

Sam calls for govt-industry-labour cohesion in economic diversification drive

Tony Wong

Chief Executive Sam Hou Fai said yesterday that achieving appropriate economic diversification in Macau requires the government, industry, and labour to foster consensus and strengthen social cohesion, with the aim of enabling Macau to overcome the various difficulties and challenges hindering its efforts to achieve economic transformation and upgrading.

The chief executive also said yesterday that his government will launch a public consultation “soon” on its drafting of Macau’s 3rd Five-Year Plan.

Sam made the remarks when delivering a speech during a reception at The Plaza Restaurant in Zape marking today’s International Workers’ Day hosted by the Macau Federation of Trade Unions, commonly known as Gung Luen in Cantonese.

In his speech, Sam underlined his government’s commitment to protecting workers’ rights and benefits, such as through the setting-up of its Employment

Promotion Coordination Working Group, which aims to improve Macau’s system for protecting local residents’ employment through strengthening the government’s cross-departmental collaboration.

The local government’s cross-departmental working group aiming to boost local residents’ employment was set up in May last year.

Sam also underlined that his government is vigorously working on the drafting of amendments to the Labour Relations Law proposing to raise the number of days for private-sector employees’ statutory paid maternity leave and their statutory minimum paid annual leave.

Amendments to laws proposed by the government must be passed by the legislature to take effect. The government completed a 45-day public consultation earlier this year on proposed amendments to the Labour Relations Law and is now assessing the opinions and suggestions gathered during the consultation process. Afterwards, the government will draft an amendment bill and submit it to the



Chief Executive Sam Hou Fai delivers a speech during yesterday’s reception at The Plaza Restaurant in Zape marking today’s International Workers’ Day hosted by the Macau Federation of Trade Unions. – Photo: GCS

legislature for debate, review and vote.

Sam also said in his speech that a high-quality labour force is the “primary” element required for developing new quality productive

forces, underlining that the local government attaches great importance to improving workers’ qualifications by developing various initiatives, such as expanding its “training + employment”



programmes conducted in collaboration with large enterprises, and setting up a new digital platform making it easier for residents to join vocational training programmes run by the city’s various institutions and organisations.

Sam noted that the initiatives aim to help residents enhance their professional skills and competitiveness, thereby enabling Macau to be equipped with a high-quality labour force.

Continued on p.6

Myanmar moves Aung San Suu Kyi to house arrest

YANGON – Myanmar’s junta chief-turned-president yesterday ordered deposed leader Aung San Suu Kyi to be moved to house arrest, five years after sweeping her into detention in a 2021 coup.

A statement from the office of Min Aung Hlaing said he had “commuted the remaining sentence” of the 80-year-old Suu Kyi “to be served at the designated residence”.

The office also shared a photograph seeming to show Suu Kyi sitting flanked by two men – one in a khaki shirt and another in a police uniform.

It was not immediately clear where she will be moved, but a senior source from her dissolved National League for Democracy (NLD) party told AFP she would



This undated handout photo from the Myanmar Military Information Team released yesterday shows Aung San Suu Kyi (centre) talking in an undisclosed location. – AFP

likely be kept sequestered at an address in the capital Naypyidaw.

“We do not know where it is exactly,” the source said, speaking on condition of anonymity for security reasons.

A Naypyidaw police source said security forces had been

ordered to “enforce restrictions” in areas of the capital last night.

“The ‘designated residence’ mentioned in the order will remain under their direct custody and control,” they said, speaking on condition of anonymity. – AFP (Early story on page 9)



Artists perform during the closing ceremony of the 6th Asian Beach Games in Sanya, Hainan Province, last night. (More on pages 14 & 16) – Xinhua

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

The Macau Post Daily

Xi stresses advancing basic research to solidify foundation for building China’s strength in science, technology

– Story on p. 7

Ex-FBI director Comey appears in court over Trump threat charge

Former FBI director James Comey surrendered to authorities in Virginia on Wednesday after being charged with threatening President Donald Trump’s life with a social media post.

– Story on p. 11

‘Football Leaks’ hacker Rui Pinto acquitted in 2nd trial

Rui Pinto, the hacker behind the “Football Leaks” revelations that exposed dodgy dealings in world football, was acquitted on Wednesday of all charges in a second Portuguese trial.

– Story on p. 12

Residents have mixed expectations ahead of Labour Day visitor rush: vox pop



Pedestrians walk near the city's main square, Largo de Senado, yesterday afternoon, ahead of the five-day Chinese mainland's Labour Day holiday which begins today.

– Photo: Khalel Vallo

Khalel Vallo

As the Chinese mainland's five-day Labour Day holiday begins today, residents in Macau are bracing for an influx of visitors, with opinions split between optimism over economic benefits and concern over daily disruptions.

Speaking to the *Post* yesterday, some of the residents highlighted traffic congestion, transport difficulties and crowd pressure as their main concerns during the holiday period.

For 23-year-old Ling, a university student, she pointed to the strain on mobility across the city. "My biggest concern during the Labour Day holiday in Macau is how hard it is to manage the visitor rush. Traffic gets very congested, and taxis can be difficult to get, especially because they may prefer picking up passengers from the Chinese mainland. There's little I can do about it once tourism spikes".

Meanwhile a freelance photographer surnamed Lei, 22, had a similar concern, noting both the vibrancy and inconvenience brought about by the holiday surge. "Honestly, my expectations for Labour Day in Macau are a bit mixed. On one hand, I know the city will be buzzing with visitors and the tourism sector does a great job, so the energy can be exciting", Lei said, adding that he's also bracing for the crowds. "I expect huge numbers of tourists from the mainland,

which means packed buses and long taxi queues. But sometimes it feels like the priority is on the visitors, and it gets a little hard for us just trying to go about our daily lives".

Others also reflected on how ongoing events may influence visitor distribution. For instance, a university graduate surnamed Pun, 21, said that tourists from the mainland may have more choices for travel destinations this time due to the second week of the craft market being held in Praça do Tap Siac and the Vivienne Westwood exhibition at Grand Lisboa Palace in Cotai. "I hope they can support more local artists work", Pun said, pointing out that she expects "almost the same thing as last year, with almost no changes aside from the Westwood exhibition".

For those working in the service industry, the holiday brings a different set of expectations. Steve, 29, noted that the period is often more demanding than relaxing. "I actually expect the Labour Day holiday to be busier rather than relaxing. For those of us in service jobs, it usually means more work instead of a break", he said, adding that it's good for business and income, especially for people in tourism and retail, but at the same time, the workload can be quite heavy. "Personally, I just hope things are well-organised, like transport and crowd control, so work runs smoothly", Steve noted. ■

Macau, HK, Chinese mainland sign 4 aviation cooperation arrangements

Khalel Vallo

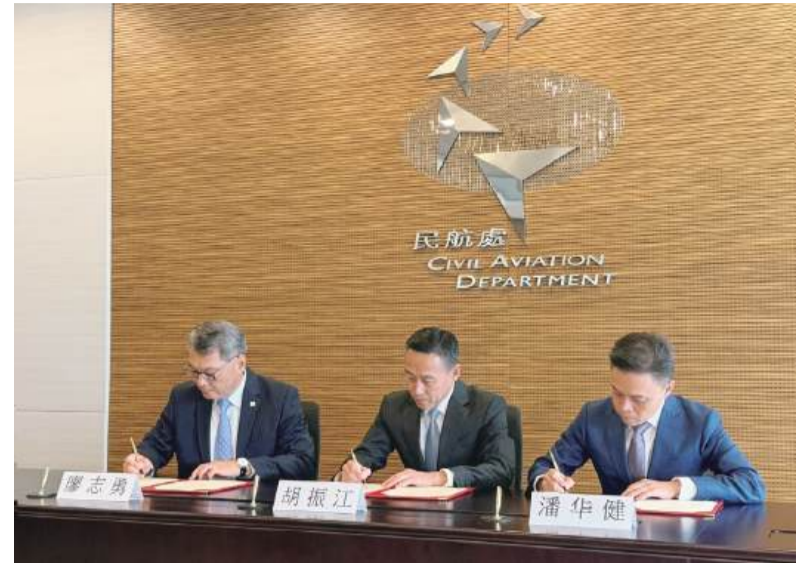
The Civil Aviation Administration of China (CAAC), Hong Kong's Civil Aviation Department (HKCAD) and the Macau Civil Aviation Authority (AACM) signed four cooperation arrangements in Hong Kong yesterday, expanding mutual recognition of airworthiness standards and strengthening certification cooperation, including for the domestically developed and manufactured C929 aircraft, according to a statement by AACM yesterday.

