signing held in the coastal town of Swakopmund was witnessed by government officials, which included Namibia’s Minister of Information and Communication Technology Emma Theofelus and Angola’s Minister of Telecommunications,

Information Technologies and Social Communication Mário Augusto da Silva Oliveira.

“Through this partnership, Namibia is deliberately leveraging its strategic investment in international digital infrastructure, most notably the Equiano Subsea Cable System, to expand access beyond our borders,” Theofelus said.

The decision to connect SARSSy to Equiano via Swakopmund reflects practical cooperation rooted in sound economics and global best practice, she added.

Her counterpart Oliveira noted that the initiative marks a significant step forward in strengthening bilateral cooperation between Angola and Namibia, while describing the project as “a project of vision and of the future, one that connects infrastructure, integrates markets, and brings people closer together.”

Equiano connects Africa directly to Europe via Portugal while linking critical African digital hubs, including South Africa. – *Xinhua*

Brazil says 16 countries conduct anti-child sex abuse operation

SÃO PAULO – Brazil’s federal police announced a major operation targeting sexual abuse of minors yesterday, with 16 mostly Latin American nations executing related warrants.

Some 750 police personnel were participating in the operation just in Brazil, a statement said, to

“simultaneously execute 159 search and seizure warrants” nationwide, as well “16 pre-trial detention orders.”

The detention orders focus on “crimes of sexual abuse against children and adolescents,” it said, using the currently preferred term over the historically used “child pornography.”

The Brazilian police said that warrants were also being conducted yesterday in 15 other countries: Argentina, Colombia, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Spain, France, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Puerto Rico, Dominican Republic, and Uruguay. – AFP

Champions League semi-final like a first date: Atletico's Koke

MADRID – Atletico Madrid captain Koke admitted his nerves are jangling ahead of today's Champions League semi-final clash with Arsenal.

The veteran midfielder will lead out the Rojiblancos for the first leg battle against Mikel Arteta's Premier League leaders, with Atletico back in the final four of the competition for the first time since 2017.

"When the date draws near, your stomach is in knots, like when you have a first date with the girl you like," Koke told reporters yesterday.

"Once you start warming up, it all goes away. You play with the

excitement of playing a semi-final."

Koke, 34, played in both of Atletico's Champions League final defeats by rivals Real Madrid in 2014 and 2016, with his club desperate to win the trophy for the first time in their history.

Despite his age, Koke said he was not thinking about this potentially being his last chance at winning the trophy.

"I don't feel it like that - I'm enjoying this season a huge amount, you don't get to the Champions League semis every year," explained Koke.

"I've had the luck that this is the fourth semi-final I'll be able to play... I don't know if I'll play

another one, but I know that I will enjoy it like I did the others."

Koke will be without midfielder partner Pablo Barrios after a thigh injury ruled him out for the next month.

"It's not just me who will miss him, but the whole team, he's a hugely important player for us," said the Spain international.

Atletico coach Diego Simeone, celebrating his 56th birthday yesterday, said he had no special wishes in mind.

"I just have pure gratitude, I have the chance to be with my (family)... I'm not in a position to ask for absolutely anything, just to

be thankful and enjoy what comes to me in this life," said Simeone.

The coach, who has led Atletico for over 14 years, does not believe his team are owed anything despite their misfortune in the Champions League, including last year's elimination by Real Madrid after Julian Alvarez's penalty was controversially disallowed for a supposed double touch.

"I don't think anyone owes us anything, things are deserved and achieved, and for that you have to work and search for them, and obviously you need luck on your side too," added the coach.

"It's extraordinary that Atletico

are in the Champions League semis again, nine years later, and for the fourth time in 14 years," he continued.

"It's wonderful, incredible, and I think that faith, that hope, that our fans give to us is contagious and will do us well.

"We have a really tough game against a very good team, with a set-piece strategy... that they've worked on a lot."

The Champions League represents Atletico's last hope of silverware this season after their Copa del Rey final defeat earlier in April.

The game will be played at 3 a.m. tomorrow morning Macau time.

