

Airport operator's pre-tax profit dips 40 pct to 229 million patacas in 2025

Tony Wong

Airport operator CAM recorded a pre-tax profit of 229 million patacas in 2025, according to a statement published in the Official Gazette (BO) yesterday.

Last year's pre-tax profit represented a 40.2 percent decrease from the 383 million patacas recorded in 2024.

The statement noted that the airport recorded 7.52 million passengers and 58,196 flight movements in 2025, down 1.6 percent and 2.9 percent respectively from 2024.

The statement also noted that the airport reached cargo volume of 109,292 tonnes in 2025, an increase of 1.1 percent from 2024.

The statement said that the company's total annual revenue amounted to 1.35 billion patacas in 2025, a decrease of 8.7 percent from the 1.478 billion patacas recorded in 2024.



This photo taken from Big Taipa Hill earlier this month shows the local airport with its reclamation and expansion project underway. – Photo: Tony Wong

Airport's performance in 2024

According to a statement published by the operator, Macau International Airport Company Limited, in the Official Gazette in May last year, the number of the airport's passengers and flight movements in 2024 grew by 48.3 percent and 41.1 percent respectively from 2023. The airport's cargo volume in 2024 surged by 69.4 percent from 2023.

The company's total annual revenue in 2024 registered a 24.0 percent increase from 2023, according to last year's statement.

The local airport in Taipa officially opened on December 8, 1995, when Macau was still

under temporary Portuguese administration.

The airport's ongoing expansion project got off the ground in November 2024. The expansion project, with land reclamation covering 129 hectares (1.29 square kilometres), is scheduled to be completed in 2030, raising the airport's total area to 325 hectares.

The expansion project is reclaiming land in the coastal waters between the airport's runway and its two current taxiways to expand its apron, creating new space for setting up more aircraft stands and various other new ancillary facilities. The reclamation project

will include the construction of two new taxiways, which are expected to be completed in 2028, after which the two current taxiways will be demolished.

Yesterday's CAM statement also underlined that the airport's ongoing reclamation and expansion project "is proceeding steadily and on schedule".

The statement also noted that the airport will start implementing a measure in the fourth quarter of this year according to which its runway will be closed overnight daily to facilitate the expansion project.

The airport operator said early this year that the overnight runway closure will be implemented for three years between October 2026 and October 2029, during which flight operations will be suspended daily between 12 a.m. and 8 a.m.

Yesterday's CAM statement also reaffirmed that the ongoing construction of Macau International Airport's upstream cargo terminal in Hengqin is expected to be completed at the end of this year, after which the facility can come into operation in the first half of next year. ■

Putin, Trump held a phone call, discussed Mideast: Kremlin aide



MOSCOW – Russian President Vladimir Putin spoke by phone with US counterpart Donald Trump, Putin's diplomatic advisor Yuri Ushakov told reporters yesterday, adding that the two leaders focused primarily on the Middle East war.

"The presidents paid particular attention to the situation regarding Iran and in the Persian Gulf," Ushakov said.

"Vladimir Putin considers Donald Trump's decision to extend the ceasefire with Iran to be the right one, as this should give negotiations a chance and, overall,

help to stabilise the situation."

Meanwhile, Putin yesterday offered a ceasefire in the fighting in Ukraine on May 9, when Russia celebrates the Soviet Union's WWII victory over Nazi Germany, the Kremlin said.

In his phone call with US counterpart Donald Trump, Putin said he was ready "to declare a ceasefire for the duration of Victory Day celebrations", Ushakov told reporters.

"Trump actively supported this initiative, noting that the holiday marks our shared victory."

– AFP

Divided US Fed holds interest rates steady for 3rd straight meeting

WASHINGTON, DC – A divided US Federal Reserve kept interest rates unchanged for a third straight meeting yesterday on high uncertainty from the Middle East war, in what was likely its last gathering helmed by Jerome Powell.

"Inflation is elevated, in part reflecting the recent increase in global energy prices," the US central bank said.

Its decision keeps rates at a range between 3.50 percent and 3.75 percent.

But four out of 12 voting officials opposed the decision, including Stephen Miran, who

sought a quarter-point cut.

Three others – Beth Hammack, Neel Kashkari and Lorie Logan – backed the pause but not the Fed statement signalling an inclination towards lower interest rates.

This was the most number of dissenting votes since 1992, and the divergence among officials will be closely watched.

The Fed has been on a path of rate cuts since late last year.

But with the US-Israel war on Iran causing a surge in energy costs and snarling supply chains, analysts are monitoring if inflation could prompt policymakers to instead

consider the need for a rate hike.

Powell, who has been a frequent target of President Donald Trump, was set to hold a press conference after the Fed's decision.

Besides his assessment of economic fallout from the war, all eyes will be on his future plans.

Powell's tenure as Fed chairman ends May 15, and a Senate panel has voted to advance the nomination of Trump's choice for new Fed chairman, Kevin Warsh.

But Powell could choose to stay on as a Fed governor, even after his chairman term ends.

– AFP

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The Macau Post Daily

China, Australia should jointly uphold multilateralism: Wang Yi

Foreign Minister Wang Yi said yesterday that China and Australia should jointly stand on the right side of history and on the side of multilateralism and jointly uphold the global free trade system.

– Story on p. 7

Two Jewish men stabbed in 'terrorist' attack in London

Two Jewish men were stabbed yesterday in north London, an attack police declared a "terrorist incident" and which follows a series of arson attacks targeting Jewish sites.

– Story on p. 10

Indian billionaire's son offers home for Escobar's hippos

An Indian billionaire's son offered on Tuesday to take hippos descended from those introduced to Colombia by drug kingpin Pablo Escobar, rather than have the animals killed.

– Story on p. 11

Mainland woman fined for trying to take baby without ID through Gongbei checkpoint

Armando Neves

Zhuhai's Gongbei border checkpoint announced in a statement yesterday that a woman from the Chinese mainland has been fined for attempting to bring a baby without ID from Zhuhai to Macau through the checkpoint on April 16.

According to the statement, on that day a mainland couple were attempting to exit the adjacent city through the manual inspection lane at the checkpoint with two children. They were urged by customs officers to change their travel plans because one of the children, a three-month-old infant, did not have an Exit-Entry Permit for Travelling to and from Hong Kong and Macao (EEP), rendering the baby ineligible for departure.

The statement did not disclose

the infant's gender.

Afterwards, the statement said, the woman attempted to bypass supervision by carrying the infant through the express lane immigration clearance channel. Once she entered the channel, she was apprehended by immigration officers.

She was fined 2,000 yuan (2,360 patacas) under Article 59 of the Exit and Entry Administration Law of the People's Republic of China (PRC), for assisting others in illegally exiting the mainland.

Gongbei checkpoint reminded the public that only border crossers aged seven or older and measuring at least 1.2 metres in height may use the express (e-channel) clearance lane. Only one person is permitted to enter the e-channel at a time. ■



This pixelated image of a screenshot from a video posted by Zhuhai's Gongbei checkpoint on its WeChat official account yesterday shows a family of four, the mother holding her undocumented baby, at the checkpoint on April 16.

Dear Customers,
You have 364 days to visit us. Please do not come to our restaurant on May 1. It is the only day of the year when we do not work. Come on any other day, if you have the courage.

Restaurante Fernando

Sands China launches 'Community Revitalisation Programme 2.0'



Macao Chamber of Commerce Vice President of Board of Directors João Ma Chi Tat (2nd from right), Economic and Technological Development Bureau (DSED) Director Yau Yun Wah (5th from right) and Sands China Executive Vice Chairman Wilfred Wong Ying-wai (6th from right) pose with officiating guests, representatives and entrepreneurs from the inaugural entrepreneurship recruitment programme at yesterday's press conference at The Londoner Macao. – Photo: Rui Pastorin

Rui Pastorin

Sands China launched its "Community Revitalisation Programme 2.0 for Rua das Estalagens" yesterday during a press conference at The Londoner Macao, opening recruitment for a new batch of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) to operate in the district, along with its inaugural "Shop Rebranding Programme" for the currently operating businesses.

The measure follows the company's Entrepreneurship Recruitment Programme launched in 2024, which drew 128 applications, from which seven enterprises were chosen to operate in the district. The second edition is again co-organised with the Macao Chamber of Commerce.

The Entrepreneurship Recruitment Programme 2.0 is open for application until June 30 for permanent residents aged at least 21 to apply as an individual, team or local SME. According to details from yesterday's press conference, applicants must commit to a self-invested initial operating capital of no less than 300,000 patacas, with selected applications to receive subsidies equivalent to one or two times the amount of the self-invested

capital, being capped at 1 million patacas per applicant.

The inaugural Shop Rebranding Programme, meanwhile, is geared towards enhancing competitiveness of the businesses currently operating in the area and encompasses brand image innovation, product packaging and shopfront beautification. Applicants need to commit to a minimum self-invested capital of 50,000 patacas, with those selected to receive one to three times the amount of the self-invested capital, capped at 500,000 per applicant, as noted in yesterday's press conference. Applicants must be permanent Macau residents aged 21 and over.

Economic and Technological Development Bureau (DSED) Director Yau Yun Wah highlighted in his speech yesterday that the 2024 Entrepreneurship Recruitment Programme for Rua das Estalagens drew the attention of local young entrepreneurs and supported as well as incubated a number of creative business plans, while also noting encouraging results.

Moreover, Sands China Executive Vice Chairman Wilfred Wong Ying-wai noted in his speech the growing

popularity of the businesses, noting: "As one of the driving forces behind the project, we are delighted to see the growing popularity of the distinctive businesses selected for Rua das Estalagens, with some even successfully transforming into popular stores online, bringing a refreshing new look to the entire street".

Wong added that he hoped that the project can "achieve a sustainable, innovative, and forward-looking business ecosystem".

Macao Chamber of Commerce Vice President of Board of Directors João Ma Chi Tat meanwhile highlighted in his speech the initial programme's positive reception, noting that it garnered over a hundred entrepreneurial proposals within a short period, with results that "not only demonstrated positive market response, but also brought tangible changes to Rua das Estalagens".

A discussion session featuring representatives from the first edition was also held at the press conference, while free events ranging from training courses to the Rua das Estalagens Open Day are set to be held between May and June. ■

2026 Macau Spending Rewards achieves 'significant' results in 2 weeks: DSED



Economic and Technological Development Bureau Director Yau Yun Wah delivers a speech at yesterday's press conference for the 'Community Revitalisation Programme 2.0 for Rua das Estalagens' at The Londoner Macao. – Photo: Rui Pastorin

Rui Pastorin

The 10-week "2026 Macau Spending Rewards" campaign, which was launched on April 10, achieved "significant" results in just the first two weeks since it started, according to Economic and Technological Development Bureau (DSED) Director Yau Yun Wah, who also noted that participation was "markedly higher than last year".

Yau made the remarks during a speech at The Londoner Macao during the launch of Sands China's Community Revitalisation Programme 2.0 for Rua das Estalagens.

Yau pointed out that in the first two weeks of the ongoing campaign: "the number of transactions that earned chances to draw coupons reached 1.7 million. On a daily

average basis, this was nearly double that of the same period of last year's campaign. Eight payment institutions issued a total of more than 3.18 million electronic coupons, while the amount from the electronic coupons redeemed in the first two weeks exceeded 61 million patacas".

Yau added that the overall redemption rate was "about 92 percent", which is an increase of about 6.6 percentage points compared with the same period last year's campaign.

"More than 18 million patacas in instant discounts for card-based consumption have also been redeemed. The first two weeks of the campaign have already effectively promoted community spending of approximately 290 million patacas", he added. ■

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Macau Weather

CLOUDY APART FROM SUNNY PERIODS.
FORCE 3 TO 4 NORTH TO NORTHEASTERLY WINDS, OCCASIONALLY FORCE 5 WITH GUSTS.
RELATIVE HUMIDITY WILL RANGE BETWEEN 60% AND 95%.



19°C~26°C

Source: SMG

CCAC probes case of attempted bribery of casino security guard

Armindo Neves

The Commission Against Corruption (CCAC) announced in a statement yesterday that it has investigated a case involving a woman for attempting to bribe a security guard. The suspect, who is currently barred from entering a local casino, allegedly tried to pay her way into the gaming establishment.



According to the statement, the woman is banned from the casino of a specific integrated resort. She allegedly offered a HK\$500 bribe to a security guard on duty in exchange for entry. The guard refused the offer and immediately reported the incident to the police.

Following an investigation, the CCAC determined that the woman is suspected of violating Article 4 of the Law on the Prevention and Suppression of Bribery in the Private Sector. She is suspected of attempted bribery.

The case has been transferred to the Public Prosecutions Office (MP) for further investigation.

A spokesperson for the CCAC told the Post by telephone yesterday that no further information was available for the time being. The statement did not disclose when the alleged incident occurred, nor did it reveal the woman's age, citizenship or the reason for her existing casino ban.

MGTO steps up preparations for Labour Day holiday visitor surge

Khalel Vallo

The Macau Government Tourism Office (MGTO) said in a statement on Tuesday that it has rolled out a series of measures ahead of the five-day Labour Day holiday in the Chinese mainland, aiming to manage expected peak visitor flows and ensure service quality across the city.

The Chinese mainland's Labour Day holiday runs from tomorrow through Tuesday.