The arrangements consist of an amendment to the existing joint maintenance management framework alongside three new arrangements covering mutual acceptance of type certificates, airworthiness management of aviation fuels and chemicals, and type certification of the C929 aircraft, the statement said.

The four arrangements include the "Amendment to the Cooperation Arrangement on Joint Maintenance Management", which removes geographical restrictions and allows maintenance and training certificates issued by any approved organisation in the three Chinese regions to be mutually recognised.

They also include the "Cooperation Arrangement on Mutual Acceptance of Type Certificates", enabling Hong Kong and Macau to accept type certificates issued by the Chinese mainland without repeating technical assessments.

In addition, the "Cooperation Arrangement on Airworthiness Management of Aviation Fuels and Chemicals" is where permits issued by the Chinese mainland authorities are recognised to



This handout photo provided by the Macau Civil Aviation Authority (AACM) yesterday shows the representatives of the Civil Aviation Administration of China (CAAC) (centre), Civil Aviation Department of Hong Kong (HKCAD) (left), and AACM signing the four cooperation arrangements in Hong Kong earlier in the day.

diversify supply sources.

Moreover, the "Cooperation Arrangement on Type Certification of the C929 Aircraft" allows Hong Kong and Macau representatives to participate in the certification process of the C929 wide-body aircraft developed by Commercial Aircraft Corporation of China, Ltd. (COMAC).

According to Wikipedia, the Comac C929 is a long-range 250-to-320-seat wide-body twinjet airliner developed and manufactured by the state-owned aircraft manufacturer COMAC, competing with Europe's Airbus A330neo and the United States' Boeing 787 Dreamliner.

Representatives from Hong Kong and Macau will participate in its type certification process, allowing both special administrative regions (SARs) to stay updated on the

latest airworthiness developments, the statement said, noting that the arrangements were signed by CAAC Deputy Administrator Hu Zhenjiang, HKCAD Director-General Liu Chi-yung and AACM President Pun Wa Kin.

Prior to the signing, CAAC representatives visited Macau and met with AACM on Tuesday, the statement noted. Discussions covered aviation development projects, accident investigation cooperation, safety management and the low-altitude economy, the statement noted.

According to the statement, Hu said both sides should strengthen technical cooperation and personnel exchanges, while encouraging Macau to leverage its "One Country, Two Systems" policy advantages to enhance competitiveness in civil aviation. ■

Elderly local Filipina nabbed for selling drugs to compatriots

Tony Wong

A local Filipina has been arrested for selling drugs to her compatriots since January, Judiciary Police (PJ) spokesman Lei Chi Hou said during a regular press conference yesterday.

Lei identified the suspect as a 61-year-old Macau ID card (BIR) holder surnamed Trinidad, who told the police that she is jobless.

Lei said that the police recently received a tip-off that someone was selling drugs, after which they identified Trinidad as the suspect.

On Tuesday night, the police put the area around the Filipina's home, located in the peninsula's central district, under surveillance, after which they intercepted her in the early hours of Wednesday. The police seized two packs of ice weighing 1.52 grammes in total from her, with an estimated street value of 4,500 patacas.

The police also seized drug-taking paraphernalia from her. Afterwards, Lei said, the



PJ spokesman Lei Chi Hou looks on during yesterday's regular press conference yesterday.

– Photo: Tony Wong



This undated handout photo released by the Judiciary Police (PJ) yesterday shows evidence seized from the Filipina and her home.

police searched Trinidad's home where they seized an electronic scale, and a quantity of plastic bags used for storing drugs, Lei said.

Under questioning, the Filipina admitted that she had been selling

drugs to her compatriots in Macau since January this year. She also tested positive for drugs.

She has been transferred to the Public Prosecutions Office (MP) for further investigation, facing drug selling and taking charges. ■

Published since Aug 2004

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

Macau Weather

CLOUDY APART FROM SUNNY INTERVALS. ONE OR TWO SHOWERS LATER. FORCE 3 TO 4 EAST TO NORTHEASTERLY WINDS. RELATIVE HUMIDITY WILL RANGE BETWEEN 65% AND 90%.



21°C~26°C

Source: SMG

Labour Day holiday notice

Due to the Labour Day public holiday today, *The Macau Post Daily's* reporting and editing team will be off on Sunday. We will return to work on Monday, and the print edition of your favourite newspaper will be back on the newsstands and delivered to offices and homes on Tuesday morning.

However, our website (<https://www.macaupostdaily.com/>) will continue to be updated 24/7 with breaking news, particularly local and national stories.

We wish all our readers, advertisers, distributors, and contributors a restful break.

All government offices and banks are closed today and will reopen on Monday. *The Macau Post Daily's* office is also closed today and will reopen on Monday.

Na Tcha market blends heritage, youth energy to create new 'spark'

Armindo Neves

The Na Tcha Temple Association is hosting a Na Tcha themed market in front of Na Tcha Temple near the Ruins of St Paul's, titled "Lotus Door Three Banquets · China-chic Banquets".

According to an advance copy of his opening speech at noon today, association president Ip Tat says the market aims to blend intangible cultural heritage with youth energy to create a new "spark".

Ip says that as a nationally recognised intangible cultural heritage, the Na Tcha folk belief embodies the traditional desire to ward off evil and seek blessings. He also says that it represents the roots of Chinese culture and fosters a strong sense of community and fellowship among Macau's residents.

Over the years, Ip underlines, his association has prioritised striking a balance between tradition and innovation. The market is a vivid example of how intangible cultural heritage can be brought closer to the public in an accessible and engaging way, he says.

Kuok Pak Yu, head of the association's youth division, says that the market also aims to transcend the traditional boundaries of temple fairs, bringing a centuries-old heritage into everyday life, according to an advance copy of her speech at today's ceremony.

According to Kuok, the association has collaborated with Macao Polytechnic University (MPU) to transform the Na Tcha folk belief into an online interactive game and a digital cultural gallery. Additionally, in collaboration with the Macao University of Tourism (UTM), young people are serving as cultural educators, interpreting traditional



Visitors walk in front of Na Tcha Temple next to the Ruins of St. Paul's last Sunday, as the Na Tcha Temple Association is hosting its traditional Na Tcha market. Both the Taoist temple and Catholic church are UNESCO World Heritage-listed properties. — Photo: Armindo Neves

beliefs from a youthful perspective.

Kuok points out in her speech that the market features interactive experiences, youth-led guided tours, and a photography competition. These initiatives encourage both residents and visitors to capture moments of the temple fair and share them on social media. This, she notes, allows intangible cultural heritage to gain new life in the digital age.

In her speech, Kuok says she hopes the market helps transform the perception of intangible cultural heritage from a preserved past into a living future being shaped today.