—AFP/MPD

NY unveils free fan zones for World Cup viewing

NEW YORK – World Cup fans in New York will be able to see games in free fan zones, organisers and city officials announced yesterday amid worries about the sky-high cost of watching this premier sporting event.

New York is among the host cities for the World Cup, which is being shared by the United States, Mexico and Canada starting June 11.

Fans expressed outrage last week when it was announced that round-trip train tickets to MetLife Stadium, which will host eight games including the tournament final, will cost US\$150, compared to US\$12.90 normally.

Mayor Zohran Mamdani says he is trying to make the World Cup more affordable for New Yorkers.

So each of the city's five boroughs will have a free-of-charge fan zone for people to watch games live, enjoy local food offerings and cultural events.

"These events were not initially

set to be free, but the world's game should belong to the world," the mayor said at a news conference.

"So we made the decision together for fans to be able to watch together without having to spend a dollar," Mamdani added.

The local transport company New Jersey Transit has defended the short US\$150 rides to MetLife Stadium in New Jersey by saying it will cost nearly US\$50 million to run trains to that 78,000-seat venue.

Asked about this on Monday, Mamdani complained that city authorities are being forced to foot transportation costs even as the tournament is forecast to bring in US\$11 billion in revenue for FIFA.

This is the amount that the football's world governing body FIFA projects to take in revenue from this tournament.

New Jersey's recently sworn-in Governor Mikie Sherrill had pushed for FIFA to assume the cost of getting fans to MetLife Stadium.

But FIFA has balked and insists

any money it takes in goes to financing the national federations that comprise it and other tournaments.

The deal between FIFA and the previous New Jersey leadership also eliminated parking at the stadium, requiring the rail service to transport four times as many fans as it usually does, Sherrill has said.

FIFA, which is already facing severe criticism over the sky-high cost of many match tickets called New Jersey's move "unprecedented."

Each of the five New York boroughs will have a fan zone for watching live games.

In Manhattan it will be at iconic Rockefeller Center, known for its Christmas tree and skating rink during the winter holidays.

In most US cities hosting World Cup games the fan zones will be free of charge, except in Los Angeles.

New York and New Jersey say they are expecting a million visitors for the World Cup and more than US\$3 billion in revenue. —AFP

Football shorts

Brazil's Militao set to miss World Cup after hamstring surgery

MADRID – Real Madrid's Brazilian defender Eder Militao is set to miss the World Cup after undergoing surgery on a hamstring injury yesterday.

"Our player Eder Militao underwent successful surgery today [yesterday] for a rupture of the proximal tendon of the biceps femoris in his left leg," Real Madrid said in a statement, without specifying how long the defender will be sidelined.

Operated on at a clinic in Finland under the supervision of the club's medical staff, the 28-year-old is expected to miss at least five months, according to the Spanish and Brazilian press.

Militao is therefore expected to be unavailable to play for record five-time World Cup winners Brazil this summer in the United States, Canada and Mexico.

The Real Madrid defender sustained the injury last week during a La Liga win over Alaves.

Militao has had terrible luck with injuries over the past few years since joining Madrid from Porto in 2019, including two lengthy absences for cruciate ligament ruptures. —AFP

Modric's AC Milan season over after 'successful' cheekbone surgery: source

MILAN – Luka Modric will not play again for AC Milan this season after undergoing surgery on a cheekbone fracture suffered in his team's goalless draw with Juventus, a source with knowledge of the matter told AFP on Monday.

Croatia captain Modric is expected to be out of action for between six to eight weeks but should be free to play in the upcoming World Cup, potentially with a face mask, the source said.

The 40-year-old will, however, have to sit out Milan's final four games of the Serie A season after clashing heads with Juve midfielder Manuel Locatelli at the San Siro on Sunday.

Modric subsequently left the field with an ice pack to his face, with Milan revealing earlier on Monday that he had fractured his left cheekbone and would need to go under the knife.

"Surgery was needed on a complex, multi-fragment fracture of the left cheekbone. The operation... was perfectly successful," said Milan in a short statement.