According to the statement, MGTO is strengthening coordination with tourism authorities in the Chinese mainland, alongside stepping up communication with the local travel trade and hotel sector. Meetings have been held with operators to review hospitality arrangements, tour group itineraries and crowd management strategies, the statement said, adding that joint patrols with relevant government entities have also been conducted to regulate industry operations, while an interdepartmental meeting convened by the Consumer Council (CC) focused on enhancing protection of consumer rights during the holiday period.

In order to support industry preparation, MGTO continues to collaborate with Trip.com to publish weekly accommodation booking indicators via its "Macao Tourism Data Plus" platform, aiming to offer insights into visitor trends, the statement said.

For visitors, MGTO is promoting the use of smart tools, including a visitor flow monitoring platform covering 114 attractions and a real-time border checkpoint system managed by the Public Security Police Force (PSP), the statement noted, underlining that



This undated handout photo provided by the Macau Government Tourism Office (MGTO) on Tuesday shows a meeting at its headquarters with its tourism operators before the Chinese mainland's five-day Labour Day holidays.

these tools allow travellers to better plan itineraries and crossing times.

The statement pointed out that MGTO has also enhanced information dissemination through its destination website and the "Experience Macao" mobile app, alongside releasing promotional materials such as the "Safe Trip in Macao" campaign.

During the holiday period, two community tourism events centred on culinary culture will be held, namely the "Green Rhythms & Vegetarian Notes Savoring Macao Food Culture Festival" in Zape and the "Taste Journey Food Market 2026" in Taipa Village, aimed at boosting the community economy, the statement said.

In addition, the government is partnering with integrated resort operators to launch "Tourism and 'Leisure' Buses" routes, with the goal to connect attractions, dining spots

and local businesses across different districts to encourage visitor flow into different neighbourhoods, the statement noted.

Meanwhile, temporary pedestrian zones will be implemented in Taipa Village and along the peninsula's Rua de Nossa Senhora do Amparo starting tomorrow through Monday, between noon and 7 p.m., to facilitate crowd control and improve the visitor experience, the statement said, adding that MGTO staff will be deployed on-site to provide assistance and travel information.

The statement said that it will increase manpower at tourist information counters during the holiday, while its tourism hotline (2833 3000) will continue to operate 24 hours a day, adding that it will coordinate responses to any emergencies to ensure a smooth and safe holiday experience for visitors.

Exhibition on the Resonant History and Aesthetic Memory of Macao Firecrackers

Exhibition Venue

Sands Gallery, Level 6,
The Grand Suites at
Four Seasons



澳門出品 流益光溢 彩年 金沙中國

Exhibition Period

2026.03.18 - 08.31

Opening Hours

11:00 ~ 19:00





Vivienne Westwood exhibition opens at Grand Lisboa Palace

Khalel Vallo

An exhibition about the late British fashion designer Dame Vivienne Westwood is being held at Grand Lisboa Palace in Cotai, highlighting her influential work in fashion, jewellery and activism, with the showcase running until July 15.

According to an information board at the entrance of the exhibition, Westwood (1941–2022) is regarded as one of the most influential designers of the past half-century, known for breaking boundaries by merging cultural elements through bold experimentation in shape, form, and decoration.

Westwood was a foundational figure in British fashion, best known for bringing punk and new wave aesthetics into the mainstream. Her career spanned over five decades, evolving from underground rebellion to global luxury.

She was twice named British Designer of the Year and was appointed a Dame, the female equivalent of Sir, in 2006 for her services to fashion.

According to the information board, jewellery played a central role throughout her career. Trained in silversmithing, Westwood began her career by selling her own designs in the 1960s. She later partnered with Malcolm McLaren* to open a boutique on London's King's Road in 1971, where her early designs helped define the punk movement.

The exhibition highlights how Westwood revolutionised fashion by elevating everyday objects such as safety pins and studs into decorative statements, challenging traditional ideas of value. Her later work, from the mid-1980s onwards, shifted towards historical influences, drawing from classical civilisations as well as baroque and Renaissance art. Jewellery remained a focal point, featuring elements such as pearls and 18th-century styles.

Westwood's designs also reflect her strong activism. Her work frequently addressed social, political and environmental issues, with a focus on sustainability and criticism of the consumer culture. Recycled materials, particularly in jewellery, became a defining feature of her later collections.

A section of the exhibition titled "Exploration" emphasises her curiosity and global outlook, showcasing her engagement with different cultures and traditions, including collaborations with artisans in Africa through the Ethical Fashion Initiative (EFI) of the United Nations (UN), according to an information board of the "Exploration" section. The display also reflects her belief in learning from historical techniques as a foundation for creativity. Exhibition panels also feature her philosophy, including the idea that creativity must be rooted in tradition and past knowledge rather than created in isolation.

Through fashion, jewellery and activism, the exhibition presents Westwood's legacy as one that bridges past and present, offering visitors insight into her enduring influence on global culture and design. Exhibitiongoers are welcome to see Westwood's exhibits at the integrated resort's C007 on Level 1, open daily from 11 a.m. through 8 p.m. with free admission by registering online, with the last admission at 7 p.m.

* *Malcolm Robert Andrew McLaren (1946-2010) was an English fashion designer, entrepreneur and music manager. – Wikipedia*



Photos: Khalel Vallo

Hac Sá Long Chao Kok Coastal Trail reopens today

Rui Pastorin

The Hac Sá Long Chao Kok Coastal Trail will reopen today after the completion of restoration work, the Municipal Affairs Bureau (IAM) announced in a statement yesterday.

The coastal trail spans around 1,200 metres.

Multiple parts of the trail's stone railings were severely damaged due to typhoons last year, prompting its

temporary closure and restoration works, the statement said.

Now reopened, the statement noted that members of the public can again enjoy the trail, which extends from Rua de Hac Sá Long Chao Kok to Caminho do Quartel de Hac Sá or Rua Um dos Jardins de Cheoc Van, and admire rock formations as well as the ecology found along it. ■



This photo provided by the Municipal Affairs Bureau (IAM) yesterday shows part of the Hac Sa Long Chao Kok Coastal Trail.

Studio City presents 'Disney Palette of Happiness'

Rui Pastorin

The "Disney Palette of Happiness" has opened at Studio City in Cotai, with themed attractions, games, and delicacies on showcase throughout its run until November 1.

The event marks the fourth collaboration between the integrated resort operator and Disney IPs. Characters are found in parts of the property, ranging from the seven metre Mickey Mouse installation that greets visitors at the resort's entrance to Zootopia's Judy Hopps and Nick Wilde at one of the five Disney-themed cabins of the Golden Reel.

In all, three themed zones are featured. Among them are the photo station the "Magical Jungle Lodge" at the Main Entrance Lobby; the "Isle of Wonder" in

Times Square where various game booths, interactive workshops, themed experiences can be found alongside a pop-up store; and the installation "Dreamy Rainbow Town" featuring Judy Hopps and Nick Wilde at the LRT Entrance on Level 1.

Themed delicacies inspired by popular Disney characters are also being offered at Gala and the Louvre Pastry & Deli.

Moreover, with an opening event scheduled to take place over the Labour Day weekend, characters are also set to make appearances at the integrated resort.

For more details, on the experience and offerings, as well as the prices for some activities, one can visit <https://www.studiocity-macau.com/en/events/disney-palette-of-happiness>. ■



This photo taken during Monday's media preview shows the Disney-themed "Isle of Wonder" at Studio City's Times Square in Cotai. - Photo: Rui Pastorin

Beach swimming season to start tomorrow

Tony Wong

This year's swimming season will begin tomorrow when lifeguards and paramedics will be on duty at the city's two beaches, Hac Sa ("Black Sand") and Cheoc Van ("Bamboo Bay"), the Marine and Water Bureau (DSAMA) said in a statement yesterday.

The swimming season will run until October 31.

During the annual non-swimming season between November 1 and April 30, no lifeguards and paramedics are on duty at the two beaches.

Yesterday's statement noted that the bureau will deploy lifeguards and paramedics to the two beaches during the upcoming swimming season. The lifeguards and paramedics will be on duty between 10 a.m. and 6 p.m. from Mondays to Fridays, and between 9 a.m. and 7 p.m. on Saturdays, Sundays, and public holidays.

The statement noted that buoys have been set up at both beaches to ensure the safety of swimmers.

The bureau reminded beachgoers and swimmers to pay attention to the latest notices, flags on site and their personal physical condition before swimming in the sea, avoid touching marine life, and not to enter the sea if feeling unwell or having any injury.



This undated handout photo released by the Marine and Water Bureau (DSAMA) yesterday shows workers setting up buoys at Hac Sa Beach.

The statement also stressed that lighting fires, camping, riding bicycles, and driving motor vehicles on the beach are strictly prohibited.

The bureau estimates that the flow of beachgoers will increase during the Labour Day holiday period, and urges potential beachgoers to check real-time images, the warning flag arrangements at the two beaches and the flow of beachgoers through its official website or its mobile app "Macau Marine" before heading to the beach.

Meanwhile, with the start of the swimming season, the city's four

public outdoor swimming pools managed by the Sports Bureau (ID) will also open from tomorrow.

The four swimming pools will open until October 31, consisting of Dr. Sun Yat Sen Swimming Pool, Taipa Central Park Swimming Pool, Hac Sa Park Swimming Pool, and Cheoc Van Swimming Pool.

The four swimming pools are respectively located in the Dr. Sun Yat Sen Municipal Park near the peninsula's Barrier Gate checkpoint, in the Taipa Central Park, in the Hac Sa Park near Hac Sa Beach, and near Cheoc Van Beach. ■

Bus route linking Guia, Cotai hospitals starts Monday

Armindo Neves

The Macao Medical Centre of Peking Union Medical College Hospital (PUMCH) announced in a statement yesterday that it will launch a bus route on Monday between the public Conde de São Januário Hospital Centre (CHCSJ) on the peninsula's Guia Hill and Macao Union Hospital in Cotai.

According to the statement, in order to facilitate patients' access to the two hospitals, the Health Bureau (SSM), in collaboration with Macao Union Hospital, has decided to launch a temporary shuttle bus service on May 4.

According to the statement, the service will operate from Monday to Saturday, between 7:30 a.m. and 6:30 p.m., providing a total of eight shuttle trips per day.

From 7:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m., four shuttle buses will run from CHCSJ to the hospital in Cotai; from 11:30 a.m. to 6:30 p.m., four shuttle buses will run from Macao Union Hospital to CHCSJ, the statement said.

The pick-up and drop-off points are located at the lobby of Macao Union Hospital and near the bus stop outside the CHCSJ Emergency Department Building, respectively. ■

臨時接駁巴士服務班次表
Horário de partidas do serviço temporário de ligação por autocarro

協和澳門醫學中心
Centro Médico de Macau Union

仁伯爵綜合醫院
Centro Hospitalar Conde de S. Januário

上車點: 山頂醫院急診大樓巴士站附近 (近24小時門診出入口)
Ponto de embarque: "Urgências do Hospital S. Januário" (Índeximo da entrada e saída de Consulta Externa de 24 horas)

服務期: 2026年5月4日起
星期一至星期六
Período de serviço: A partir de 4 de Maio de 2026, de segunda-feira a sábado

班次表	往仁伯爵綜合醫院 Para o Centro Hospitalar Conde de S. Januário		往協和澳門醫學中心 Para o Centro Médico de Macau Union	
	預計發車時間 Hora prevista de partida		預計發車時間 Hora prevista de partida	
	11:30	13:30	07:30	09:30
	16:30	18:30	12:30	14:30

This bus timetable provided by the Macao Medical Centre of Peking Union Medical College Hospital (PUMCH - aka Macao Union Hospital) yesterday shows the bus departure schedule between the hospital and the Conde de São Januário Hospital Centre (CHCSJ).

China's 2025 data production hits 52.26 zettabytes

FUZHOU – China produced 52.26 zettabytes* of data in 2025, an increase of 27.28 percent year on year, said Liu Liehong, head of the National Data Administration, yesterday.

Data generated by China's system software and artificial intelligence (AI) reached 26.92 zettabytes in 2025, overtaking the volume of traditionally dominant internet of things (IoT) data for the first time, Liu said at the opening of the 9th Digital China Summit in Fuzhou, east China's Fujian Province.

He also noted that the value added by the country's core digital economy industries accounted for more than 10.5 percent of GDP last year, and that digital infrastructure is being upgraded at an accelerating pace.

According to National Data Resource Survey Report (2025)

released yesterday at the summit, in 2025, China's total data output accounts for approximately 27.44 percent of the global volume. Enterprises have become the primary driver of data production, contributing nearly 90 percent of incremental data output, underscoring the significant progress made in industrial digital and intelligent transformation.

Moreover, the national total data storage volume reached 2.53 zettabytes, a year-on-year increase of 21.05 percent, the report said.

It is worth noting that the report said China's total volume of data used for artificial intelligence (AI) training and inference in 2025 reached 199.48 exabytes, a year-on-year increase of 42.86 percent. The inference data volume hit 101.34 exabytes, surpassing training data volume for the first time.

"This marks that AI has entered

a new stage featuring equal emphasis on training and inference as well as application-driven iteration," said Liu.

The average daily token calls nationwide has surged from over 1 trillion at the beginning of 2025 to 100 trillion at the year-end, showing an exponential growth. The annual cumulative token calls volume reached approximately 21,100 trillion times, Liu added.