Na Tcha, known in Putonghua as Nezha (哪吒), aka Nezha the Crown Prince (哪吒太子), is a protection deity in Taoism, Buddhism, and Chinese folk belief. Besides, Na Tcha, a prominent figure in Chinese mythology, is a divine hero whose origins are rooted in ancient Chinese folklore and religious traditions. According to the mythological narrative, Na Tcha was born during the Shang Dynasty (商朝, around 1600–1046 BCE), and his famed story is closely tied to the Investiture of the Gods (封神演义), a Ming Dynasty (1368-1644) novel set in that era. ■

Labour Day event aims to boost community economy

Armindo Neves

The Macau Industrial and Commercial Youth Association hosted an opening ceremony yesterday about its 8-day Labour Day "Play Fun Macau" event in Praça dos Lótus in Ilha Verde district (青洲坊蓮花廣場).

The event is sponsored by Bank of China (BOC) Macau.

Wong Sio Pang, vice president of the association, said in a speech that the event aims to revitalise the community economy through an "innovative model" designed to guide consumer traffic towards the northern district's small- and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs).

Wong expressed hope that the event can showcase the creativity and sense of responsibility of the younger generation,

build a platform to integrate into the broader national development, and work with all sectors to co-create the future.

According to a statement released during the ceremony, residents who make a single purchase of 50 patacas or more using the BOC app between yesterday and next Thursday will receive an electronic admission ticket to the event.

The event, themed "Community Consumption and Family Entertainment", is open daily from 3 p.m. to 8 p.m., featuring attractions such as bumper cars, an inflatable castle, booth games, parent-child workshops and for the nostalgic – pinball machines, creating a new "community living area" where neighbours can gather and families can have fun together, the statement said. ■



Revellers enter the eight-day Labour Day "Play Fun Macau" event on its opening day in Praça dos Lótus (青洲坊蓮花廣場) yesterday. — Photo: Armindo Neves

Happy Workers' Day

In celebration of International Workers' Day



賀定一

崔世昌

澳門中華總商會

澳門土木工程實驗室

澳門街坊會聯合總會

澳門生產力暨科技轉移中心

ABOUT The Young Post

The Macau Post Daily's The Young Post will be published every Monday to present and discuss topical issues that may interest not only the younger but also all the other generations.



Recitation contest highlights Macau's multicultural fabric

Armindo Neves

The Chinese Educators Association of Macau hosted the 40th Macao Students' Recitation Contest at Hou Kong Middle School on Estrada de Ferreira do Amaral last Saturday. According to a statement released during the contest, a total of 86 school campuses participated in the contest, with 4,043 participants.

Zheng Jiezhao, chairman of the association and principal of Lou Hau High School, told the *Post* on that day that the competition serves a multifaceted role: celebrating Macau's diverse cultural identity and enhancing students' linguistic and cultural literacy.

"In an era dominated by digital media and artificial intelligence (AI), recitation – as a vital form of oral art – plays an irreplaceable role in cultivating a student's focus, emotional expression, and interpersonal communication skills," Zheng noted.

While Zheng acknowledged that technology could eventually assist in objective scoring, he maintained that the human element is paramount. "Emotional expression in recitation requires personal experience," he said.

He added that the association is considering future innovations, such as exploring using AI-assisted judging for helping the judges. He also underlined that the competition has received enthusiastic support from teachers, students, and parents across various schools over the years. With a steady increase in both participating schools and attendees, it has become a renowned academic event in Macau. This contest continues to promote the exchange and development of language arts* locally, fostering students' interest and proficiency in language learning while enhancing their overall cultural literacy.

Tou Chi Wai, a judge for the Portuguese recitation category, emphasised that a stellar performance relies on three pillars – clear enunciation, appropriate emotional expression, and a profound understanding of the source text.

"Vocal technique and emotional delivery are inextricably linked," Tou observed. He noted a positive shift in recent years, with students opting for materials more relatable to daily life. This has resulted in performances that feel more natural and unrestrained, aided by modern teaching methods that prioritise contextual learning.

Sara, an English language teacher from Portugal based at St Joseph Diocesan College (The Fifth School) (CDSJ5), highlighted the specific challenges posed by Portuguese literature. "Portuguese poetry often carries a melancholic, nostalgic tone that differs from the English tradition," she said. "This presents a unique challenge for students when interpreting the text."

To build confidence, Sara focuses on correcting pronunciation while using encouragement and relaxed interaction to alleviate the pressure often felt by those starting to learn the language. Sara says she firmly believes that recitation acts as a vital supplement to textbook learning, fostering sustainable growth and heightened language awareness.

Sou, a student at CDSJ5, stepped out of her comfort zone to recite in Portuguese for the first time. She chose a poem about an amusement park, drawn to its message regarding the importance of preserving one's innocence into adulthood. "Navigating the nasal and rolled sounds was a challenge," she admitted, noting that she spent hours listening to recordings to refine her delivery. "Recitation is about finding resonance between myself and the poem. It has taught me that language is a living medium."

Luciano, a student from Hou Kong Middle School (Primary Section), selected a poem about a mischievous boy because he felt it mirrored his own personality. His mother, surnamed Ma, observed that the months of preparation significantly improved their bond. "Practising together each night has been wonderful for



Chinese Educators Association of Macau Chairman Zheng Jiezhao (centre) and other representatives from the "40th Macao Students' Recitation Contest" preparatory committee pose on Hou Kong Middle School's campus on Estrada de Ferreira do Amaral last Saturday. – Photos: Armindo Neves

our communication," she said. "Beyond school, this has been an incredible development opportunity for him."

Luciano's teacher, surnamed Kuan, said that her training prioritises perseverance and resilience. "We teach students to stay calm and approach practice step by step," she said. "These are qualities – etiquette and appreciation – that aren't found in textbooks but are essential for life."

A Form One Portuguese- and English-language teacher from Fu Luen School, surnamed Chong, said that the contest encourages empathy. Fu Luen School launched its secondary school courses last September; before it only provided primary school and kindergarten courses. Chong said that by assuming different roles through text, students gain a broader perspective on life, while simultaneously sharpening their oral logic and self-assurance. As the local educational landscape evolves, such contests remain a cornerstone in preparing Macau's youth for the international stage, Chong said.

Another student from Hou Kong Middle School (Primary Section), called Howard, told the *Post* that this year marks the third time he has participated in the recitation contest. In the first two years, he took part in a group recitation, but this year he chose to challenge himself by entering the solo English recitation upper primary category, hoping to push beyond his comfort zone. Howard said that he selected a cheerful piece, "Dauntless Dimple" by Jack Prelutsky**, because he sees himself as the funny person at school. He admitted that he has had limited practice time but views recitation as a process of performance and textual comprehension, and he has always loved the English language.

**Language arts is the umbrella term for the academic discipline that teaches students how to use and understand their primary language. It typically includes: literature, composition, linguistics, and communication. – Gemini

** Jack Prelutsky, 85, is a US writer of children's poetry who has published over 50 poetry collections. – Wikipedia



Five photos taken during last Saturday's contest show contestants reciting poems, taking photos with their teachers.

Exhibition centring on Mona Lisa opens in HK



An interactive exhibit at the Hong Kong Heritage Museum allows visitors to digitally explore the Mona Lisa's details.

Rui Pastorin in Hong Kong

An exhibition in Hong Kong spotlighting Leonardo da Vinci's (1452-1519) masterpiece the Mona Lisa, along with Renaissance art, through multimedia and physical works kicked off yesterday at the Hong Kong Heritage Museum in Sha Tin.

Titled "The Hong Kong Jockey Club Series: Meet Mona Lisa & Portraying the Renaissance" created especially for the city, the exhibition is presented as a highlight of the ongoing French May Art Festival, which lasts through July, with over a hundred programmes to be showcased.

The free-admission exhibition is title-sponsored by Hong Kong Jockey Club Charities Trust.