Milan did not say for how long Modric would be out of action, but the latest club statement added that Milan "hoped for a quick recovery in view of the World Cup" for Modric, hinting that his club season was over.

Last summer, Modric signed a one-year contract with the seven-time European champions, with an option to extend the deal through to the end of next season.

Milan are on course to return to the Champions League, with Massimiliano Allegri's team third in Italy's top flight, six points ahead of fifth- and sixth-placed Como and Roma ahead of Sunday's trip to Sassuolo. —AFP



Manchester City's English defender Stones holds the Premier League trophy during the presentation ceremony following the English Premier League match against West Ham United at the Etihad Stadium in Manchester, north west England, on May 19, 2024.

John Stones will leave Manchester City at the end of the season after 10 trophy-filled years at the Etihad, the Premier League club announced yesterday. Stones said he had lived "all my dreams out" as he announced yesterday, he would be leaving Manchester City at the end of the season after 10 trophy-laden years at the Etihad.

The defender, 31, joined City from Everton in 2016, becoming manager Pep Guardiola's second signing, and has made 293 appearances to date, scoring 19 goals.

The England international has won six Premier League titles and the Champions League among multiple trophies and there may be more silverware to come this season, with City chasing a domestic treble. —AFP

Brighton unveil plan for separate women's football stadium

LONDON – Brighton unveiled their proposals yesterday for what they say will be Europe's first purpose-built women's football stadium.

The south coast club, whose men's team compete in England's elite Premier League, believe the new ground will "provide a permanent home and identity for the women's team".

The stadium is set to be located at Bennett's Field, a site adjacent to the Amex Stadium - the home of Brighton's men's team.

It will have a minimum capacity of 10,000 and be connected to the Amex via a bridge walkway.

Subject to planning approval, Brighton, currently sixth in England's top-flight 12-team Women's Super League, hope to open the stadium for the start of the 2030/31 season.

"The prospect of a bespoke stadium, built exclusively for women's players, staff and supporters, is incredibly exciting," said Zoe Johnson, the club's managing director of

women's and girls' football.

"It is a project that is the first of its kind in the UK and Europe, and one of only three in the world, and will capture the imagination of stakeholders across the women's game, not just here, but globally."

Brighton say changing rooms, pitch standards and recovery spaces will "support elite female players", while the matchday experience will be "designed to be especially welcoming for families and first-time attendees".

There will also be breastfeeding rooms, baby changing areas and 'buggy parks' for prams.

Johnson added the stadium will help Brighton "push forward our ambitions to compete consistently both domestically in the Women's Super League (WSL), and also in European club competition" while building a "passionate fanbase".

Brighton have occasionally played WSL matches at the Amex but the majority of their home fixtures take place at Crawley Town's Broadfield Stadium, about 32 kilometres away. —AFP

China shines at Asian Beach Games as Zhao sets world record, sailors win 5 golds

SANYA – China enjoyed a standout day at the 6th Asian Beach Games yesterday, highlighted by 16-year-old Zhao Yicheng's world record in men's speed climbing, a podium sweep in the women's event, and five gold medals in sailing.

Zhao showed strong form in the preliminaries, equaling the Asian record with 4.73 seconds before breaking the world record with 4.58 seconds on his second run, surpassing the previous mark of 4.64 set by American Samuel Watson.

Indonesia's Antasafi Robby Al Hilmi false-started in the final, handing Zhao the gold without needing to climb, while Kazakhstan's Rishat Khaibullin took bronze.

"I made extensive preparations for this competition and stayed very focused tonight," Zhao said. "I'm deeply grateful to my team and my coach."

China swept the women's podium, with Zhou Yafei taking

gold, Deng Lijuan silver and Zhang Shaoqin bronze. Zhou, who clocked 6.34 seconds in the preliminaries, defeated Deng in the final with a time of 6.35 seconds.