– Xinhua

*A zettabyte (ZB) is a unit of digital information storage used to measure extremely large scales of data, such as the total volume of traffic on the entire internet. One zettabyte is equal to one sextillion bytes (1,000,000,000,000,000,000 bytes) or one trillion gigabytes. Etymologically, zetta- denotes the 7th power of 1,000; -byte denotes a unit of data. – Gemini

Report: China leads in AI patents, digital economy booms



An unmanned delivery vehicle is displayed at the 9th Digital China Summit in Fuzhou, capital of Fujian Province, yesterday. The summit, themed "Accelerating Innovation and Development in Digital Technologies and Deepening the Building of Digital China", opened yesterday.

– Xinhua

FUZHOU – China has become the world's largest holder of artificial intelligence (AI) patents, accounting for 60 percent of the global total, according to the Digital China Development Report (2025) released by the National Data Administration.

Published yesterday at the main forum of the ninth Digital China Summit in east China's Fujian Province, the report shows that the added value of core digital economy industries now accounts for more than 10.5 percent of China's GDP. The core AI industry exceeds 1.2 trillion yuan in scale.

The report also notes that the Digital China development index reached 170.1 in 2025, up 12.99 percent year on year.

Notable progress has been made with the faster rollout of digital regulations and technologies, new application scenarios for datasets,

the expansion of AI infrastructure and a growing pool of digital talent. Digital technologies are increasingly integrated with the economy, governance, culture, society and environment.

The report shows that China has built more than 110,000 high-quality datasets covering healthcare, industry and education. It has also established 306 national green computing facilities.

"The digital engine will play an even greater role in driving industrial upgrades," said Yu Ying, deputy director of the National Data Administration. "The National Development and Reform Commission and the National Data Administration will continue working with all parties to advance Digital China development and build new engines for high-quality development."

– Xinhua



This photo taken yesterday shows the Hainan Science and Technology Museum in Haikou, Hainan Province. The museum officially opened yesterday. As a brand-new landmark for science popularization in the Hainan Free Trade Port, the museum boasts four exhibition halls with a total construction area of approximately 46,500 square meters.

– Xinhua

Avian 'feces bombardment' haunts Chinese owners of aggressive pets

Analysis

BEIJING – A black bird swoops down, deliberately splattering its droppings at a pet cat pawing behind a windowpane. What sounds like a Tom and Jerry scene is, for some pet owners in China, a real-life nuisance.

From east China's Jiangsu, Zhejiang and Anhui provinces to central China's Hubei Province, many have recently shared videos of pets, homes and even people being "bombarded" by birds, not as isolated incidents but as repeated, targeted encounters.

Ms. Chen from Jiangsu is one of them. About a month ago, a pair of blackbirds built a nest in a tree outside her window. Her cat once leapt at the glass, trying to catch them as they flew past. Since then, the birds have returned twice a day, often dropping feces at the spot where the cat sits.

For Mr. Zhang in Anhui, the situation was even more surreal. In early April, his dog barked at a tree, likely disturbing nesting birds. Since then, Zhang says he has

been targeted with bird droppings whenever he appears in the area. He now walks his dogs in an underground garage.

China Newsweek analyzed the videos and confirmed that the birds belong to a single species, the Chinese blackbird (*Turdus mandarinus*), which can be found in many parts of the country. Despite its wide distribution, the species is under national wildlife protection.

The bird, with its jet-black plumage and bright yellow beak, is known for its strong instinct to protect its nest and young, especially during the breeding season. By remembering perceived threats, it may repeatedly target other animals or humans with droppings.

The behavior of deterring potential danger is common among birds during the breeding period, said Li Zhongqiu, a professor at the Nanjing University School of Life Sciences. For Chinese blackbirds, this period lasts from April to July.

Pet owners have shared their experiences with a mix of self-

mockery and helplessness, asking for advice on how to keep their windows clean. Suggestions include hanging eagle-shaped kites, drawing the curtains, or keeping pets away from window areas. However, none of these measures appears to be effective so far.

In fact, as early as 2019, posts about the species attacking pets could already be found online, though they attracted little attention at the time.

According to the 2026 China Pet Industry White Paper (Consumption Report), the number of pet dogs and cats in China's urban areas reached 126 million in 2025, nearly one-tenth of the country's total population of 1.4 billion.

The recent surge in discussion about the interactions between vengeful but amusing birds and household pets not only reflects growing public affection for "fur babies," but also mirrors improvements in China's ecological conditions and rising bird populations.

From late April to May, the

annual "Bird-Loving Week" events are being held across the country, along with the release of the latest bird protection results.

Taking Beijing as an example, the number of bird species has reached 531, meaning that the Chinese capital, which covers only 0.17 percent of the country's land area, accounts for more than one-third of its bird species, highlighting the richness of urban biodiversity.

In the comment section of the lifestyle-sharing platform RedNote, pet owners jokingly share photos of their cats next to bird droppings, while also reassuring each other to simply put up with the mess, as the breeding season will soon come to an end.

The love for animals goes beyond pet ownership. In recent years, birdwatching has emerged as a popular hobby in China, especially among young people under 30. A report released by RedNote in April 2025 shows that in 2024, the number of birdwatching posts was 1.2 times the total accumulated over

the previous decade.

Species such as Chinese blackbirds are increasingly nesting in parks, woodlands and even residential communities, while more migratory birds are appearing in urban parks, said Zheng Yunxiang, an engineer at the Shanghai Forestry General Station. Zheng added that progress in ecological conservation has created better conditions and greater appeal for birdwatching enthusiasts.

"No wonder Jingwei is a bird, such incredible persistence," one RedNote user commented on the Chinese blackbirds. Jingwei, a bird from Chinese mythology, is said to tirelessly fill up the sea with stones and twigs after drowning.

The remark also resonates with China's long-term efforts in ecological conservation. The country's 15th Five-Year Plan (2026-2030), released in March this year, called for further improving the diversity, stability and sustainability of ecosystems, a continued commitment to harmony between humans and nature.

– Xinhua

China, Australia should jointly uphold multilateralism: Wang Yi



Foreign Minister Wang Yi (right), also a member of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Committee, shakes hands during the eighth China-Australia diplomatic and strategic dialogue with Australian Foreign Minister Penny Wong in Beijing yesterday. —AFP

BEIJING – Foreign Minister Wang Yi said yesterday that China and Australia should jointly stand on the right side of history and on the side of multilateralism, jointly uphold the global free trade system and maintain the stability and smooth functioning of industrial and supply chains, play a constructive role in the political settlement of hotspot issues, and promote the building of a more just and equitable global governance system.

Wang, also a member of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Committee, made the remarks when holding the eighth China-Australia diplomatic and strategic dialogue with Australian Foreign Minister Penny Wong in Beijing.

Wang stated that people-to-people exchanges between China and Australia serve the interests of both sides, and both governments should further enhance mutual understanding. He hopes Australia will safeguard the safety and legitimate rights and interests of Chinese personnel.

Wang said China's friendly cooperation with Pacific Island countries doesn't target any third

party, and Australia should view this with objectivity and rationality.

Wang added that as the rotating chair of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC), China is willing to strengthen cooperation with all parties, including Australia, to invigorate and revive the process of building an Asia-Pacific community.

Wang also offered an in-depth explanation of China's position on the Taiwan question.

For her part, Wong said that the Australian side adheres to the one-China policy, opposes "Taiwan independence," and hopes that the Taiwan question can be peacefully resolved.

The economies of Australia and China are highly complementary and close cooperation in various fields such as economy and trade is in the common interests of both sides, said the Australian foreign minister, adding that Australia supports China in hosting the APEC Economic Leaders' Meeting, does not exclude any country from carrying out cooperation for the development of island nations, and is willing to work with China to safeguard international rules and ensure energy security. —Xinhua

Travel to Kinmen, Matsu open to Shanghai residents from yesterday

SHANGHAI – Shanghai residents can apply for group and individual tours to Kinmen and Matsu starting from yesterday, the Shanghai Municipal Administration of Culture and Tourism said yesterday.

Residents who intend to visit Kinmen and Matsu may register with qualified travel agencies in Shanghai and Fujian Province,

and apply to the local exit-entry administration authorities for travel endorsements.

Earlier this month, the Chinese mainland rolled out a package of 10 policies and measures – spanning inter-party communication, infrastructure, travel, trade and culture – aimed at boosting exchanges and cooperation with Taiwan. —Xinhua

VP Han meets Australian FM Wong on bilateral ties

BEIJING – Vice President Han Zheng met with Australian Foreign Minister Penny Wong on bilateral relations in Beijing yesterday.

Han said that China-Australia relations have made significant progress over the past decade or so, but also experienced ups and downs. China and Australia's adherence to treating each other as equals, seeking common ground while reserving differences, and mutually beneficial cooperation,

conforms to the fundamental interests of both sides, Han added.

He noted that China stands ready to work with Australia to implement the important common understandings reached by the leaders of both countries, hold on to the right direction for bilateral ties, strengthen alignment of development strategies, enhance dialogue and exchanges, and build a more mature, stable and fruitful China-Australia comprehensive

strategic partnership.

Wong said that currently Australia-China relations have maintained a sound growth momentum, with steady progress in mutually beneficial cooperation, adding that Australia highly values its ties with China and will enhance communication and dialogue, expand pragmatic cooperation, and advance sustained development of bilateral relations. —Xinhua

China again demands Japan to accelerate process of addressing abandoned chemical weapons

BEIJING – China again is demanding that Japan accelerate the process of addressing abandoned chemical weapons (ACWs) as it is Japan's unshakable responsibility, give back to the Chinese people their clean homeland, and remove the biggest obstacle to realizing a world free of chemical weapons, foreign ministry spokesperson Lin Jian said yesterday.

Lin made the remarks at a regular news briefing when answering a query related to yesterday's 29th anniversary of the entry into force of the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC).

"Japan's abandoned chemical weapons in China is one of the gravest crimes committed by the Japanese militarists during the war of aggression against China. To this day, the ACWs continue to pose a serious threat to the health and safety of the Chinese people and the environment in affected regions," said Lin.

Complete destruction of these weapons is Japan's due international obligation, Lin said, adding that China has been urging Japan to completely and thoroughly destruct the ACWs without further delay in accordance

with the provisions of the CWC and the MoUs between the two governments regarding this issue.

"To remove the hazardous ACWs is Japan's unshirkable responsibility. Once again we demand that Japan earnestly take its historical and present responsibilities, fulfill its obligation under the CWC, provide clues to burial sites with nothing withheld, and invest more resources to accelerate the process, restore a safe living environment for the Chinese people and eliminate the roadblock to a world free of chemical weapons," said Lin. —AFP



Vice President Han Zheng (right) shakes hands with the President of the 80th Session of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA), Annalena Baerbock, in Beijing yesterday. Baerbock is a former German foreign minister. She also met with Foreign Minister Wang Yi in Beijing yesterday. —Xinhua

Minister calls for relentless efforts to combat organized crime

BEIJING – Minister of Public Security Wang Xiaohong yesterday called for further intensifying the authorities' ongoing crackdown on organized crime.

Wang, also a member of the Secretariat of the Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Committee, made the remarks at a meeting on the sustained

campaign against organized crime.

Wang called for efforts to make new achievements in the fight against organized crime and to create a sound political and social environment for a good start to the country's 15th Five-Year Plan (2026-2030).

Wang called for a proactive

approach, immediate action, and sustained efforts to crack down on organized crime.

He also emphasized the need to focus on key regions, enhance primary-level governance, and improve law-based governance to achieve lasting results and effect. —Xinhua

Thai ex-PM Thaksin to be released from prison next month

Montira Rungjirajitranon

BANGKOK – Thailand's jailed former prime minister Thaksin Shinawatra will be released early from prison next month, the corrections department said yesterday.

Thaksin, 76, has been serving a one-year prison sentence for corruption since September.

The telecoms billionaire will be freed on May 11 and will "need to comply with all conditions" until his probation ends, including wearing an electronic monitor, the department said in a statement.

His age and the fact that he had less than a year left to serve justified

his early release, it added.

Thaksin's political clan has for two decades been a key foe of Thailand's pro-military, pro-royalty elite who view their populist brand as a threat to the traditional social order.

His Pheu Thai party, and its earlier iterations, was Thailand's most successful political party of the 21st century, with the Shinawatra family producing four prime ministers and drawing widespread support from the rural masses.

But Pheu Thai had its worst election result ever in February, slipping to third place and raising questions about the future of

Thaksin's political machine.

Yet Pheu Thai's inclusion in the ruling coalition of conservative Prime Minister Anutin Charnvirakul has left open the possibility of a political comeback.

Thaksin's nephew and Pheu Thai's prime minister candidate, Yodchanan Wongsawat, was given the position of minister of higher education in Anutin's cabinet.

Reduced prison term

Thaksin is serving his sentence in a Bangkok prison after the Supreme Court ruled last year that he improperly served a 2023

sentence in a hospital suite rather than a cell.

He was elected prime minister in 2001 and again in 2005, and took himself into exile after his second term was cut short by a military coup.

After returning to Thailand in August 2023, he was sentenced to eight years for corruption and abuse of power.

But rather than prison, he was whisked to a private room in hospital on health grounds, his sentence was reduced to one year by royal pardon, and he was freed as part of an early release scheme for elderly prisoners.