Incorporating digital storytelling, the first part of the exhibition, the six-chapter "Meet Mona Lisa", tells

the story of da Vinci's masterpiece, from its conception as a portrait of noblewoman Lisa Gherardini, the famous 1911 theft that shocked the world to eventually becoming the ever-popular global icon, all across 500 years. The exhibition is jointly produced by the Musée du Louvre and the Grand Palais Immersif.

Bringing the exhibition to life is the use of multimedia technology, panoramic projections and interactive elements, with Mona Lisa's "voice" guiding the museumgoers across different parts of this section.

Briefing the media during a press conference at the museum yesterday, Musée du Louvre Chief Curator of Italian Paintings of the 16th Century Vincent Delieuvin said that the exhibition is a chance to get a closer look at undoubtedly



Representatives and officiating guests including Hong Kong Secretary for Culture, Sports and Tourism Rosanna Law (7th from left); Consul General of France in Hong Kong and Macau Christile Drulhe (6th from left); and Co-chairman of the Board of French May Arts Festival Pansy Ho Chiu-king (5th from left) pose for a group photo after officiating at yesterday's opening ceremony at the Hong Kong Heritage Museum. - Photos: Rui Pastorin

the most famous work of art in the world, albeit through technology.

At the Louvre Museum in France, where the piece is displayed, Delieuvin noted that it sees around 25,000 people a day hoping to catch a glimpse of it, but can't do so for long or up close for security reasons. The exhibition therefore offers "the perfect opportunity to finally get close to the Mona Lisa, admire her, and understand how and why she became the most famous work of art in the world", he said.

The second part, "Portraying the Renaissance", focuses more on portraiture during the Renaissance, a period of intense cultural, artistic, and scientific growth in Europe that took place roughly between 1400 and 1600. Featured are real works of various mediums showcased

in Hong Kong mostly for the first time. It is curated by the Musée National de la Renaissance – Château d'Écouen, the Pinacoteca Ambrosiana, the Ateliers d'art de la Réunion des Musées Nationaux – Grand Palais, and the Atelier de Chalcographie du Louvre.

Among its highlights are "Sheets from the Codex Atlanticus", which features four of Da Vinci's manuscripts from a collection of drawings and notes made between 1478 and 1518, along with pieces from the museum's collection and works from Chinese mainland artist Xu Lei. Musée National de la Renaissance Curator and Art Historian Matteo Gianceselli noted in his remarks at the press conference that the event marks the first time that the museum has

lent many works to a destination far from France.

Hong Kong Heritage Museum Director Brian Lam Kwok Fai meanwhile highlighted during the Q&A session that he expects around 180,000 visitors throughout its 3-month run.

An opening ceremony was held for the exhibition last night, with the Hong Kong SAR's Secretary for Culture, Sports and Tourism Rosanna Law Shuk-pui; Consul General of France in Hong Kong and Macau Christile Drulhe; and Co-chairman of the Board of French May Arts Festival Pansy Ho Chiu-king among those in attendance and delivering remarks.

The exhibition is open until July 27. Stay tuned for more photos and details in an upcoming Page 4. ■

NOTICE

First Meeting between Macau European Chamber of Commerce and Macao ASEAN International Chamber of Commerce

On April 28, 2026, the Macau European Chamber of Commerce (MECC) and the Macao ASEAN International Chamber of Commerce (MAICC) held their inaugural bilateral meeting to deepen exchanges, consolidate cooperative foundations, and explore long-term strategic collaboration.

The meeting was attended by representatives from both chambers:

* Macau European Chamber of Commerce: Echo Chan (President), Carlos Cid Álvares (Vice President and Board of Directors), Niall Murray (Vice President and Board of Directors), and Sunny Tang (Executive Assistant).

* Macao ASEAN International Chamber of Commerce: Kelvin Tan (Chairman), Chill Lao (Acting Director General and Standing Vice Chairman), Sam Lei (Standing Vice Chairman), and Kylie Chim (Director).

During the session, representatives from both chambers introduced their respective institutional backgrounds, operational positioning and development objectives. The Macao ASEAN International Chamber of Commerce commits to promoting trade, economic, cultural and tourism exchanges between Macau and ASEAN nations, while serving as a critical bridge linking the Greater Bay Area and ASEAN markets. The Macau European Chamber of Commerce, founded in 2012, gathers enterprise members from multiple European countries, maintains close liaison with governmental and regional organisations, and continuously facilitates commercial cooperation, industry



(Front row, left to right) Sam Lei (MAICC Standing Vice Chairman), Kelvin Tan (MAICC Chairman), Echo Chan (MECC President), Niall Murray (MECC Vice President); (Back row, from left to right) Kylie Chim (MAICC Director), Granda Wu (MAICC Secretary to the Chairman), Sunny Tang (MECC Executive Assistant).

networking and cultural exchange activities.

Both sides reviewed their ongoing operational work, including the organisation of international exhibitions, trade missions and business networking events. A series of practical cooperation proposals were reached, covering mutual sharing of event resources, joint arrangement of business matching sessions, reciprocal event invitations, interconnection of member networks, and regular information dissemination of upcoming activities. Both chambers agreed to establish a regular bilateral communication mechanism, with

initial routine meetings to be held every six months.

Concrete action plans were confirmed at the meeting. The Macao ASEAN International Chamber of Commerce will provide relevant information regarding its upcoming Vietnam business mission, while the Macau European Chamber of Commerce will extend event invitations in return. Both parties will exchange contact information and promptly disseminate collaborative opportunities to respective members.

In terms of event and cultural exchange, the two chambers shared key upcoming

activities. The Macao ASEAN International Chamber of Commerce will organize a business visit to Vietnam from June 18 to 21, focusing on investment and market exploration in tourism and construction sectors. The Macau European Chamber of Commerce will host its annual gala dinner on May 15, 2026, with cultural events and business networking activities arranged on the sidelines. Both sides confirmed mutual participation in major events to enhance cultural understanding and practical business cooperation.

In addition, in-depth discussions were conducted on core international business development topics. Participants explored approaches to identifying and strengthening the unique international competitive edges of Macau and Hengqin within the Greater Bay Area. Both sides also analysed the necessary legal and fiscal supporting systems to elevate Hengqin's global investment appeal, including double taxation arrangements and the alignment with international accounting standards. The meeting further reviewed how chambers of commerce can fully leverage cross-regional networks to realise interconnected development and mutually beneficial collaboration.

Both chambers expressed full commitment to sustained communication, continuous opportunity sharing, and regular follow-up meetings, laying a solid foundation for deeper multi-field cooperation between Europe, Macau, ASEAN and the Greater Bay Area.

Sam calls for govt-industry-labour cohesion in economic diversification drive

Continued from p.1

'Monolithic industrial structure main problem'

Currently, Sam noted, a monolithic industrial structure remains the main problem affecting Macau's economy, adding that achieving appropriate economic diversification, which is a "must-answer question" for Macau, requires the government, industry, and labour to foster consensus and strengthen social cohesion, with the aim of enabling Macau to overcome the various difficulties and challenges that it is facing in achieving economic transformation and upgrading.

In his speech, Sam also said that "work is an important link connecting the individual, the family, and society. From this perspective, work has not only an individual meaning at the micro level but also a collective value at the macro level. Work constitutes the basis of life and the main source of progress for each of us, each family, and each society. It is through work that we develop skills, realise our self-worth, increase family income, and promote harmony and stability within the family. At the same time, work contributes to driving social progress and demonstrating the values of citizenship in society."

The chief executive went on to say that "in short, only by truly respecting working people and valuing the spirit of labour can we

continuously create material wealth and promote spiritual civilisation. All of us in Macau must unite efforts to create a more positive and optimistic working environment, in order to build a happier and better future."

Sam pledged that the local government will collaborate with all sectors of Macau's civil society to vigorously uphold the spirit of work and the spirit of craftsmanship, characterised by passionate dedication, the pursuit of excellence, and the courage to innovate.