2024 Olympic silver medalist Wu Peng of China was eliminated in the round of 16 after making a mistake.

China also dominated sailing as the competition concluded, finishing with five gold, two silver and two bronze medals. Cheng Wenyu won the girls' Optimist title, Yan Guoguo took gold in the girls' ILCA4, Ma Zilin triumphed in the women's Formula Kite, Wang Yiguo won the boys' foil windsurfing, and Chen Yimin secured gold in the girls' foil windsurfing.

Elsewhere, Thailand's Rachata Sadtrakulwattana won the boys' Optimist, Singapore's Ian Goh claimed the boys' ILCA4, and Thailand's Joseph Jonathan Weston took gold in the men's Formula Kite.

In water polo, China beat defending champion Kazakhstan 3-0, while Iran defeated Thailand by

the same scoreline. China leads the standings with 12 points, followed by Iran with 11, with both sides unbeaten ahead of today's gold medal match.

Thailand will face Japan in the women's beach volleyball final, while Iran and Qatar advanced to the men's final after defeating Oman and Thailand respectively.

In beach handball, Iran beat Thailand 2-1 in the semifinals, while Qatar defeated Bahrain 2-0 to reach the final.

"It is incredibly hard to predict anything in a beach handball match. No team is a guaranteed winner before the match ends," said Ali Heidarian of Iran. "This was our toughest test in this tournament, but we managed to get through it successfully."

China currently tops the medal table with 21 gold, 14 silver and eight bronze medals, followed by Thailand and the Philippines.

– Xinhua

Photos on page 16

Felix, 40, says she plans comeback for LA Olympics

Athletics

LOS ANGELES – Allyson Felix, the most decorated woman in Olympic athletics history with 11 medals, says she is planning a comeback at age 40 with her eyes on the 2028 Los Angeles Olympics.

Felix told *Time* magazine in a story published online on Monday that she is preparing for what she hopes will be a sixth Olympics in her hometown when she will be 42.

"This is a once-in-a-lifetime homecoming," Felix said of her Olympic dream. "And it is the only thing powerful enough to pull me back."

Felix is the most decorated American Olympian in athletics.

She captured her only solo gold in the 200 metres in London in 2012, added gold in the 4x400 relay in 2008 in Beijing, 2012 in London, 2016 in Rio de Janeiro and 2021 in Tokyo and won 4x100 titles in 2012 and 2016.

She took 200m silver in 2004

and 2008, 400 silver in 2016 and 400 bronze at Tokyo.

Felix has championed women returning to competition after having children. She gave birth to a daughter in 2018 and a son in 2024.

Felix attended the 2024 Paris Olympics as a spectator and found she yearned for her competitive days.

"It was definitely mixed emotions," Felix told the magazine. "There were moments where I was like, 'Oh, this is so great. It's so exciting to be in the stands and on the other side.'"

"And then there were moments where I was, 'You know, I miss this feeling.'"

Felix also won a record 20 medals at the World Championships, the most for any woman or man, including 14 titles.

She won the 200 crown in 2005, 2007 and 2009 and the 400 in 2015 as well as three 4x100 relay titles, a 4x400 mixed relay crown in 2019 and six women's

4x400 relay golds, including at what was her farewell meet, the 2022 worlds in Eugene, Oregon.

Felix, a member of the athletes commission for the 2028 LA Olympic organising committee, said she is realistic about her quest.

"I know, at 40, I am not at my peak. I have no illusions about that," Felix said. "I'm very clear in what it is and what I want to see. And so I hope it's seen that way."

Getting support from a home crowd is part of her goal.

"When I was competing, you just heard this roar for host-country athletes at the Olympics," Felix said. "I would love to experience that."

Simply making the attempt to compete at the LA Games is a victory of its own for Felix.

"I would probably be upset at myself if I just didn't give it a try," Felix said. "However it turns out, I'll still be there with my kids, hanging out and cheering everybody on." – AFP

Frenchman Godon wins Romandie prologue, Pogacar 5th

Cycling

VILLARS-SUR-GLÂNE, SWITZERLAND – French champion Dorian Godon took a surprise victory in the Tour de Romandie opening prologue yesterday as world champion Tadej Pogacar could finish only fifth.