The timing of his return and his medical transfer, which coincided with his Pheu Thai party forming a new government, had fuelled public suspicion of a backroom deal and allegations of special treatment.

The Supreme Court ruled in September that Thaksin had not been suffering from a critical health condition and his time spent in hospital could not count as time served, landing him in a prison cell to serve his one-year term.

Thaksin is one of more than 850 prisoners who were approved for early release yesterday, the corrections department said. –AFP

Committee ruling sets stage for Philippine VP Duterte impeachment vote

MANILA – A Philippine congressional committee said yesterday it had found probable cause to impeach Vice President Sara Duterte, setting the stage for a House of Representatives vote with major 2028 presidential race implications.

The justice committee voted unanimously that evidence in a pair of complaints alleging Duterte misused public funds in office and made a death threat against President Ferdinand Marcos had successfully established probable cause to pursue impeachment.

The two complaints will now be consolidated into one before being sent to the plenary for a vote.

Under the Philippine constitution, an impeachment by the House of Representatives triggers a Senate trial, where a guilty verdict would ban former president Rodrigo Duterte's eldest daughter from elected office for life.

Lawmaker Leila De Lima, one of the complaints' endorsers, said the evidence showed an "alarming pattern of amassing unexplained wealth" as well as threats that struck "at the very heart of our constitutional order".

"There's no question we have enough and valid reason for this process to move forward and impeach the vice president," De Lima told the committee before the vote.

The threat against Marcos stemmed from a late-night press briefing in which Duterte claimed to have hired an assassin to kill the



Protesters call for the impeachment of Philippine Vice President Sara Duterte outside the House of Representatives in Quezon City, Metro Manila yesterday. – AFP

president should he have her cut down first.

She later said her comments had been misinterpreted.

Yesterday, the National Bureau of Investigation told the committee the vice president's alleged death threat qualified as sedition.

Bank records presented by the committee in previous hearings, meanwhile, suggested large discrepancies between the vice president's publicly declared net worth – 88 million pesos (US\$1.4 million) as of 2024 – and hundreds of transactions involving 6.8 billion pesos.

The vice president declined to appear at any of the hearings, saying she would answer questions if the process reached the Senate.

Duterte and Marcos have been engaged in a high-stakes political

brawl that erupted within weeks of their 2022 win in the presidential election, when the vice president was denied her favoured cabinet portfolios and instead named education secretary.

The vice president, who in February formally announced plans to run for president, was impeached by the House last year only to see the Supreme Court toss the case out over procedural issues.

The 2025 impeachment bypassed the committee process entirely when the necessary one-third of House members signed an impeachment complaint and sent it directly to the Senate.

The House is currently in recess, meaning any new impeachment vote must wait until they return on May 4. –AFP

Dragon diplomacy: Indonesia lends pair of Komodo dragons to Japanese zoo

SURABAYA – Indonesia will lend a breeding pair of endangered Komodo dragons to Japan under an agreement signed yesterday between zoos from the two countries that emphasised the project's conservation merits.

The five-year renewable deal, criticised by animal rights group PETA, will in turn see Indonesia's Surabaya Zoo receive a pair of red pandas, a pair of giraffes, four Aldabra giant tortoises and two female Japanese macaques from iZoo in Kawazu in Japan's Shizuoka prefecture, officials said.

"This is not just animal exchange. This is a bridge between our two countries, Japan and Indonesia," iZoo director Tsuyoshi Shirawa said at the signing ceremony.

Indonesia's environment ministry said in a statement this month the programme's main objective was "long-term conservation".

PETA Asia has expressed concern that any dragon offspring born in Japan will be "condemned to a lifetime of confinement".

"True conservation protects Komodo dragons where they belong – in their natural habitats – not by exporting them for political optics or public-relations gains," PETA Asia president Jason Baker said in a statement.

The ministry said conservation of the dragons in their natural habitat remained "the main priority".

"Through this cooperation, it is hoped there will be more Japanese people and tourists coming to Indonesia, particularly to the Komodo National Park... to witness

Komodos in their natural habitat," Indonesian forestry official Ahmad Munawir said at yesterday's event.

Under the rules of the CITES pact that governs international trade in endangered species, transfers like this one are allowed for non-commercial breeding programmes.

The zoo in Surabaya, Indonesia's second-largest city over 700 kilometres from the dragon's natural habitat, has bred dozens of the dragons in recent years in conditions that mimic their natural home.

In the wild, the world's largest living lizards are found only in the World Heritage-listed Komodo National Park and on neighbouring Flores island.

According to the International Union for Protection of Nature, the global population was about 3,458 adult and juvenile Komodo dragons at the last count in 2019.

The fearsome reptiles, which can grow to three metres in length and weigh up to 90 kilogrammes, are threatened by human activity and climate change destroying their habitat.

In some places, they are losing natural prey to human hunters, and they sometimes die in conflict with humans over livestock.

Some are captured and illicitly traded to zoos or as pets.

There have been legal transfers of Komodos to other zoos in the past, including London and Singapore.

The Indonesian and Japanese governments signed a Memorandum of Understanding last month to make the exchange with Japan possible. –AFP



Komodo dragons are seen in an enclosure at Surabaya Zoo in Surabaya, Indonesia yesterday. –AFP

Death toll from Indonesian train crash rises to 16, all women

JAKARTA – The death toll from a train crash outside the Indonesian capital Jakarta rose to 16, all women, after an injured passenger passed away in hospital, officials said yesterday.

A long-distance train slammed into the last, women-only carriage of a stationary commuter train near the Bekasi Timur station late Monday, prompting a nearly 12-hour rescue effort with crews prying open mangled carriages.

Jakarta police spokesperson Budi Hermanto told AFP yesterday that a 25-year-old woman died in

the morning, bringing the toll to 16.

Ninety people were injured in the incident, Budi said. Forty-four were discharged after receiving hospital treatment.

The national search and rescue agency said all the victims were women.

The commuter train had been standing at a level crossing after an incident involving a taxi at a level crossing, when the long-distance train crashed into the back of it, officials have said.

All the victims were in the

commuter train.

The transport ministry has opened an investigation into the taxi company, minister Dudy Purwagandhi told reporters yesterday.

President Prabowo Subianto has blamed the deadly incident on unsafe level crossings, and ordered a nationwide upgrade with guard posts or flyovers.

Transport accidents are not uncommon in Indonesia, a vast archipelago nation where buses, trains and even planes are often old and poorly maintained. –AFP

Gandhi slams Nicobar megaport plan as 'destruction'

NEW DELHI – Indian opposition leader Rahul Gandhi said yesterday a proposed US\$9 billion megaport and city project on the strategic Great Nicobar Island is “destruction dressed in development’s language”.

The island, nearly 3,000 kilometres from New Delhi, sits at the entrance to one of the world’s busiest waterways – the Strait of Malacca, through which up to 30 percent of global maritime trade passes.

The plan to develop the 910 square kilometre island with a container port, airport and city see swathes of pristine rainforest cut down, including land inhabited for millennia by communities with minimal outside contact.

“What is being done in Great Nicobar is one of the biggest scams and gravest crimes against this country’s natural and tribal heritage in our lifetime,” Gandhi said in a video message posted on social media, showing him walking through the island’s forests.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi has said the Great Nicobar Island Project “is of strategic, defence and national importance”, and India’s environmental court gave the green light in February.

But Gandhi said he would try to stop it.

“What I have seen is not a project,” he added. “It is millions of trees marked for the axe. It is 160 square kilometres of rainforest condemned to die. It is communities that have been ignored while their homes have been snatched away.”

Environment Minister Bhupender Yadav last year insisted that the project “poses no threat to the island’s tribal groups” and “does not jeopardise the eco-sensitivity of the region”.

Around 9,000 people live on the island, including around 1,200 from Indigenous groups, including the Nicobarese and the Shompen, hunter-gatherers who have shunned contact with outsiders, according to rights group Survival International.

“As well as devastating the local environment and the Nicobarese Indigenous communities, the Great Nicobar project would destroy the Shompen, a largely uncontacted people who live in the rainforest,” Survival’s Sophie Grig said yesterday.

She called the megaport an “ill-conceived project, which must be cancelled before an entire people are wiped out”. –AFP

Japanese police probe man over wife in zoo incinerator: media

TOKYO – Police were questioning a man in Japan on suspicions he disposed of his wife’s body using an incinerator at a zoo he works for, local media have reported.

Investigations were still ongoing and the Asahiyama Zoo, closed since earlier this month as part of regular preparations for the summer season, delayed its reopening slated for yesterday.

The employee at the zoo on the northern island of Hokkaido,

who is in his 30s, reportedly was questioned voluntarily over the disappearance of his wife.

He told investigators that he had used the zoo’s incinerator – meant to dispose of waste and animal remains – to burn her body “for a few hours”, local media reported this week.

“The police are currently conducting an investigation, and our facility will fully cooperate,” the zoo said in a statement yesterday.

The zoo will instead resume its business tomorrow, it added. –AFP

Indian man takes sister’s exhumed body to bank for withdrawal

NEW DELHI – An Indian man dug up his sister’s body and carried it to a bank branch to prove she was dead after being refused access to her account without a death certificate, the lender has said.

Jitu Munda, from a constitutionally recognised tribal community in the eastern state of Odisha, went to an Indian Overseas Bank branch on Monday to withdraw money from his deceased sister’s account.

But bank staff told him that “withdrawals by a third party are not permitted without proper authorisation”, the lender said Tuesday.

Angered by being turned away because he did not have her death certificate, Munda returned to the branch carrying the “human

remains” of his sister, who had been buried days earlier, the bank said.

Television networks broadcast footage of Munda carrying what appeared to be a corpse partially wrapped in plastic, with skeletal legs visible and slung over his shoulder.

“This created a highly distressing situation at the premises,” the bank said.

It added that the incident stemmed from a “lack of awareness”, and the individual’s unwillingness to follow procedures.

“The claim will be settled on priority, once the death certificate is submitted,” it added.

Registration of births and deaths is mandatory in India. But gaps in documentation persist, particularly in rural areas, leaving many families without formal certificates. –AFP

French teen in straw licking case allowed to leave Singapore

SINGAPORE – A French teen facing criminal charges in Singapore for a straw licking stunt was granted permission yesterday to leave the country for three weeks on pledges to return.

The 18-year-old is accused of posting on social media a video of himself putting the straw he licked back into the dispenser on an orange juice vending machine.

Didier Gaspard Owen Maximilien’s clip went viral and triggered a backlash that led to his arrest in Singapore, which has a reputation for not tolerating bad behaviour.

The teen’s lawyer sought permission from a judge for him to travel to Manila from May 2-25 for

an internship, a key requirement for him to graduate.

The judge granted the request after the prosecution posed no objection, but asked that he must remain contactable while overseas and required a SG\$5,000 (US\$3,900) bond.

His next appearance in the Singapore court was also rescheduled from May 22 to May 29.

The teen, who is studying in Singapore and is out on bail, was charged last Friday over the straw stunt.

He uploaded the video on Instagram knowing that it “would or would probably cause annoyance to the public”, according to court documents.

The public nuisance offence

carries a jail term of up to three months and a fine.

A second charge of committing mischief said Maximilien knew that he was “likely to cause wrongful loss or damage” to iJooz, the company operating the vending machine which had to replace all 500 straws in the dispenser.

The mischief offence carries a punishment of up to two years in jail on conviction and a fine, according to the charge sheet.

Both offences were allegedly committed on March 12.

The *Straits Times* newspaper said the video “quickly went viral, sparking shock and concern among netizens”. –AFP



This handout aerial photo taken and released by Malaysia’s Sandakan Fire and Rescue Department yesterday, shows a general view of Kampung Karamunting after a fire in Sandakan in Sabah state on Malaysia’s Borneo island. At least 30 “makeshift wooden houses” were destroyed in Malaysia’s Sabah state yesterday, in the second reported fire in less than two weeks, fire department officials said. –AFP

Yoon’s sentence increased to 7 years on appeal for obstruction of arrest

SEOUL – The sentence for former South Korean President Yoon Suk-yeol was increased to seven years yesterday on appeal for obstruction of arrest, according to the rule of the Seoul High Court.

The court overturned the lower court’s ruling, lengthening Yoon’s prison term from five to seven years.

The team of Cho Eun-suk, an independent counsel who led investigations into Yoon’s insurrection and other charges, had sought a 10-year prison sentence on appeal after demanding the same sentence in the first instance.

Following the second-instance ruling, Yoon’s legal team said that it will appeal to the Supreme Court, according to reports.

The appellate court explained that blocking the first attempt to arrest Yoon constituted abuse of power and special obstruction of official duties, saying that blocking the second arrest attempt also constituted abuse of power.

It recognized that the execution of the first arrest warrant for Yoon was lawful, while the search warrant for the presidential residence was lawfully executed.

Yoon was charged with abusing the presidential security service to hinder the anti-corruption agency from executing its arrest warrant in January 2025.

The Corruption Investigation Office for High-ranking Officials was once thwarted in its attempt to arrest Yoon as the presidential security service formed human shields and bus blockades to prevent investigators from entering the presidential residence.

The now impeached leader was found guilty of abetting violation of the presidential security act by ordering the deletion of encrypted phone records and also convicted of drafting and destroying the post-facto martial law proclamation.