Sam also underlined the local government's commitment to creating a favourable environment and conditions for workers to pursue their careers, promoting harmonious labour relations, and supporting workers in realising their ideals and life values through honest dedication to work.

Moreover, Sam also said in his speech that the nation's 15th Five-Year Plan, which was passed by the National People's Congress (NPC) in Beijing in March, draws a new and grand blueprint for Macau's development, adding that the local government will launch a public consultation "soon" to gather opinions and suggestions from Macau's civil society concerning its drafting of Macau's 3rd Five-Year Plan, which he said, is of great relevance to Macau's future development.

Sam said he expects Gung Luen to continue playing its important

role as a main local force promoting patriotism and love for Macau in uniting the broad masses of workers to offer opinions and suggestions concerning the local government's drafting of Macau's 3rd Five-Year Plan.

In addition to Sam, other dignitaries also attended yesterday's reception such as Edmund Ho Hau Wah, Macau's first chief executive and now a vice-chairman of the National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC), Central People's Government Liaison Office in Macau Director Zheng Xincong, Foreign Ministry Commissioner Bian Lixin, Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA) Macau Garrison Deputy Commander Dai Jingsong, and Macau Legislative Assembly (AL) President André Cheong Weng Chon.

Gung Luen vows 4 new contributions

Also delivering a speech, Gung Luen Chairman Lam Lon Wai pledged that his federation will make new contributions to Macau's development in four aspects, namely improving Macau's governance level; promoting the city's talent development; helping Macau better integrate into and serve the nation's overall development, and better serving workers and all other individuals. ■

Taiwan question constitutes biggest risk in China-US relations: Wang Yi

BEIJING – Foreign Minister Wang Yi said yesterday that the Taiwan question concerns China's core interests and constitutes the biggest risk in China-US relations.

Wang, also a member of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of China Central Committee, made the remarks when speaking to US Secretary of State Marco Rubio over the phone.

The US side should honor its commitments and make the right choices, opening new space for China-US cooperation and doing its part to promote world peace, Wang noted.

Head-of-state diplomacy has always been the "anchor" of China-US relations, Wang said. Noting that bilateral ties have generally remained stable under the strategic guidance of President Xi Jinping and US President Donald Trump, Wang said it serves the fundamental interests of both peoples and meets the common expectations of the international community.

Both sides should safeguard the hard-won stability, prepare well for key high-level interaction agendas, expand areas of cooperation, manage differences, explore building a China-US relationship that is strategic, constructive and stable, and achieve mutual respect, peaceful coexistence and win-win cooperation.

For his part, Rubio said that the US-China relationship is the most important bilateral relationship in the world, and head-of-state diplomacy is at the core of the relationship.

Both sides should maintain communication and coordination, respect each other, properly handle differences, accumulate achievements for high-level interactions between the United States and China, and seek strategic stability in US-China relations, said Rubio.

The two sides also exchanged views on the situation in the Middle East, among others.

– Xinhua

Vice Premier He holds video call with US treasury secretary, trade rep

BEIJING – Vice Premier He Lifeng, also China's lead person for China-US economic and trade affairs, held a video call yesterday evening with US Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent and US Trade Representative Jamieson Greer.

The two sides held candid, in-depth and constructive exchanges on implementing the important consensus reached between the two heads of state at their meeting in Busan and during previous calls, and on further properly addressing their respective concerns in the

economic and trade sector and expanding pragmatic cooperation.

The Chinese side expressed solemn concern over recent US restrictive measures against China in the economic and trade fields.

Both sides agreed to continue making full use of the China-US economic and trade consultation mechanism to build consensus, manage differences and enhance cooperation, so as to promote the healthy, stable and sustainable development of China-US economic and trade relations.

– Xinhua

China clears first import shipment under expanded zero-tariff policy for African goods

SHENZHEN – At the stroke of midnight, 24 tonnes of South African apples became the first batch of imports to enter China under a landmark initiative, as China expanded zero-tariff treatment to all 53 African nations with which it maintains diplomatic relations. This policy takes effect today, May 1.

The shipment, cleared swiftly by Shenzhen customs officers in the early hours today, is bound for supermarkets and wholesale markets across the country. For these South African apples, the

tariff rate plunged from 10 percent to zero, strengthening their price competitiveness in the Chinese market.

Effective December 1, 2024, China implemented zero-tariff treatment for the least developed countries that have established diplomatic relations with China, including 33 least-developed African countries.

The new zero-tariff move is another major step that will inject robust momentum into China-Africa trade and investment cooperation and Africa's development.

– Xinhua



This photo shows a tram in a special livery promoting smoking control in Hong Kong yesterday. Visitors and residents alike will be fined up to HK\$50,000 and face a maximum six months in jail for carrying or using alternative smoking products in public in Hong Kong, according to the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) government. The alternative smoking products include electronic cigarettes, e-liquid and herbal cigarettes, said the HKSAR government. The ban became effective yesterday with no transition period and will be carried out on a "one strike you're out" basis.

– Xinhua

China launches campaign to rectify improper AI content production

BEIJING – China's cyberspace regulator has launched a four-month campaign against disinformation and malicious content generated by AI.

The Cyberspace Administration of China (CAC) said yesterday that the campaign will curb the misuse of AI to create and spread disinformation, violate minors' rights,

and distort or misrepresent traditional fine cultural works and classic literary texts, among other offenses.

Also targeted is AI-produced low-grade content dubbed "digital swill," referring to materials with muddled logic, harmful values, and distorted cultural narratives.

The campaign will also examine

large AI models on registration compliance, safety review mechanisms, and the security of model training datasets.

A CAC official stressed the campaign is vital to fostering the orderly development of AI services and protecting internet users' legitimate rights and interests.

– Xinhua

Xi stresses advancing basic research to solidify foundation for building China's strength in science, technology

SHANGHAI – President Xi Jinping yesterday urged greater efforts and more concrete measures to strengthen basic research, enhance China's capacity for original innovation, and further solidify the foundation for building the country's strength in science and technology.

Xi, also general secretary of the Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Committee and chairman of the Central Military Commission, made the remarks while attending a symposium on strengthening basic research in Shanghai.

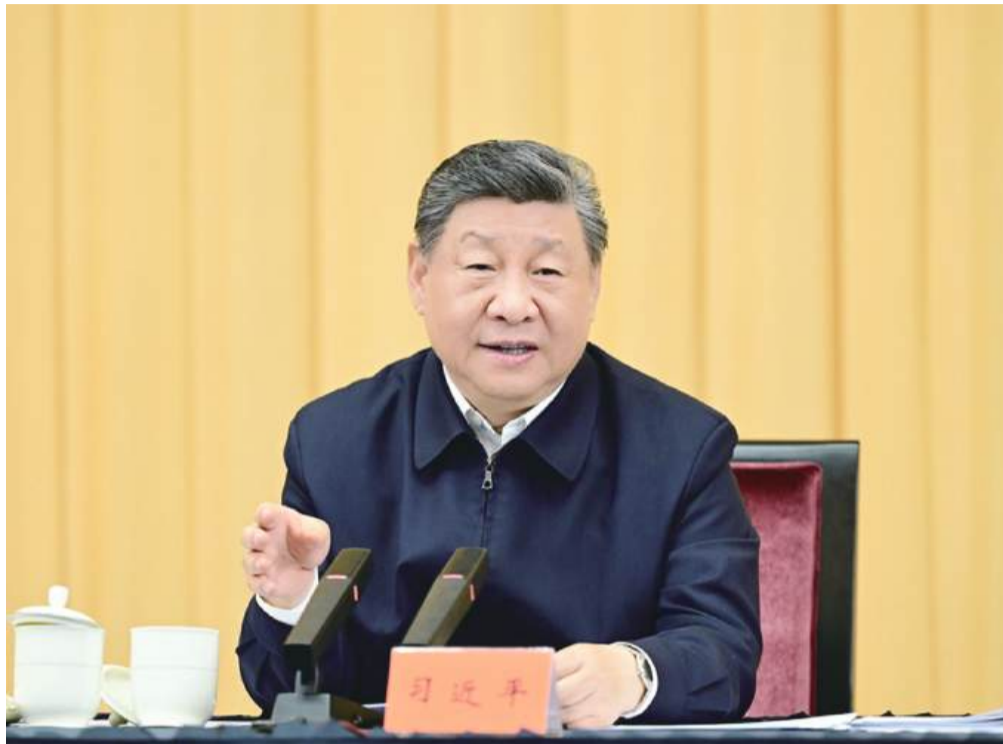
He stressed that basic research is the origin of the entire scientific system and the master switch for all technological issues.