Godon's three previous individual victories this year had all come in sprint finishes but he covered the 3.2km course around Villars-sur-Glâne in 3min 35sec to finish six seconds clear of Portugal's Ivo Oliveira and Swede Jakob Soderqvist in second and third respectively.

Pogacar, who two days ago won the 260km-long Liege-Bastogne-

Liege one-day race for the fourth time, was a further second back in fifth, just behind Swiss champion Mauro Schmid.

It is four-time Tour de France winner Pogacar's first stage race of the year having previously taken part in just five one-day races - winning four of them.

He is the overwhelming favourite to win the Romandie tour in Switzerland this week in what is his first participation at the event.

It is one of the few major week-long stage races that he is yet to win in his career, along with June's Tour de Suisse, which he will take part in for the first time before bidding for a record-equalling fifth

Tour de France in July.

Pogacar gained time on his main rivals for the overall victory in Romandie as Slovenian compatriot Primož Roglic, a two-time former winner, was eighth, eight seconds off Godon.

Roglic's Red Bull-Bora Hansgrohe team-mate Florian Lipowitz was 10th, another two seconds further back, with Frenchman Lenny Martinez 25th at 17sec.

Today's first full stage is a 171km ride around Martigny, where the tough 8.9km-long Ovronnaz climb with an average gradient of 9.8 percent in the final 40km will provide Pogacar a first chance to distance his rivals. – AFP

2026海南·三亚 第六届亚洲沙滩运动会 SANYA HAINAN 2026 6th Asian Beach Games		MEDAL TABLE			
Rank	NOC				Total
1	China	21	14	8	43
2	Thailand	9	8	5	22
3	Philippines	3	3	2	8
4	Viet Nam	2	3	4	9
5	United Arab Emirates	2	2	2	6
6	Islamic Republic of Iran	2	0	0	2
7	Republic of Korea	1	3	5	9
8	Kazakhstan	1	1	4	6
9	Singapore	1	1	1	3
10	India	1	1	0	2
11	Uzbekistan	1	0	0	1
12	Sri Lanka	0	2	4	6
13	Hong Kong, China	0	2	1	3
14	Democratic People's Republic of Korea	0	2	0	2
15	Chinese Taipei	0	1	4	5

Iran's Hossein Vafaei gestures before his World Snooker Championship Round One match at The Crucible in Sheffield, northern England last Wednesday. Iran's snooker trailblazer Vafaei would be capable of winning any trophy if he had more self-belief, said world number one Judd Trump, the man he beat in the second round of the world championship. Vafaei, 31, produced the shock of the tournament late on Monday by winning the last two frames to beat Trump 13-12 and secure a place in the quarter-finals where he will play China's Wu Yize. The World Snooker Championship 2025 will take place from April 19 to May 5, 2025. – AFP



Sunningdale to stage 2028 Women's British Open

Golf

LONDON – The 2028 Women's British Open will be held at Sunningdale, near London, tournament organisers the R&A announced yesterday.

The men's British Open is played on links, or coastal, courses.

But Sunningdale, 40 kilometres southwest of London, is an inland course.

"We know Sunningdale will

provide an outstanding venue in two years' time," said R&A chief executive Mark Darbon.

"It will be the fifth time the championship has been held there and the first since 2008."

Royal St George's in Kent is set to host the 2027 Women's British Open.

The R&A has increased the official prize fund for this year's tournament, being held at Royal Lytham & St Annes, to US\$10 million (£7.4 million). – AFP

Bullying claims ‘nonsense’, Rebel Wilson tells Sydney court

SYDNEY – Australian film star Rebel Wilson dismissed as “nonsense” claims she had bullied women on the set of her directorial debut film “The Deb”, as she gave evidence in a Sydney court yesterday.

Wilson – star of Hollywood hits including “Bridesmaids” and “Pitch Perfect” – is accused of defamation by actress Charlotte MacInnes.