The court overturned the initial acquittals, ruling that Yoon

violated the deliberation rights of nine cabinet members by excluding them from a cabinet meeting to justify the martial law declaration.

He was also convicted of ordering the dissemination of false information to foreign media that denied any intention to disrupt the constitutional order.

Yoon was sentenced to life in prison in February for insurrection stemming from his martial law declaration.

The emergency martial law was declared by Yoon on the night of December 3, 2024, but it was revoked hours later by the National Assembly.

The constitutional court upheld a motion to impeach Yoon in April 2025, officially removing him from office.

He was indicted under detention in January 2025 as a suspected ringleader of the insurrection, becoming the first sitting president to be arrested and indicted. –Xinhua

Two Jewish men stabbed in 'terrorist' attack in London

Alexandra Del Peral and Helen Rowe

LONDON – Two Jewish men were stabbed yesterday in north London, an attack police declared a “terrorist incident” and which follows a series of arson attacks targeting Jewish sites.

King Charles III, Prime Minister Keir Starmer and London mayor Sadiq Khan led the condemnation of the “appalling” assaults in Golders Green, which is home to a large Jewish population.

Police said a 45-year-old man had been arrested after having also tried to stab officers. The two victims – aged 76 and 34 – were in a stable condition in hospital.

Speaking from the scene and facing heckles from some in the local community, Metropolitan police commissioner Mark Rowley said the suspect has “a history of serious violence and mental health issues”.

“Let me be clear: this is an attack on one community [and] an attack on one community is an attack on all London’s communities,” Rowley added.

Starmer echoed the sentiment, saying on X that “attacks on our Jewish community are attacks on Britain” while vowing “those responsible will be brought to justice”.

Starmer will convene an emergency meeting of senior ministers and officials, according to the area’s MP, Sarah Sackman.

King Charles III, who is on a



A police forensics officer photographs shoes and clothes at a crime scene on Golders Green Road, in the Golders Green neighbourhood of north London, yesterday, after two Jewish people were stabbed, and a suspect arrested. – AFP

state visit to the United States, said he was “deeply concerned” in a statement issued by Buckingham Palace.

The stabbings come after a spate of arson attacks on synagogues and other Jewish sites in north London in recent weeks that have heightened security fears for the community.

‘Horror attack’

Israel’s foreign ministry condemned Starmer’s government shortly following yesterday’s incident.

“After attacks on synagogues, Jewish institutions, community ambulances and now Jews

targeted in Golders Green, the UK government can no longer claim this is under control,” it said on X.

Assistant Commissioner Laurence Taylor, Head of UK Counter Terrorism Policing, said the stabbings had “now formally been declared a terrorist incident”.

Counter-terror officers and the capital’s Metropolitan police were “also working with the security services to ensure we have a full intelligence picture”, he added.

“One of the lines of enquiry is whether this attack was deliberately targeting the Jewish community,” Taylor noted, standing outside the Met’s New

Scotland Yard headquarters in central London.

The incident unfolded shortly after 11 a.m. (local time), with the Shomrim Jewish neighbourhood watch group first reporting that a knife-wielding man was “attempting to stab Jewish members of the public”.

Shomrim members helped detain the suspect before police arrived and subdued him using an electroshock weapon. The response of the Jewish volunteers’ earned widespread praise.

The victims were also treated at the scene by Hatzola, a Jewish volunteer ambulance service.

The stabbings follow a deadly assault on a synagogue in Manchester last October on the Jewish holy day of Yom Kippur.

That attack killed two people and seriously injured three, prompting increased anxiety among Jewish communities.

“Why do we have to live in fear? We’re doing our best to live our lives as normal as possible but everyday is a struggle,” Shomrim volunteer Stephen Bak told AFP at the Golders Green scene Wednesday.

‘Shocking’

Mayor of London Sadiq Khan called the spate of antisemitic attacks “shocking”.

“There must be absolutely no place for antisemitism in society,” he added on X.

Ephraim Mirvis, Britain’s chief

rabbi, said the community was “strong” and “resilient” but “such attacks need to stop now”.

“Zero tolerance – that’s what our community wants,” he told reporters from the scene.

“Our society needs to know this is intolerable... We would like to see actions added to words.”

The first London attack in late March saw four ambulances belonging to Hatzola set ablaze.

Other incidents have followed, including an attack on the Kenton United Synagogue in Harrow as well as the premises of a Jewish charity.

Last week, the Finchley Reform Synagogue was targeted.

Police have arrested at least 26 people for the various attacks, launched since the start of the US-Iran war on Iran on February 28.

Many of the incidents have been claimed by a little-known group, believed to be linked to Iran, called Harakat Ashab al-Yamin al-Islamiya (HAYI), meaning The Islamic Movement of the People of the Right Hand.

Monitoring groups have reported a surge in antisemitic and Islamophobic incidents in Britain, particularly since the start of the war between Israel and Hamas in Gaza.

The Community Security Trust recorded 3,700 instances of anti-Jewish hate across the UK last year, a four-percent rise on 2024, but down on 2023. – AFP

Tuareg rebels urge Russian forces to leave Mali

Celia Lebur

PARIS – Russian forces must withdraw from “all of Mali” and the ruling junta will “fall sooner or later”, a spokesman for Tuareg rebels told AFP, after Islamist insurgents and separatists launched attacks destabilising the west African country.

Mali, France’s former colony, has been plunged into an unprecedented security crisis after a Tuareg-dominated rebel alliance and jihadists at the weekend carried out coordinated attacks against the west African country’s military leadership and its Russian paramilitary backers.

By joining forces, the Azawad Liberation Front (FLA) coalition made up of Tuareg, Fulani, and Arab rebels and the al-Qaeda-linked Jihadist Group for the Support of Islam and Muslims (JNIM) hope to drive out the ruling junta that came to power in a coup in 2020.

As a result of the largest attacks in nearly 15 years, the rebels captured the key town of Kidal in the desert north, and Defence Minister Sadio Camara, seen as the mastermind behind the junta’s pivot to Russia, was killed.

Russian fighters from the Africa Corps said they also “sustained losses”, but provided no details.

Since the coup, Mali – along

with Burkina Faso and Niger – has cultivated close relations with Russia and cut ties with the West.

‘Withdraw from all of Mali’

Speaking in an interview with AFP in Paris, the spokesman for Tuareg rebels, who want to carve out an independent state in northern Mali called Azawad, urged support from France and the United States and said Russians must leave the country for good.

“Our objective is for Russia to withdraw permanently from Azawad and beyond, from all of Mali,” said the FLA spokesman, Mohamed Elmaouloud Ramadane, who was set to meet French security and defence officials in Paris.

“We have no particular problem with Russia, nor with any other country. Our problem is with the regime that governs Bamako,” the capital and largest city of Mali.

He said the rebels viewed Russia’s intervention negatively because they “supported people who committed serious crimes and massacres.”

Russia’s defence ministry confirmed Africa Corps fighters had been forced to withdraw from Kidal.

Ramadane said the Russians asked for a secure corridor to



This video grab made from footage obtained by AFP from ORTM on Tuesday show Mali’s junta chief Assimi Goita during his first public address since the weekend attacks by jihadist fighters and Tuareg separatists. Goita said that the situation was “under control” in the country, three days after a major wave of rebel attacks destabilised his military government. Goita acknowledged that the west African country faced an “extremely serious” situation and urged the population not to give in to “division”. – AFP

withdraw and were escorted to Anefis southwest of Kidal.

“The Russians found themselves in danger. There was no way out,” he said.

“When they realised they could not hold out against our forces and our firepower, they requested these withdrawals,” he added.

“In all the confrontations we had with the Russians, we won them all,” he claimed.

He said Russian fighters were no match for Tuaregs who are defending their homeland.

“Even if they are a powerful force, they will not be able to stand up to the Azawadians – the masters of the terrain.”

‘No choice’

Ramadane said that the junta would eventually be driven from power.

“The regime will fall, sooner or later,” he said, adding that the rebels now intend to take control of Gao, Timbuktu and Menaka following the capture of Kidal.

“To achieve peace, to find

stability in Azawad, in Mali and beyond in the Sahel, I think the first thing is to get rid of this junta,” Ramadane said.

“The situation is far from being under the junta’s control”, he added, despite claims from Assimi Goita, the leader of the military government.

On Tuesday, the al-Qaeda-linked group JNIM released a video saying the militants were imposing a blockade “on all roads into Bamako”.

“We are locked in an existential war,” said Ramadane, adding that the rebels’ main objective was “the self-determination of the people of Azawad”.

He said that the FLA was ready to govern major cities in the north by applying a “moderate form of Sharia law” similar to that in Mauritania and relying on qadis, Muslim judges who render decisions based on Islamic law.

Ramadane described the rebels’ union with jihadists as an “alliance of convenience” in the face of a common enemy.

“We have no choice,” he added, pointing to the influence of JNIM leader Iyad Ag Ghali.

“We have learnt lessons from the past, from the incidents we have had with JNIM, and we really want to create mechanisms that allow us to coexist.” – AFP

Boat carrying stranded whale 'Timmy' reaches Denmark

BERLIN – A special barge carrying a humpback whale that was stranded in Germany had entered Danish waters by yesterday afternoon (local time) and was expected to reach the North Sea in two days, local officials said.

The whale, dubbed "Timmy" by German media, was coaxed into the vessel in a last-ditch rescue attempt on Tuesday after a weeks-long struggle for survival on the Baltic Sea coast.

The ship Fortuna B, which is towing the barge, was located between the islands of Langeland and Lolland in southeastern Denmark yesterday, according to the VesselFinder website.

"If everything goes well, he'll be in the North Sea in two days. The very worst is already behind him now," Till Backhaus, environment minister for the state of Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania, told the *Bild* daily.

Speaking to reporters on the island of Poel, where the whale was most recently stranded, Backhaus said the animal was "doing well" and had made sounds during the night.

Backhaus thanked rescuers for their "wonderful" effort in "an

exceptional situation that is hardly comparable anywhere in the world in this form".

The whale had been struggling for more than a month around the German coast, getting stuck on sandbanks and then managing to free itself again several times.

At the start of April, officials gave up on trying to rescue the animal, saying they believed it could not be saved.

But this triggered an outcry and authorities were persuaded to approve a privately financed rescue plan proposed by two wealthy entrepreneurs.

The barge idea was hatched after their initial attempt to save the whale with inflatable cushions and pontoons was unsuccessful.

The rescue effort was seen as a long shot and criticised by experts who said it would only cause the animal more distress.

The whale's ordeal has sparked a media frenzy – with non-stop coverage from TV channels, online outlets and social media influencers – but has also led to angry spats and conspiracy theories. – AFP



Aerial photo taken yesterday shows the rescued humpback whale in a special barge along the Danish coastline enroute back to the North Sea after it beached on a sandbank near the city of Luebeck, in late March. – AFP

US special envoy to attend economic forum in Greenland

COPENHAGEN – The US special envoy for Greenland is listed among the participants in an economic forum organised in Nuuk next month, but organisers maintained he had not been formally invited.

Louisiana Governor Jeff Landry was nominated to the position by President Donald Trump in December, as the United States increased its rhetoric about taking over the autonomous Danish territory, sparking public protests.

The May 19-20 Future Greenland conference will bring together political and business leaders, as well as investors, as the Arctic island seeks greater autonomy.

Christian Keldsen, the head of Greenland's employers' association, which is organising the event, said the focus was on "long-term economic

development, which arouses significant international interest".

"The conference has always been open and anyone can buy a ticket," he was quoted as telling Greenlandic daily *Sermitsiaq* yesterday.

"That is what Landry has done... he is not part of our official programme," he said, adding that the envoy had not been invited by organisers.

In mid-January, at the height of tensions between the United States, Greenland and Denmark, Greenland's dogsled federation withdrew its invitation for Landry to attend a race in March.

"We wish to maintain good relations with the countries with which Greenland wants to cooperate," said Keldsen. "We cannot prevent people from taking part." – AFP

US Supreme Court curbs race-based voting maps in landmark ruling

Frankie Taggart

WASHINGTON, DC – The US Supreme Court yesterday sharply limited the use of race in drawing electoral districts, in a decision that could reshape congressional maps nationwide and boost Republican prospects ahead of midterm elections.

In a 6-3 ruling split along ideological lines, the conservative-dominated court struck down a map that creates a second majority-black district in Louisiana, finding it amounted to an unconstitutional racial gerrymander despite being drawn to comply with the 1965 Voting Rights Act (VRA).

The decision leaves the core of the VRA intact but narrows how it can be applied, and will be seen by civil rights activists as a blow to a landmark law that has already been weakened by previous rulings over the past decade.

Democracy Docket, a voting rights platform, said the ruling could help secure 27 extra Republican seats, cementing the party's control in the US House of Representatives "for at least a generation."

"Without racial protections, maps could be redrawn with almost no limits," the outlet reported.

It was not immediately clear how much the ruling will affect November's elections, with primaries already underway and legal challenges likely to delay any changes.

Republicans are nonetheless expected to push for new maps in states where time and the law permit.

Writing for the majority, Justice Samuel Alito said that compliance with the VRA "could not justify" the use of race in this case, arguing that Section 2 of the

act does not require states to draw districts primarily on racial lines.

"That map is an unconstitutional gerrymander, and its use would violate the plaintiffs' constitutional rights," he said, referring to the group of non-black voters who brought the case.