Xi acknowledged that a new round of sci-tech revolution and industrial transformation is accelerating, and that global competition in science and technology is increasingly centered on frontier areas of basic research. He noted that the importance of original and disruptive innovation is becoming increasingly prominent.

"We must seize opportunities, rise to challenges, put basic research high on agenda, advance it with sustained commitment, and strive for continuous achievements," he said.

Xi emphasized the need to strengthen overall planning and top-level design to optimize the systematic layout of basic research.

He called for further clarifying the main targets and key areas of basic research, reinforcing the leading roles of national research institutions and high-level research-oriented universities, as well as encouraging and regulating new types of research and development institutions.



President Xi Jinping, also general secretary of the Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Committee and chairman of the Central Military Commission (CMC), delivers an important speech at a symposium on strengthening basic research, in Shanghai yesterday. – Xinhua

Deep integration of industry, academia, research and application, led by enterprises, should be promoted to smooth the innovation chain spanning basic research, application development and commercialization, Xi said.

He called for strengthening the development of basic disciplines and fostering coordinated development between applied and basic disciplines.

Xi noted that it is essential to integrate the development of education, science and

technology, and talent, make comprehensive efforts in cultivating, introducing, and utilizing talent, and expand the talent pool for basic research.

He advocated carrying forward the spirit of scientists, promoting science popularization, and stimulating the imagination and curiosity of young people, so that pursuing basic research becomes their lifelong aspiration.

Xi stressed the need to strengthen support for basic research, and called for gradually

increasing the share of funds for basic research and establishing a mechanism of diversified inputs.

He also called for a systematic approach to developing major sci-tech infrastructure, the advancement of intelligent research platform systems, and the improvement of a categorized evaluation system tailored to the characteristics of basic research.

Efforts should be made to enhance the working and living conditions of those engaged in basic research, foster an open, inclusive and failure-tolerant innovation environment, and strengthen research integrity, Xi said.

He called for actively integrating into the global innovation network, deepening international exchanges and cooperation in basic research, jointly tackling major scientific issues such as climate change, energy and environment, as well as life and health, and actively participating in global sci-tech governance.

Cai Qi, a member of the Standing Committee of the Political Bureau of the CPC Central Committee and director of the General Office of the CPC Central Committee, attended the symposium.

Ding Xuexiang, a member of the Standing Committee of the Political Bureau of the CPC Central Committee and Chinese vice premier, presided over the symposium.

Ding called for greater confidence and resolve, as well as more practical measures and actions, to comprehensively strengthen basic research, enhance original innovation capabilities, and strive for a high level of self-reliance and strength in science and technology. – Xinhua

Advancing Chinese modernization with hard work, perseverance

Analysis

BEIJING – At the Ningbo-Zhoushan Port in east China, national model worker and veteran crane operator Zhu Shijie is working with electrical control engineers to advance the smart, standardized operation of remotely controlled gantry cranes.

Recognized with one of China's highest honors for workers for his spirit of hard work and innovation, Zhu has drawn on more than two decades of hands-on experience to develop a high-efficiency crane operation method now promoted across China's ports.

In 2020, President Xi Jinping met Zhu at the site, encouraging him to make full use of his role as a model worker and help cultivate more like him.

Zhu has taken those words to heart. Dedicated efforts by Zhu and his colleagues have ensured the smooth operation of the port, which handles an average of 3.9 million tonnes of cargo daily. Zhu has also led a team that has trained more than 3,500 workers, helping nurture a new generation of skilled port professionals.

PROMOTING SPIRIT OF HARD WORK

Xi has hailed the value of outstanding workers like Zhu as they take on vital responsibilities to drive the country's overall development.

"Model workers and exemplary individuals are the moral exemplars of the people and the pillars of the nation," Xi said.

This week, 3,024 individuals and organizations were honored for their contributions to major national strategies, projects and priority industries. Recipients

range from engineers, technicians, teachers and doctors, to delivery workers.

Ahead of this year's International Workers' Day, which falls on Friday, Xi extended festive greetings to the working people nationwide and called on them to work hard, deliver solid results, and play a leading role in driving high-quality economic and social development.

Xi has built a reputation for hard work since his early years as a village official in a poor rural area of northwest China more than half a century ago. As the country's top leader, he has called on the society as a whole to respect model workers and promote the spirit they embody, and has backed the commitment with a range of policy and institutional measures.

He has called for building a large, highly skilled industrial workforce with strong ideals, technical expertise, a capacity for innovation, and a sense of responsibility and dedication, while also emphasizing workers' welfare and protections.

In recent years, China has continued to expand legal protections and social security coverage for workers, with growing attention to those in new forms of employment such as food delivery couriers and ride-hailing drivers, as well as older workers beyond the standard retirement age.

In his greetings to workers this year, Xi reiterated the importance of effectively protecting the legitimate rights and interests of workers and addressing their most pressing concerns.

Beyond policy measures, Xi has also conducted on-site inspections to ensure their needs are being met. In 2023, he went

to a migrant worker housing complex in Shanghai, entering homes, inspecting shared facilities such as communal kitchens and laundries, and speaking with residents about their daily lives.

He said migrant workers, who come to contribute to Shanghai, are not outsiders but part of the city. "It is our responsibility to ensure they can arrive, settle down, live comfortably, and thrive here," Xi said.

MODERNIZATION IS BUILT ON HARD WORK

China's working class has played a key role from the revolutionary years to the building and development of the People's Republic of China. Today, that same formula of gritty, hands-on effort and intellectual contribution remains essential.

At the All-China Federation of Trade Unions' centenary last year, Xi said the central task of the workers' movement today is to advance the building of a strong China. He also stressed, on other occasions, that Chinese modernization is built through hard work and that great endeavors are accomplished through practical action.

This year marks the beginning of China's 15th Five-Year Plan (2026-2030), a key period for the country's goal of basically achieving socialist modernization by 2035.

In March, after the top legislature approved the new plan, Xi went to inspect Xiong'an New Area, about an hour's drive from Beijing.

Designed to take on functions nonessential to the national capital, Xiong'an offers a glimpse of how a modern city is built from blueprint to reality through sustained hard work. There, Xi called on the residents to continue steady work

in shaping the city's future.

As China advances its modernization drive, the importance of innovation has become increasingly evident, emerging as a key focus of its push for progress.

Xi has thus called on workers to tackle challenges in upgrading traditional industries, forge ahead in developing emerging sectors, and explore new frontiers in future industries.

That priority is reflected in his inspection tours, where he visits factory floors, research labs and technology parks, meeting with engineers and technicians and urging them to strengthen innovation and applied research.

One such encounter remains vivid for Liao Xi, a 40-year-old steel technician in Shanxi. In May 2020, during a visit to Liao's workshop, Xi picked up an ultra-thin stainless steel strip, gave it a little twist and it bent slightly.

"The craftsmanship is excellent," Xi said. "It is as thin as foil and remarkably flexible." He encouraged Liao and his colleagues to keep pushing forward in innovation in high-end manufacturing. The material is now much sought after in foldable phones, new-energy cars, and aerospace.