The claims centre around Instagram posts and comments by Wilson suggesting MacInnes changed an account of having been victim of sexual harassment in order to advance her career.

The federal court case focuses on an incident where MacInnes and Amanda Ghost, a producer of “The Deb”, shared a bath in an apartment after swimming at Bondi Beach.

“It felt like she was making a sexual harassment complaint to me,” Wilson told the court yesterday according to Australian national broadcaster ABC, referring to communication she had with MacInnes.

An affidavit from Ghost tendered in court yesterday described how she and MacInnes had swum at the beach in the early evening of September 2023, returning to her apartment feeling cold.

The pair got into a hot bath while wearing swimming costumes to warm up, it said.

“It was an oversized bath, with plenty of room for two people to sit without touching (and we didn’t touch),” Ghost said in the statement tendered to court.

Two days later, Wilson phoned Ghost to say MacInnes had felt uncomfortable about the bath.

MacInnes has denied telling Wilson that and has told the court Wilson had shamed her to 11 million followers on Instagram.

Wilson yesterday denied she mistreated women while making “The Deb”, saying this was “nonsense”.

She told the court she had made truthful statements about MacInnes and Ghost. – AFP

Taylor Swift files to trademark her voice amid AI clone boom

WASHINGTON, DC – Taylor Swift has filed applications with the US intellectual property office to trademark her voice, a move similar to one made by actor Matthew McConaughey, as AI-generated content surges.

The US singer submitted two sound recordings to the United States Patent and Trademark Office (USPTO). Each begins with “Hey, it’s Taylor” and announces the release of her latest album, “The Life of a Showgirl,” which was released in early October.

Another document submitted to the USPTO on Friday was a photo of the artist on stage. The submissions were first spotted by intellectual property attorney Josh Gerben.

The filings give no further details about the submission.

Contacted by AFP, Taylor Swift’s publicist did not immediately respond.

McConaughey has in recent years pursued an application with the USPTO, framed as protection against the unauthorised use of his voice by AI models.

They include audio of him saying “Alright, alright, alright!” – his memorable line from the 1993 film “Dazed and Confused”



US singer Taylor Swift performs on stage during “The Eras Tour” at the Hard Rock stadium in Miami Gardens, Florida, October 18, 2024. – AFP

– along with audio of him saying “Just keep livin’, right?” followed by additional short phrases.

Advances in AI models now make it possible to synthesize a voice in seconds from a short clip, whereas just a few years ago the process required lengthy recordings and several days.

Many artists are increasingly concerned about the unchecked use of their image and voice by AI platforms.

Several US states have passed laws prohibiting such use, though

many apply primarily to malicious or commercial exploitation.

Only a few – notably the ELVIS Act passed by Tennessee’s state legislature in 2024 – offer broader protections.

Few performers have turned to the courts to assert their rights.

The most notable example is Scarlett Johansson, who sued the app Lisa AI in 2023 for creating, without her consent, an AI avatar in her likeness for use in an advertisement. – AFP



US actor Matt Damon and his wife Luciana Barroso attend the nonprofit Bring Change to Mind’s Revels and Revelations Celebration at the Fort Mason Center for Arts and Culture in San Francisco, California, on Monday. The Revels and Revelations Celebration is the premier annual gala for Bring Change to Mind (BC2M), a nonprofit co-founded by US actress Glenn Close, 79, to end the stigma and discrimination surrounding mental illness. – AFP

Man goes on trial in Austria over Taylor Swift concert attack plan

VIENNA – A 21-year-old man went on trial in Austria yesterday over a plot to attack a Taylor Swift concert, which led to shows by the US megastar in the Alpine nation to be scrapped in 2024.

Three dates in Swift’s record-breaking “Eras” tour were cancelled in the summer of 2024 after authorities warned of the plot.

Beran A., who was led into the courtroom by masked police personnel, has been in detention since his arrest in August 2024 and is facing terror offences and other charges.

The Austrian is accused of having been a member of a terror organisation from May 2023 “by planning and preparing a terrorist attack on the concert of singer Taylor Swift”, prosecutors have said.