The ruling marks a significant shift in how courts interpret the balance between preventing racial discrimination and adhering to constitutional guarantees of equal protection, raising the bar for when race can be considered in redistricting.

Both the majority ruling and the dissent were read from the bench, a rare move in the high court.

Sweeping consequences

Justice Elena Kagan warned that the decision would have sweeping consequences, saying it risked letting states "systematically dilute minority citizens' voting power" without legal redress.

The case centred on an electoral map redrawn after the 2020 Census to add a second district in which black voters formed a majority, following court challenges that the previous map diluted minority voting strength.

That revised map was then challenged by a group of non-black voters who argued it relied too heavily on race, setting up a clash between efforts to enforce voting rights protections and constitutional limits on race-based decision-making.

The Supreme Court ultimately sided with those challengers, concluding that the map crossed the line into unconstitutional racial sorting.

The implications could extend far beyond a single state. Legal analysts say the ruling may make

it harder to create or maintain majority-minority districts – a key tool used for decades to ensure representation for black and other minority voters.

Such districts have often favoured Democratic candidates, meaning the decision could give Republicans an advantage in closely contested House races in November.

"[It] is about the many other districts, particularly in the South, that in the last half-century have given minority citizens, and particularly African Americans, a meaningful political voice," Kagan said.

"After today, those districts exist only on sufferance, and probably not for long."

The case comes amid an intensifying national battle over redistricting, with both Republican and Democratic-led states seeking to redraw boundaries in ways that could shift the balance of power in Congress.

Section 2 of the Voting Rights Act – the provision at the centre of the case – was designed to prevent voting practices that dilute minority influence, even without explicit evidence of discrimination.

But the court's conservative majority has increasingly signalled discomfort with race-conscious remedies, suggesting they must have limits under what conservative Justice Clarence Thomas, who is black, described as a "colour-blind" Constitution.

The ruling follows a series of decisions that have chipped away at the Voting Rights Act, including a 2013 judgment that struck down a key provision requiring federal oversight of election law changes in states with histories of discrimination. – AFP

Uber adds hotel booking in push to become 'everything app'

NEW YORK – Uber yesterday unveiled a new feature allowing users to book a hotel room directly from its app, the latest step in its push to become a one-stop shop for everyday needs.

The company had already broadened its ambitions in 2014 with the launch of Uber Eats, which started as a food delivery service before expanding into wider shopping, from cosmetics to electronics.

The San Francisco-based company will now let users book hotel rooms through the app via a partnership with travel site Expedia, which lists more than 700,000 properties. The tie-up also envisions eventually adding short-term rentals from the Vrbo platform.

The hotel booking tool works much like other travel sites, with

search, maps, and filters for price, amenities, and guest ratings. Users can pay with card details already saved in the app.

"We're no longer just an app for rides, or even two apps, or family of apps for both rides and eats. Uber is now an app for everything," chief executive Dara Khosrowshahi said at a presentation yesterday in New York.

"Together, we can reduce the number of steps, we can save people time and money," Expedia chief Ariane Gorin added.

The move reflects a broader trend toward apps that handle many aspects of daily life – a model long established in China, where platforms like WeChat and Alipay bundle together payments, bookings, messaging, and much more.

Rival Airbnb has been on a similar path. The home-rental company introduced bookable local activities back in 2016 and last summer added on-demand personal services such as haircuts and massages, while also launching its own ride-hailing option.

Elon Musk has outlined similar ambitions for X, the social network formerly known as Twitter, and has said a banking feature is on the way.

On the AI front, Uber said users will soon be able to ask the app to plan a week of meals, generate a shopping list, and arrange delivery – all in one go.

A voice assistant is also in the works, letting people navigate the app through natural conversation. – AFP

Exiting fossil fuels key to energy security: nations at Colombia talks

Nick Perry and Anna Pelegri

SANTA MARTA, Colombia – The first global talks on phasing out fossil fuels kicked off in Colombia on Tuesday with nations casting an exit from oil and gas as not just a climate priority but vital for energy independence.

Ministers are seeking to reignite the shift away from planet-heating fossil fuels at the conference in Santa Marta amid a deepening global energy crisis triggered by the Iran war.

“We in Europe...are losing half a billion euros each day this war continues,” the EU’s climate envoy Wopke Hoekstra told delegates at the coastal city.

“We already had a very good reason to move on [from fossil fuels] for climate action...We now also have it for commercial reasons, and reasons of independence.”

The conference was announced last year after nations failed to include an explicit reference to fossil fuels in the final deal reached at the UN COP30 climate summit in Brazil.

But organisers say the Middle East war – which has throttled Gulf energy exports – had underscored the urgency of breaking fossil fuel dependence.

In a speech to delegates on Tuesday, Colombia’s leftist President Gustavo Petro delivered a blunt message: fossil fuels “lead to

death,” he said.

Some import-reliant nations in Santa Marta spoke of fuel rationing and soaring prices at home as energy supplies dried up.

“Some people use independence, some people use sovereignty, but basically they need energy security,” the UK’s climate envoy Rachel Kyte told AFP in Santa Marta.

“Increasingly, the world is concluding that fossil fuels are a source of instability.”

COP frustration

On the list of attendees are major fossil fuel producers Canada, Norway and Australia, and developing oil giants Nigeria, Angola and Brazil.

They join coal-reliant emerging markets Turkey and Vietnam, and small island nations extremely vulnerable to climate shocks, among others.

But the world’s biggest emitters of greenhouse gases – including the United States, China and India – are not attending, nor are oil-rich Gulf states.

The conference bypasses the United Nations climate talks and reflects a growing impatience with its failure to tackle fossil fuels, the main driver of global warming.

Nearly 200 countries agreed at COP28* in 2023 to transition away from fossil fuels, but efforts to turn that pledge into action have stalled.



Colombia’s President Gustavo Petro addresses the International Conference on the Just Transition Away from Fossil Fuels in Santa Marta, Colombia, on Tuesday. – AFP

“We all know that this convening arose out of our collective frustration at the continuing failure of the UNFCCC** process to address the root cause of the problem,” Vanuatu’s Climate Minister Ralph Regenvanu said in Santa Marta.

Fossil farewell

The conference is not expected to produce binding commitments but a set of proposals for countries wanting to gradually swap out fossil fuel production and consumption for cleaner forms of energy.

This is a particular challenge for

developing countries heavily reliant on oil and gas revenue, like hosts Colombia.

Santa Marta is home to one of the country’s biggest coal ports, and oil tankers can be seen along the coast’s horizon.

But even European nations have weighed increasing coal and gas use in the wake of the Iran war, underlining the challenge of reducing reliance on fossil fuels even in advanced economies.

On Tuesday, France unveiled a fossil fuel “roadmap” setting deadlines to phase out coal by 2030, oil by 2045 and gas by 2050 for energy purposes.

Nations will discuss how to pursue these plans, as well as reforming fossil fuel subsidies that throw up barriers to renewable energy investment, among other issues.

Analysis by the International Institute for Sustainable Development on Monday showed that governments still spent five times more public money on fossil fuels than renewable alternatives.

A scientific panel has also published a 12-point “menu” of policy options for governments in Santa Marta that includes “halting all new and expanding fossil fuel extraction and infrastructure projects.”

Even as record investments flow into renewable energy, scientists warn

the pace is still too slow to keep global temperature rises to safer levels.

The world has already warmed about 1.4C above pre-industrial times and is tracking to blow past 1.5C in a matter of years.

Above that threshold, scientists warn that coral reefs and Greenland ice sheets could disappear, among other catastrophic and irreversible impacts. – AFP

* COP28 stands for the 28th Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). It was the 2023 edition of the UN’s annual climate summit, where world leaders, negotiators, and observers meet to agree on global strategies to address climate change. COP28 took place in Dubai in December 2023. COP28 was particularly significant because it concluded the first “Global Stocktake” – a report card on how well the world was meeting the goals of the 2015 Paris Agreement. – Gemini

**UNFCCC stands for the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. Established in 1992, it is the primary international treaty aimed at preventing “dangerous” human interference with the climate system. It serves as the legal and administrative foundation for global climate negotiations, including major agreements like the Kyoto Protocol and the Paris Agreement. – Gemini

Guerrillas claim deadly Colombia attack, say it was an ‘error’

BOGOTÁ – Dissident guerrillas from Colombia’s defunct FARC rebel army took responsibility for a bomb attack that killed 21 people, claiming a “tactical error” during an electoral campaign marked by a surge in violence.

The devastating explosion on a highway in the southwestern Cauca department injured another 56 people and was the biggest single loss of life since FARC blew up a Bogotá nightclub in 2003, killing 36 people.

Coming a month before presidential elections on May 31, the attack fuelled fears that violence is on the rise once again, 10 years after FARC agreed to disarm after a half-century of conflict with the state.

The dissident FARC offshoot

Central General Command (EMC) took responsibility for the attack, stating on Tuesday that the incident had occurred during clashes with the army and had resulted from “errors” in the group’s military manoeuvres.

The EMC is led by Iván Mordisco, Colombia’s most-wanted criminal suspect. It broke away from FARC when the latter laid down arms in a historic peace accord in 2016.

“With profound sorrow, we must assume political responsibility for this tactical error, which has no justification whatsoever,” the statement read.

A military source told AFP that the guerrillas had set up a checkpoint on the road to ambush soldiers.

Colombian Defence Minister

Pedro Sánchez said the reprisal had followed military pressure after peace negotiations between left-wing President Gustavo Petro and Mordisco.

Colombian police on Tuesday captured José Vitoncó, an alleged leader of a local rebel group with links to Mordisco and who police said was the “main person responsible” for the attack in Cauca.

Petro has called the incident a “terrorist” attack and asserts that it was an attempt to sabotage the elections, in which he is barred from running for a second term.

His party’s candidate Iván Cepeda is leading in the polls, trailed by rightwing candidates Abelardo de la Escriella and Paloma Valencia. – AFP

Indian billionaire’s son offers home for Escobar’s hippos

NEW DELHI – An Indian billionaire’s son offered on Tuesday to take hippos descended from those introduced to Colombia by drug kingpin Pablo Escobar, rather than have the animals killed.

Anant Ambani, the son of tycoon Mukesh Ambani, said he had formally requested the Colombian government to stay a decision to kill the animals, which have wreaked havoc on rivers in the South American nation.

Instead, he has asked to allow the “safe, scientifically-led translocation that would bring the 80 animals to a permanent home” at his Vantara animal centre.

The vast zoo in India’s western state of Gujarat bills itself as the “one of the world’s largest wildlife rescue, care and conservation centres”.

Vantara is already home to hundreds of elephants, as well as 50 bears, 160 tigers, 200 lions, 250 leopards and 900 crocodiles, among other animals, according to India’s Central Zoo Authority.

Experts have repeatedly sounded the alarm on Vantara’s massive animal intake, including the import of critically endangered and rare species.

Escobar brought hippos – which are native only to Africa and can weigh up to several tonnes – to Colombia in the 1980s.

After Escobar’s death, hippos from his private zoo made a new life in the lush river banks of the Colombia’s Magdalena River – where they have attacked fishermen, prompting moves to cull them.

Anant Ambani, son of the billionaire head of the multinational conglomerate Reliance Industries, said he had submitted a detailed plan to give the animals a new home at Vantara.

The animal centre is sited alongside the Reliance Jamnagar Refinery Complex, which the conglomerate says is the world’s largest crude oil refinery.

Summers there can get extremely hot, with temperatures soaring above 40C.

Ambani’s proposal sets out a veterinary-led capture and transport, as well as the creation of a “purpose-designed naturalistic setting” for the hippos, according to a statement.

“Vantara has the expertise, infrastructure and resolve to support this effort, entirely on Colombia’s terms,” the statement said.

“These 80 hippos did not choose where they were born, nor did they create the circumstances they now face,” Ambani added.

“They are living, sentient beings, and if we have the ability to save them through a safe and humane solution, we have a responsibility to try.” – AFP

Portugal to spend US\$26.4 billion on storm rebuilding plan

LISBON – Portugal unveiled a 22.6-billion-euro (US\$26.4 billion) package on Tuesday to repair the damage done by this winter’s deadly storms and better prepare the country for future foul weather.

From late January, Portugal was battered by a string of tempests that caused widespread flooding, lashed the country with 130 km/h winds and led to landslides.

At least seven people died, according to the civil protection authorities, while some Portuguese

media outlets have put the death toll higher, reporting up to 18 deaths.

The first portion of Tuesday’s package will aim to rebuild infrastructure in the affected regions, where the storms caused an estimated 5.3 billion euros in damage.

Another 15 billion euros will be provided to bolster protection against future natural disasters, notably through strengthening water and energy infrastructure, reforming the emergency medical system and the construction of four new dams.

The last tranche of 2.3 billion euros focuses on improving responses to the sort of serious weather seen in the winter, said Prime Minister Luís Montenegro.

While most of the plan would be paid for by the Portuguese treasury, European funds will be involved as well, Montenegro added.

On the front line of climate change in Europe, the Iberian peninsula is experiencing increasingly long heatwaves and episodes of heavy rainfall that are becoming more frequent and intense. – AFP

World Cup to get cash boost as FIFA unveils red card crackdown

Rob Woollard

FIFA VANCOUVER - FIFA on Tuesday boosted overall World Cup cash distributions to nearly US\$900 million following concerns over the spiralling costs for teams taking part in the tournament. Football's global governing body said in a statement that money shared between the 48 teams taking part in the finals in Mexico, Canada and the United States would now total US\$871 million, up from an initial figure of US\$727 million announced in December.