For Liao, the breakthrough was anything but smooth. When Xi first visited the company three years earlier, he had just started working on the project, when experiments were failing roughly every other day. After more than 700 attempts, the team finally succeeded in producing what was then the world's thinnest stainless steel strip.

"We have achieved remarkable progress through hard work, and we will continue to rely on it to build an even better future," Xi once said. – Xinhua

Manila landfill fire leaves locals gasping

Pam Castro

OBANDO, Philippines – Filipino ferry dispatcher Dave Delos Reyes has been handing out N95 masks for nearly three weeks to protect passengers against the smoke that a landfill fire has sent billowing above a stretch of Manila Bay.

The fire at Metro Manila's Navotas landfill is largely invisible to the naked eye, combusting as deep as 15 metres below the surface and releasing a toxic brew of methane as well as carbon dioxide.

Nearly 500 people who lived on islands near the site have been evacuated to the town centre of Obando municipality, about 2.5 kilometres away, but it is not nearly far enough to escape the smoke.

"Honestly, sometimes the smell is so strong that it can still seep through the N95 masks. It hurts our throat and heads," Delos Reyes told visiting AFP reporters yesterday.

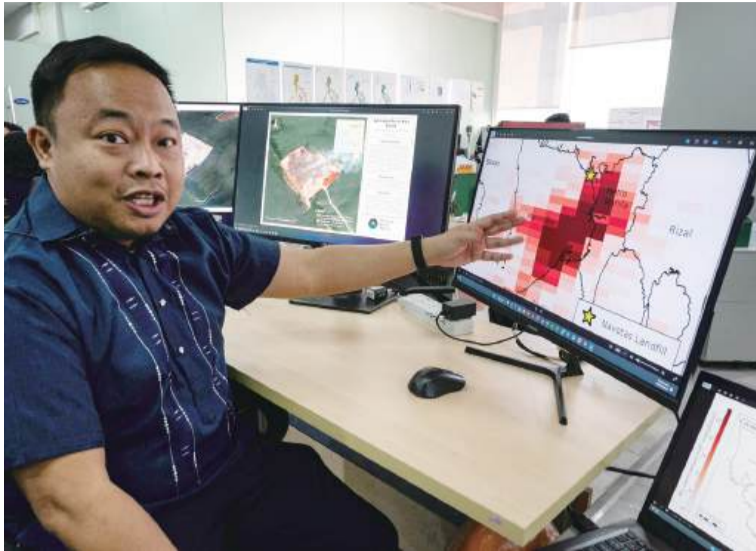
At its peak, smoke from the underground fire was affecting air quality across Metro Manila, where an "acutely unhealthy" reading was recorded in multiple areas, according to a local monitor.

Those numbers are finally returning to normal, the Philippine Space Agency's Ernest Macalalad told AFP, the result of around-the-clock efforts to snuff out the fire by covering it with tons of soil, depriving it of oxygen.

But in Obando, residents and evacuees alike said the smoke was still impacting their health and livelihoods.

AFP journalists who travelled to the landfill site by boat saw billows of thick, grey smoke completely enveloping houses on Salambao - one of the islands from which people were evacuated.

"The smoke from the landfill comes and goes. We can feel it for around 20 minutes, then it will be gone," said Monica Verses, who sells candy and drinks from the open window of her tiny



Ernest Malalad, chief science research specialist of the Philippine Space Agency (PhilSA) points to a satellite photo of areas affected by nitrogen oxides, at the PhilSA headquarters in Manila yesterday. – AFP

convenience store.

"Every time the smoke reaches my store, my chest tightens, and I cough a lot," the 62-year-old said.

The US government's disaster agency has linked emissions from landfill fires to cancer, liver damage, rashes and reproductive disorders.

Multiple residents told AFP the smoke from the landfill, which stopped receiving trash last August, only gets thicker at night.

'Not a typical fire'

Fires like the one at Navotas pose a different set of challenges from aboveground blazes, said Superintendent Anthony Arroyo, a spokesman for Manila's fire bureau.

"It's not a typical fire with surface combustion or a blaze... there's layers of rubbish in a mountainous area, and below that... methane gas," he said.

Fires that start below the surface often begin spontaneously, as organic matter decomposes and creates heat, fuelled by oxygen that sneaks in through the cracks.

Flooding the area with water had not been considered, as it risked compromising the liner that prevents chemicals from leaking into the ground below, Arroyo said.

Instead, firefighters and public works employees were covering the site inch by inch with soil dredged from a nearby site.

"The soil itself absorbs heat. At the same time, it serves as a smothering method, removing the oxygen from the subsurface fire."

While about 50 percent of the affected area has now been covered, work has been slow-going, Arroyo added, with heavy equipment unable to be used in some parts of the landfill due to its sloping walls of refuse.

For evacuees like Ramon Adino, 68, who is living in a cramped school classroom with 12 other families, a return to "normal life" is now just a matter of waiting.

"I'm slightly better now, but I'm still struggling to breathe normally... It's like I'm always catching my breath," he said, adding he hoped the fire would "be extinguished soon".

Food vendor Marissa Gusi, 62, said that while living conditions at the evacuation site were difficult, she planned to prioritise her health. "I'd rather stay here indefinitely than lose my life because of that smoke," she said.

– AFP

Wikimedia completes Indonesian registration under threat of ban

JAKARTA – The organisation that oversees Wikipedia said yesterday it completed the registration required to operate in Indonesia after the government threatened to block its services.

Under a 2020 regulation, all electronic system providers (PSEs) must register in Indonesia for what the government called legal and user protection purposes before making their services available.

Critics have said a provision in the rule requiring registered PSEs to take down content deemed as "causing public unrest and disturbing public order" is a restriction on free speech.

The Wikimedia Foundation, which owns and operates Wikipedia, had previously said the provision "departs from international human rights norms".

But the foundation said yesterday it had explained to the Indonesian government its concerns regarding user privacy, editorial independence and the preservation of the volunteer-run model of Wikimedia projects.

It said the communications ministry "provided a written assurance" that its registration cannot be used by the government to moderate content or disclose data in a way that would undermine the organisation's business model.

The foundation noted it had completed the registration process for the Wikipedia application, but its registration for the Wikipedia website was delayed "due to an error on the registration site".

The ministry did not respond to an AFP request for comment.

Earlier this month, Indonesia gave Wikimedia seven days to register or have its services, including Wikipedia Indonesia, blocked in the country of about 284 million people.

Last October, Indonesia briefly suspended TikTok's local operating licence after the social media platform refused to share information sought by Jakarta about violent anti-government protests earlier in the year. – AFP

Duterte tries to block ICC crimes against humanity trial

THE HAGUE - Rodrigo Duterte's lawyers have filed an appeal in a bid to prevent the Filipino ex-president's crimes against humanity trial at the International Criminal Court, the Hague-based tribunal said yesterday.

His defence team have appealed against the ICC's decision last week to confirm the charges against Duterte for crimes allegedly committed during his "war on drugs", which is believed to have led to the deaths of thousands of people.

Prosecutors have charged the 81-year-old former Philippines strongman with three counts of crimes against humanity, accusing him of involvement in at least 76 killings linked to the crackdown.

Following a week-long hearing in February, the pre-trial judges concluded there were substantial

grounds to believe that Duterte had been behind those murders.

According to an ICC statement yesterday, the Philippines ex-president's lawyers argued that the court had taken an "impermissibly 'flexible' approach to the formulation of the charges".

The court had also failed "to articulate a reasoned evidentiary basis for confirming the charges", his Duterte's lawyers argued.

Should his appeal fail, Duterte will be the first former head of an Asian state to appear before the ICC.

The court tries individuals for the world's most serious crimes, such as war crimes and crimes against humanity.