By sharing Islamic State (IS) propaganda through various

messaging services and other offences, he participated and “openly aligned himself” with IS, they added.

Planning the attack on the concert, he allegedly tried to get weapons and worked on making a shrapnel bomb “specific to IS attacks” and received instructions from other IS members on handling explosives, according to prosecutors.

Attack plans abroad

He is also alleged to have been involved in other attack plans abroad, including in Dubai and Istanbul though those attacks never materialised.

Another 21-year-old, Arda K., is standing trial together with Beran A., according to Austrian news agency APA.

The duo, together with a third man, Hasan E. imprisoned

in Saudi Arabia, are accused of forming a “highly dangerous IS terror cell” planning to carry out several attacks in the name of IS, prosecutors say.

The trial of the two defendants has been scheduled to last four days.

If found guilty, Beran A. faces up to 20 years in prison.

Last year, a Berlin court convicted a Syrian teenager of contributing to the plot to attack the Swift concert.

The 16-year-old was given an 18-month suspended sentence.

The plot was thwarted with the help of US intelligence.

Swift later wrote on social media that “the reason for the cancellations filled me with a new sense of fear, and a tremendous amount of guilt because so many had planned on coming to those shows”. – AFP



Two defendants in handcuffs are escorted to the courtroom by warrant officers as a trial starts at court in Wiener Neustadt, Austria, yesterday, over a plot to attack a Taylor Swift concert, originally scheduled for August 2024 in Vienna. – AFP

World Weather			
CHINA	ASIA-PACIFIC	WORLD	LUSOPHONE
Beijing 11°C~25°C	Manila 24°C~35°C	New York 10°C~15°C	Lisbon 14°C~20°C
Shanghai 8°C~14°C	Bangkok 27°C~37°C	London 9°C~18°C	Rio de Janeiro 22°C~30°C
Hong Kong 19°C~27°C	Tokyo 13°C~20°C	Frankfurt 5°C~20°C	Luanda 23°C~29°C
Taipei 19°C~30°C	Singapore 25°C~33°C	Vancouver 9°C~18°C	Maputo 19°C~25°C
Guangzhou 16°C~24°C	Kuala Lumpur 25°C~34°C	Paris 10°C~24°C	Dili 23°C~32°C
Nanjing 6°C~17°C	Jakarta 24°C~33°C	Moscow -1°C~5°C	São Tomé 26°C~31°C
Guilin 11°C~21°C	Seoul 9°C~22°C	Las Vegas 15°C~28°C	Praia 18°C~26°C
Xi'an 11°C~25°C	Sydney 14°C~23°C	Monte Carlo 15°C~21°C	Bissau 20°C~37°C



Amir Denguir (centre) of Qatar competes during the beach handball men's semifinal against Bahrain at the 6th Asian Beach Games in Sanya, Hainan Province, yesterday. – Xinhua

Lu Da (top) of China competes with Callum Johnston Roberts of the Philippines during their beach wrestling men's +90kg round group D match at the 6th Asian Beach Games in Sanya, Hainan Province, yesterday. – Xinhua



Zhao Yicheng of China competes during the men's individual qualification of sport climbing (speed) at the 6th Asian Beach Games in Sanya, Hainan Province, yesterday. Zhao set a new world record of 4.58 seconds in the men's speed preliminaries the previous mark of 4.64 seconds was held by American Samuel Watson, set at a World Cup event in Bali in 2025. – Xinhua

Rachata Sadtrakulwattana of Thailand reacts after the Optimist Boys race of sailing at the 6th Asian Beach Games in Sanya, Hainan Province yesterday. – Xinhua



Saranya Saetang (bottom) of Thailand competes during the beach handball women's semifinal against China at the 6th Asian Beach Games in Sanya, Hainan Province, yesterday. – Xinhua

Li Wenji (bottom) of China competes with Bolortungalag Zorigt of Mongolia during their beach wrestling women's +70kg round group B match at the 6th Asian Beach Games in Sanya, Hainan Province, yesterday. – Xinhua