The cash injection was announced following a meeting of FIFA's ruling council ahead of the body's Congress taking place in Vancouver today.

The hefty increase comes after several FIFA members reportedly argued that the high cost of travel, tax and overall operations could result in them losing money from taking part in the tournament.

FIFA has now moved to alleviate those concerns, hiking an award of US\$1.5 million for "preparation costs" to US\$2.5 million for each of the qualified teams.

A payment of US\$9 million for qualifying for the tournament has also been increased to US\$10 million.

Further contributions for team delegation costs and increased team ticketing allocations are also part of the overall increase.

"FIFA is proud to be in its most solid financial position ever, enabling us to help all our member associations in an unprecedented way," FIFA President Gianni Infantino said in a statement.

"This is one more example of how FIFA's resources are reinvested back into the game."

FIFA is projected to earn around US\$13 billion from the current four-year World Cup cycle, which concludes with this year's tournament, the largest World Cup in history.

FIFA's prize money for the 2026 tournament announced last year had already shattered the cash handed out at the 2022 World Cup, increasing by 50 percent.

The increase in cash payments comes with FIFA increasingly under fire for the high cost of tickets to the tournament, while some local authorities in the United States have dramatically raised transport costs during the event.

Mouth-covering crackdown

FIFA, meanwhile, also confirmed law changes which will be rolled out

at the World Cup, which kicks off in Mexico City on June 11.

From now on, players who cover their mouths during confrontations with opponents will face a red card as part of a new initiative aimed at combating racism.

In a statement following a meeting of the International Football Association Board (IFAB) in Vancouver on Tuesday, FIFA confirmed that the rule was one of two law changes that would be introduced at the World Cup.

"At the discretion of the competition organiser, any player covering their mouth in a confrontational situation with an opponent may be sanctioned with a red card," FIFA said.

The new rule follows controversy earlier this year when Benfica winger Gianluca Prestianni was accused of racially abusing Real Madrid star Vinicius Junior during a Champions League game in February.

Prestianni was accused of calling Vinicius a "monkey" repeatedly while covering his mouth. Prestianni denied racially abusing Vinicius but was later banned for six matches - with three of those suspended - for "homophobic conduct".

In a separate law change announced on Tuesday to be enforced at the World Cup, FIFA said that red cards would also be introduced for players leaving the field of play in protest at a referee's decision.

FIFA also said a team causing a game to be abandoned will forfeit the match.

The move follows the uproar at this year's final of the Africa Cup of Nations, when Senegal's players, head coach Pape Thiaw and his staff walked off the pitch in Rabat after Morocco were awarded a penalty in added time, which forward Brahim Diaz ultimately missed.

Senegal went on to win the final 1-0 in extra time, but were sensationally stripped of the title by the Confederation of African Football (CAF) in a bombshell decision issued last month.

FIFA has also approved a change to the way sanctions are enforced during the World Cup.

From this year's tournament, single yellow cards issued to players in the group stage will be cancelled after the first round, and then again after the quarter-finals.

The move is aimed at ensuring that star players do not find themselves suspended for crucial games in the tournament after collecting two separate yellow cards. - AFP



Emery aims to write 'new chapter' in Europe with Villa

LONDON - Unai Emery said he wanted to write a "new chapter" with Aston Villa as he prepares for a Europa League semi-final against fellow former European champions Nottingham Forest.

The two Premier League clubs, who will meet in today's first leg at the City Ground, are one step away from a first continental final in decades.

Forest won the Champions League, then called the European Cup, in 1979 and 1980, and Villa were champions in 1982 during a golden spell for English clubs.

Emery has revived the Birmingham team since he was appointed as manager in 2022 but they have still not won a major trophy for 30 years.

Villa lost in the semi-finals of the UEFA Conference League in the 2023/24 season, to Olympiakos, and again in last year's FA Cup semi-final against eventual winners Crystal Palace.

Villa go into today's match against Forest knowing they are firmly on course to qualify for next season's Champions League, with the top five Premier League teams guaranteed entry into Europe's premier club competition.

Emery said he wanted to write a "new chapter" with Villa.

"We are going to try to use our experiences to try to get better in this one," the Spaniard said at his pre-match press conference yesterday.

"But of course I know how difficult it is to win a semi-final, because it is 50/50 between both teams, and they have as well, good players, a good coach, experienced coach in Europe.

"They have as well, I think their momentum, feeling confidence in the moment they are (in)."

Emery has a proud record in the Europa League, masterminding four triumphs in total with Sevilla and Villarreal.

"Of course I have my own experiences before, and in this competition, and different momentum as well, but it's completely different," he said.

"In football, everything you were doing before - maybe it's fantastic, maybe not - but it's done, and now is a new chapter, and I want to write a new chapter here."

Emery expects a tough test from Forest, who are unbeaten in their past eight matches in all competitions - a run that has helped ease their fears of relegation.

"They have their history, Nottingham Forest in Europe, winning the Champions League," he said. "And we have our history as well, but not recently, and recently, we want to try, both teams, to keep doing something important in Europe."

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

- AFP/MPD



Remarkable, ramshackle Rayo chasing Conference League dream amid chaos

Rik Sharma

MADRID - After a quarter of a century away from European football, the prospect of modest Spanish side Rayo Vallecano making their first ever final must rank as one of the season's bigger surprises.

When the extreme conditions they are operating under are factored in, it is nothing short of remarkable they have reached the Conference League final four, hosting Ligue 1 team Strasbourg today in the first leg.

They may be midtable in La Liga but humble Rayo, from the working class neighbourhood of Vallecas in the southeast of the Spanish capital, are a far cry from their illustrious neighbours Real Madrid and Atletico: they are usually more concerned with survival than European finals.

And avoiding relegation is not the only tussle they tend to engage in. The fans - and to some extent the players and staff - are fighting an internal battle against their deeply unpopular, some would say reviled, president and owner Raul Martin Presa.

The Rayo chief wants to uproot the team from its home stadium, kept in a filthy and decrepit state perhaps in order to get his way, and engages in a running row with supporters he has described as "drunken and brainless".

Their 3-0 La Liga victory over Atletico Madrid in February captured the dysfunctional club in a microcosm - fighting against the odds and themselves.

In the build-up Rayo players and staff had publicly complained about the state of their pitch and run-down training facilities, and the game was moved to Leganes's stadium.

Only 5,000 fans travelled, with

many refusing in protest at the owner, whom they chant about regularly, calling for his departure.

In 2023 Oscar Trejo resigned as the team's captain in disgust at conditions at the club, the abysmal facilities, the terrible treatment of staff and supporters alike.

Sometimes there is no hot water in the showers for the players; often there is no water at all in the public toilets.

In pre-season, players were forced to practise elsewhere because of a fungal infection of the grass at their training ground.

The club's left-wing ultras group, the Bukaneros, symbolically disinfected the stadium after Presa invited politicians from far-right party Vox.

"Rayo's situation is obviously a complete disaster and being here is a ridiculous and beautiful miracle," Vallecas season-ticket holder Phil Kitromilides told AFP ahead of the Strasbourg clash.

"It means everything - this is a club that has never won anything and don't even expect to ever challenge for a trophy."

Brexit benefit

Coach Inigo Perez has been linked with bigger jobs, including Villarreal. He might never have led Rayo at all, were it not for a post-Brexit British work permit snub.

Andoni Iraola's former assistant was due to follow the coach to Bournemouth in 2023 but was barred by the British. He headed to Rayo instead in February 2024, helping the team stay up.

Sometimes life gives you lemons, and Perez, the son of a fruit-seller, has turned them into lemonade.

Smart, tactically adroit, he helped Rayo rise to eighth the

following season and qualify for European football for only the second time in their history.

The previous occasion was back in the 2000-01 campaign, reaching the UEFA Cup quarter-finals.

Presa does not want to discuss his future, not with a trophy still on the line.

"I got angry with one of my players who joked about it... the collective is what matters," said the coach.

"It's not appropriate to talk about that right now because it weakens us as a group."

Presa was happy to, though: "I want him to be the Cholo Simeone of Rayo," he said.

First comes the football. Rayo are 11th, but only five points clear of the relegation zone and looking over their shoulder, as well as on to a potential Conference League final in Leipzig.

"I've dreamt of this for many years," said forward Isi Palazon, whose goal in Greece took them past AEK Athens in the quarter-finals.

"It's hard for me to grasp what we've accomplished."

Even just reaching where they are is success for Rayo. Their opponents Strasbourg have a bigger budget and cachet but today they must handle the intense, raucous, perhaps insanitary, close-quarter experience of the Vallecas.

Rayo fans queued for tickets from the early hours of Monday morning, without even knowing when they would be going on sale.

The club, with no mind to make life easier for its supporters, does not have an online box office. And still, despite everything, they find a way to make it work.

The game will be played at 3 a.m. tomorrow morning Macau time. - AFP/MPD



This picture shows a sheet of stickers ready to be trimmed and packaged, featuring football players for the upcoming 2026 FIFA World Cup hosted by the US, Canada and Mexico, at the Panini Group factory in Modena, northern Italy, on Tuesday. The Panini Group holds the exclusive rights for the official collectible cards and stickers for the 2026 FIFA World Cup hosted by the US, Canada, and Mexico. - AFP

What we learnt from cycling's Spring Classics

Cycling

Barnaby Chesterman

PARIS – As attention turns to the build-up to the Giro d'Italia, the first of the year's Grand Tours, AFP looks back at a thrilling set of Spring one-day classics and what we learnt about the main protagonists.

Indomitable

Anyone hoping that Tadej Pogacar might lose form or motivation and open the door to someone else winning once in a while, has had that pipe dream shattered.

If anything, the 27-year-old world champion is still getting better.

He has had five races this year and won four of them - finishing second in the only one he did not claim, Paris-Roubaix.

The Slovenian opted for a relatively light workload in the early part of the year, but he seems even more unbeatable than ever.

He finally chalked off Milan-San Remo at the sixth attempt, and there now remains only one major single day classic missing from his trophy cabinet: Paris-Roubaix.

The very fact that a four-time

Tour de France winner is competing for success at Paris-Roubaix is remarkable in itself, but Pogacar has come genuinely close to winning it in his two participations.

The rest will have to wait for some time yet for the king to abdicate.

A new star is born

Cycling fans have got used to Pogacar's domination, but it may be coming to an end sooner than expected.

French 19-year-old Paul Seixas has long been hyped as the great hope for a home Tour de France winner, and this year he has proved that he is already the real deal.

Dominant victories at the Tour of the Basque Country and Fleche Wallonne one-day classic showed that he is already one of the best in the world.

But his willingness and ability to go toe-to-toe with Pogacar in a thrilling battle at Liege-Bastogne-Liege at the weekend suggested that it will not be long before he is able to beat the incomparable Slovenian.

France waits with baited breath to see if he will start the Tour in July, and if he does, Pogacar and



UAE Team Emirates-XRG's Slovenian rider Tadej Pogacar speaks during a press conference ahead of the Tour of Romandy cycling stage race, in Vevey, Switzerland on Monday. – AFP

Jonas Vingegard will have a genuine contender to battle against.

Back to his best

Some people wondered whether Wout van Aert's best days as a one-day classics specialist were behind him at the age of 31.

But this spring, he proved he

remains a force to be reckoned with.

His Paris-Roubaix victory, beating Pogacar in a sprint finish to win only his second Monument, rounded off an impressive campaign.

He had been getting close to such a major victory.

He had not finished lower than fourth at nine Monuments since the 2022 Milan-San Remo.

He was third at the Primavera in March, fourth at the Tour of Flanders and took part in two impressive long range efforts for victory at In Flanders Fields and

Dwars door Vlaanderen - coming up a kilometre short in the first and being caught just 100 metres from the line in the second.

It all served to prepare his engine for his successful Paris-Roubaix tilt.

Expect Van Aert to be competing at the front end again in 2027.

The best on cobbles

Mathieu van der Poel's spring campaign may have ended ultimately in disappointment as he failed to win any of the three Monuments he took part in, but he nonetheless proved he is still the man to beat on the cobbles.

His Milan-San Remo bid was hampered by a crucial late crash but he was still one of only two riders able to follow Pogacar's initial acceleration on the Cipressa climb, the penultimate ascent before the finish.

He eventually finished eighth and was fourth at Paris-Roubaix after producing a stunning ride in which he fought back into contention despite losing two minutes to his rivals due to two punctures through the tough Arenberg forest cobbled sector.

He was second at the Tour of Flanders to Pogacar but won Omloop Het Nieuwsblad and E3 Saxo Classic.

He will still be the man to beat on the cobbles next year and with Pogacar unlikely to return to Milan-San Remo, Van der Poel will likely be the favourite there too. – AFP

China retains women's 3x3 basketball gold, takes water polo silver



SANYA – China's women's 3x3 basketball team successfully defended its title, while the Chinese men's water polo team secured a historic silver medal at the 6th Asian Beach Games yesterday.

China's quartet of Wang Lili, Cao Junwei, Sun Fengyi and Yang Hengyu completed a perfect run to claim the women's 3x3 gold. On the final day of the event, they edged Thailand 18-16 in the semifinal before defeating the Philippines 21-13 in the final.

Reflecting on the semifinal, Wang said, "We prepared for the match against Thailand as if it were the final. They put us under great pressure. We went from leading to trailing, then relied on our defense to gradually level the score. Staying calm, we finally sealed the win with a buzzer-beater."

Qatar beat Thailand 21-10 to take the men's gold. China fell

to Qatar 18-16 in the semifinal but bounced back to defeat the Philippines 21-13 and secure the bronze medal.

In water polo, Iran edged China 3-2 in the final round-robin match to claim its first men's gold, while China took silver for its best-ever finish. Kazakhstan, winners of the previous five editions, settled for bronze.

China's water polo goalkeeper Zhang Yiwen said he was satisfied with the result despite missing out on gold, noting that the experience would motivate him to improve as the team prepares for the Asian Games and qualification for the Los Angeles 2028 Olympics.

In beach volleyball, Thailand defeated Japan 2-0 to win the women's title, while Qatar overcame Iran to claim the men's gold.

Beach wrestling also concluded yesterday, with Iran sweeping all four men's golds (70kg, 80kg, 90kg and +90kg).

India took the women's 60kg and +70kg titles, while Sri Lanka won the women's 50kg gold. China's Long Jia needed just 29 seconds to defeat Vietnam's Dang Thi Linh 4-0 in the women's 70kg final.

In beach soccer, Iran scored three goals in the first period en route to a 6-2 victory over Oman in the men's final, while Saudi Arabia beat Palestine 6-4 for bronze.

In beach handball, Iran defeated Qatar 2-1 to win the men's title, while Thailand beat Bahrain 2-0 to claim silver.

Also yesterday, China's Zhao Yicheng and Long Jianguo clocked 9.75 seconds to win the men's relay gold, while Indonesia took the women's relay title in 13.76 seconds.

Today will mark the final day of competition, with the women's beach handball final between China and Vietnam set to decide the last gold medal. – Xinhua

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Sri Lanka govt 'temporarily' takes over cricket board

Cricket

COLOMBO – Sri Lanka's government took control of the island's cricket board yesterday and appointed a nine-member interim administration to carry out "structural reforms".

Sri Lanka Cricket (SLC) is the country's wealthiest sporting body, but it has been plagued by allegations of corruption and mismanagement.

World governing body the International Cricket Council suspended Sri Lanka for two months

in 2023-2024, citing political interference in the running of the national board.

"All administrative functions of Sri Lanka Cricket will be temporarily brought under the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports, effective today [yesterday]," the ministry said.

Shortly afterwards, the ministry appointed former investment banker and opposition politician Eran Wickramaratne to lead the board.

Among the other members appointed by the government are former skipper Kumar Sangakkara

and former Test players Sidath Wettimuny and Roshan Mahanama.

The ministry said the interim committee will "address the current issues in cricket and implement structural reforms".

Four-time SLC president Shammi Silva resigned on Tuesday, along with his entire committee, after the government intervened.

AFP has contacted the ICC for comment.

Sri Lanka made an early exit from the T20 World Cup, which it co-hosted with India in February-March. – 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	Gold	Silver	Copper	Total
1	China	24	17	13	54
2	Thailand	10	9	8	27
3	Islamic Republic of Iran	9	1	0	10
4	Philippines	3	4	2	9
5	India	3	2	1	6
6	Viet Nam	2	5	5	12
7	United Arab Emirates	2	2	2	6
8	Qatar	2	1	0	3
9	Republic of Korea	1	4	5	10
10	Sri Lanka	1	2	4	7
11	Indonesia	1	2	0	3
12	Kazakhstan	1	1	6	8
13	Singapore	1	1	1	3
14	Uzbekistan	1	0	0	1
15	Hong Kong, China	0	2	1	3

Academy honours advances in pyrotechnics, visual effects

LOS ANGELES – The Academy recognised technical advances that went into blockbuster hits such as “Dawn of the Planet of the Apes” and “Guardians of the Galaxy” in its



US actress and singer Sofia Carson poses upon arrival for the 2026 Scientific And Technical Awards at Academy Museum of Motion Pictures on Tuesday in Los Angeles, California. – AFP

annual Scientific and Technical Awards on Tuesday.

The awards have been presented by the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, which hands out the Oscars, since 1931.

Tuesday’s ceremony recognized 27 people in various fields, including lead-free pyrotechnics, visual and sound effects, and animation.

“Everyone in this room knows that movie magic isn’t magic. It’s science,” said Darin Grant, who co-chaired the awards committee with Rachel Rose.

“It’s a result of relentless experimentation, the refusal to accept the status quo. Technology is the foundation that turns imagination into reality,” he added.

Among those honoured were Brent Bell, Josef Kohler and Ian Medwell for developing lead-free pyrotechnic devices for gunshot effects, which improve safety while maintaining realism.

The ceremony also paid tribute to several artists and professionals whose work enabled advancements in visual effects, animation, lighting and post-production audio.

The tools and technologies developed by this year’s winners have appeared in films including “Dawn of the Planet of the Apes,” “Spider-Man: Into the Spider-Verse,” and “Guardians of the Galaxy.”

These are “innovators who solve the industry’s most complex technical challenges,” said Grant and Rose.

The ceremony was hosted by US actress and singer Sofia Carson at the Academy Museum in Los Angeles. – AFP

‘The White Lotus’ drafts Laura Dern after Bonham Carter split

LOS ANGELES – US actress Laura Dern has joined the cast of “The White Lotus,” HBO announced on Tuesday, days after Helena Bonham Carter left the show.

The British star’s departure, which came shortly after the new season started filming on the French Riviera, sparked a frenzy of internet speculation over a glitzy series that has become as well known for its behind-the-scenes dramas as for its award-winning on-camera action.

Bosses at HBO said writer Mike White was having a rethink, with the role being rewritten and recast.

“It had become apparent that the character which Mike White created for Helena Bonham Carter did not align once on set,” a statement said.

There were no immediate details on what kind of character Dern, 59, will play in the show, which typically involves murders, class tensions and sumptuous holiday spots.

The Emmy-winning series is currently filming primarily in Cannes and St. Tropez, as well as Monaco. It will also include some scenes in Paris.

The fourth season takes place against the backdrop of the Cannes Film Festival.

Dern joins an all-star cast that includes British comedian Steve Coogan, as well as France’s Vincent Cassel (“Black Swan,” “Ocean’s Twelve”) and Heather Graham (“Boogie Nights” and “Austin Powers: The Spy Who Shagged Me.”)

Singer AJ Michalka, and comedian Kumail Nanjiani also feature.

Dern and White have previously worked together on HBO’s “Enlightened” and the comedy-drama “Year of the Dog.”

Previous seasons of “The White Lotus” were filmed in Hawaii, Italy and Thailand, and featured stars such as Jennifer Coolidge, Sydney Sweeney, Aubrey Plaza, and Walton Goggins. – AFP

Jazz legend John Coltrane’s son hits the high notes



US trumpeter and composer Terence Blanchard (left) and saxophonist Ravi Coltrane perform on the stage of the Impart jazz club in Wroclaw, Poland, during a concert in honour of Miles Davis and John Coltrane as part of the Jazz nad Odra festival on Sunday. The name Jazz nad Odra translates from Polish to “Jazz on the Odra” (or “Jazz on the Oder”). The name is derived from the Odra/Oder River, which flows through Wroclaw (known as Breslau before the end of WWII), the city where the festival has been held annually since its inception in 1964. – AFP

Katarzyna Skiba

WROCLAW, Poland – Ravi Coltrane has a tough task: honour his father John and fellow legend Miles Davis without imitating them, he tells AFP, beer in hand during a recent interview in Poland.

The younger Coltrane has teamed up with multiple Grammy winner Terence Blanchard for a series of concerts across Europe marking the centennials of his father and Davis which will culminate at the revered Grand Rex in Paris – a venue that meant a lot to both men.

“If you’re doing a tribute to somebody... the assumption might be that we’re going to be imitating their style,” Coltrane – named after Ravi Shankar, the Indian sitar player who inspired The Beatles and a host of other Western musicians – told AFP in Wroclaw recently.

“To really truly honour them, it’s not to copy them, but to peer in and try to find our own voices within the repertoire that they play,” he said.

His collaborator, five-time Grammy-winning trumpet player and composer Blanchard, said the younger Coltrane was a resounding success like his father.

“It’s not about his last name,” he said of Coltrane, who has performed with the likes of Carlos Santana, Herbie Hancock, McCoy Tyner, and Chick Corea.

“It’s about what he’s doing as an artist.”

“The difficult thing to do is to find our own personal way with the music,” he said, calling it “more rewarding” as a result.

Together on stage, the pair strike contrasting notes – Blanchard raising his horn to the ceiling while a demurer Coltrane undulates through his solos with depth and precision.

‘The hardest thing’

While not related to Miles Davis, Blanchard – like many trumpet players – is deeply influenced by the jazz great, who was inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame and branded “the most revered jazz trumpeter of all time” by *Rolling*

Stone magazine.

Like Coltrane, he does not emulate Davis.

“The easiest thing would be for me to go up there and try to play like Miles Davis... yet that would be the hardest thing,” he said.

“You can’t recreate that time from which those things were created,” he added, referencing the social and political tumult of the 1960s.

“There was a lot of suffering going on in the world,” he said, adding: “They [Davis and Coltrane] didn’t turn a blind eye to that.”

Blanchard, who has written two operas and dozens of film and television scores, is passionate about mentoring and educating younger musicians.

“That’s the thing I always tell my students,” he said. “Be a person first ... and learn how to use all of the tools musically to express what it is you’re feeling inside.”

Ravi Coltrane said it was Blanchard who came to him with the idea of doing a joint tribute, something he might have otherwise turned down.

“He’s probably the only one I would have agreed to do this with,” he said, reminiscing on their first meetings in New York in the 1990s, where Coltrane went to begin his career.

It’s a harkening back to the collaboration between Davis and the older Coltrane – whose 1959 joint

album “Kind of Blue” is lauded by many critics as the greatest jazz record ever made.

Paris is a ‘special place’

Ahead of the concert at the Grand Rex, Coltrane and Blanchard reflected on the French capital’s influence on their mentors, themselves, and the genre.

“Paris has always had a special place in my heart,” Blanchard said, recalling his New Orleans origins and the French influences he grew up around.

Miles Davis spent considerable time in Paris, playing concerts, recording the score to film noir classic “Elevator to the Gallows,” and – like many of his generation – seeking refuge from the racial discrimination of the United States.

“Bringing this show there, given Miles’s relationship with Paris, is very powerful and very meaningful for me,” Blanchard adds.

For Ravi Coltrane, the concert is one of many celebrations of the work of his father, his mother pianist Alice Coltrane, and the myriad other mentors and collaborators he has played with and learned from over the course of his career.

“The reality is we pay tribute to these artists every day,” he says, “every time we pick up our instruments, in some way we’re paying homage and honour to the men and women who have gotten us this far”.

“It never goes away”. – AFP

World Weather

CHINA	ASIA-PACIFIC	WORLD	LUSOPHONE
Beijing 14°C~28°C	Manila 24°C~36°C	New York 8°C~17°C	Lisbon 12°C~21°C
Shanghai 10°C~21°C	Bangkok 26°C~36°C	London 9°C~20°C	Rio de Janeiro 22°C~29°C
Hong Kong 20°C~24°C	Tokyo 12°C~17°C	Frankfurt 7°C~19°C	Luanda 23°C~28°C
Taipei 18°C~22°C	Singapore 25°C~33°C	Vancouver 11°C~21°C	Maputo 19°C~28°C
Guangzhou 16°C~25°C	Kuala Lumpur 24°C~35°C	Paris 10°C~23°C	Dili 24°C~32°C
Nanjing 9°C~22°C	Jakarta 24°C~33°C	Moscow 0°C~7°C	São Tomé 26°C~31°C
Guilin 11°C~25°C	Seoul 13°C~24°C	Las Vegas 17°C~29°C	Praia 19°C~27°C
Xi’an 15°C~27°C	Sydney 13°C~24°C	Monte Carlo 14°C~21°C	Bissau 21°C~39°C



Yang Hengyu (right) of China competes during the 3x3 basketball women's gold medal match against the Philippines at the 6th Asian Beach Games in Sanya, Hainan Province, yesterday. - Xinhua



Kadek Adi Asih of Indonesia reacts during the women's relay semifinal speed climbing at the 6th Asian Beach Games in Sanya, Hainan Province, yesterday. - Xinhua



Lee Youngeun of South Korea competes during the Formula Kite Women race of sailing at the 6th Asian Beach Games in Sanya, Hainan Province, on Tuesday. - Xinhua



Gold medalists team China (top), silver medalists team the Philippines (left) and bronze medalists team Thailand pose during the awarding ceremony of the 3x3 basketball women's event at the 6th Asian Beach Games in Sanya, Hainan Province, yesterday. - Xinhua



Arad Hosseini Gohari (bottom) of Iran competes during the beach handball men's semifinal against Thailand at the 6th Asian Beach Games in Sanya, Hainan Province, on Tuesday. - Xinhua



Sami Fail Juma Fail Al Bulushi (right) of Oman shoots during the beach soccer men's gold medal match against Iran at the 6th Asian Beach Games in Sanya, Hainan Province, yesterday. - Xinhua