While the ICC has already appointed a three-judge panel for the case, it will likely take several months before the trial begins. – AFP

Decade-long study reveals whale sharks' Indonesian hotspots

BANGKOK – A decade-long study tracking dozens of whale sharks off Indonesia's coast has revealed the secrets of their migrations and two hotspots where they gather year-round.

The research published yesterday fills in critical gaps in knowledge about the endangered species, and builds the case for increased protection of the Indonesian bays that the species flocks to, scientists said.

Whale sharks, which are a type of shark, not whale, face threats including pollution, tourism and vessel strikes.

While their speckled skin and stunning size make them instantly recognisable and a tourist draw, little was known about how the species moved between well-established gathering points.

Researchers in Indonesia aimed to change that by tagging

represent about 60 percent of the species, and tracing their movements.

Over a decade, they tagged 70 whale sharks at sites in Indonesia. Some were tracked for nearly three years.

"We could actually map or identify many variations of whale shark movement," said Mochamad Iqbal Herwata Putra, the study's lead author.

"The whale sharks that we tagged moved through (waters of) 13 different countries as well as the high seas," he told AFP.

The research, published in the *Frontiers in Marine Science* journal, also revealed that two bays in Indonesia host whale sharks year-round, rather than seasonally as previously thought.

"This is very unique," said Putra, focal species conservation senior manager at NGO Konservasi Indonesia.



This handout photo by Jonathan Irish for Conservation International taken on March 19, 2023 and released yesterday shows a whale shark in the waters off Raja Ampat Islands in West Papua, Indonesia. – AFP

While most "aggregation sites" for whale sharks are believed to be seasonal gathering points, Cenderawasih Bay off Indonesia's Papua province and Saleh Bay in

Sumbawa are "like home for them", Putra said.

A combination of protection from predators and high availability of food such as krill make the

bays crucial hotspots, with some evidence they may also function as nurseries.

Cenderawasih Bay is already protected as a national park, and its remote location has helped temper mass tourism.

But Saleh Bay is both popular with visitors and in a region with growing corn production on land and aquaculture at sea.

Both these industries can produce pollution – include pesticide runoff and sedimentation – that impacts water quality and whale sharks.

Putra noted that Indonesia recorded dozens of whale shark strandings in recent years. Pollution and interactions with fishing vessels are believed to be among the causes.

Konservasi Indonesia is working with the government to establish the country's first whale shark-specific marine protected area in Saleh Bay, which Putra said he hoped would come into effect this year. – AFP

Teen with 30 tortoises under clothes nabbed at Thai airport

BANGKOK – Thai authorities arrested a teenager at a Bangkok airport for allegedly smuggling 30 protected tortoises valued at about US\$9,000 that were taped under her clothing, wildlife officials said Wednesday.

Thailand is a major transit hub for wildlife smugglers who often sell highly prized endangered animals on the lucrative black market in Asia.

Authorities became suspicious of the 19-year-old Taiwanese woman's unusual movements as she prepared to board a flight to Taipei early Tuesday, Thailand's wildlife conservation department said in a statement.

A search at Suvarnabhumi airport's departure terminal uncovered the Indian star tortoises – 29 alive and one dead – strapped to her body, the department said.

"The suspect had used adhesive tape to immobilise the animals, packed them into cloth bags and

attached them to her body to evade detection," it added.

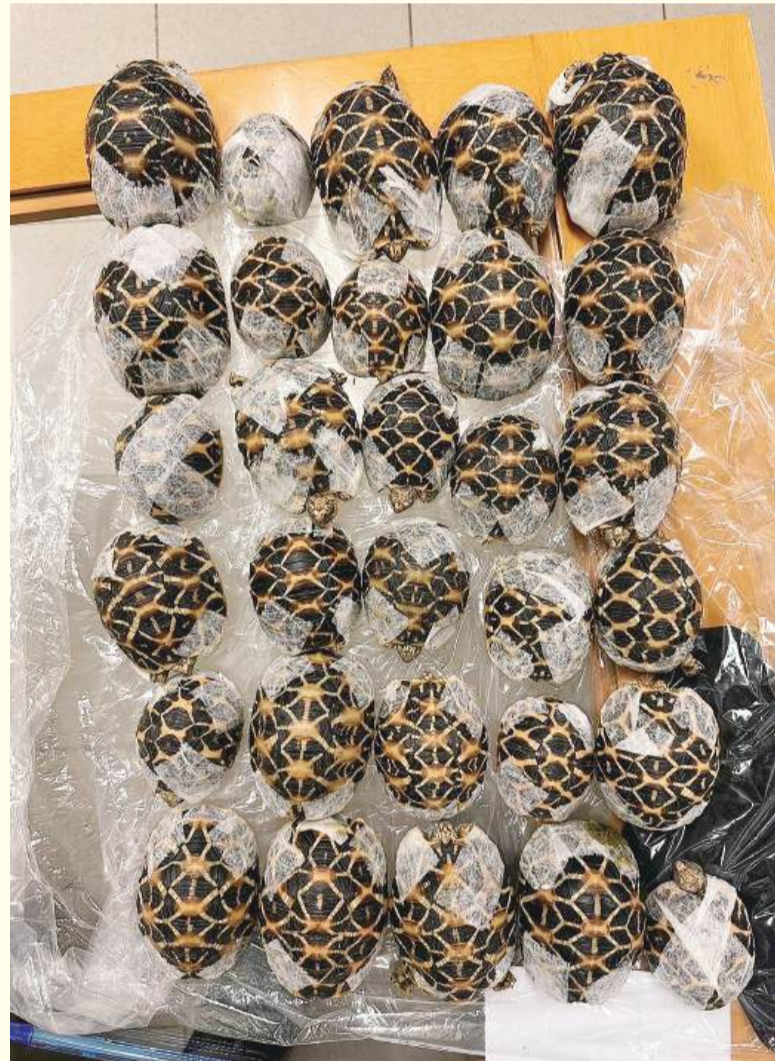
The Thai customs department said the tortoises – protected under the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) – commanded a high price on the black market, placing their total estimated value at around US\$9,000.

The woman was charged with illegally transporting animals and evading customs controls.

Authorities said they were investigating whether she was part of a wider smuggling network.

Indian star tortoises are classified as a vulnerable species by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN), which says they have been targeted to meet international demand for use as "exotic pets".

The surviving tortoises were transferred to wildlife conservation officials for care and to serve as evidence. – AFP



This handout photo taken and released on Wednesday by Thailand's Department of National Parks, Wildlife and Plant Conservation (DNP) shows Indian star tortoises confiscated from a woman attempting to travel with them at Suvarnabhumi International Airport in Bangkok. – AFP

Hammer-wielding man attacks Tokyo teenagers: reports

TOKYO – A man wielding a hammer wounded five people in Tokyo, including a teenager who was allegedly struck in the face, local media said yesterday.

Violent crime is rare in Japan, which has a low murder rate and some of the world's toughest gun laws.

The 44-year-old suspect, who is on the run from police, attacked two teenage boys near his house in Fussa city in the Japanese capital on Wednesday.

One victim sustained a severe facial injury, while the other suffered a minor shoulder injury, according to NHK and Kyodo News.

Police officers rushed to the scene, where the suspect sprayed them with an unknown substance and fled, Kyodo said.

Three officers were injured in the attack.

Tokyo Metropolitan Police declined to comment to AFP on the case. – AFP

Cambodia deports more than 600 Thais linked to cyberscams: minister



In this handout photo taken and released by Agence Kampuchea Press (AKP) yesterday, a Thai official (left) looks on as Thai citizens, suspected of being involved in online scams, sit at the Poipet international border checkpoint between Cambodia and Thailand, at Poipet town in Banteay Meanchey province, Cambodia yesterday. – AFP

PHNOM PENH – Cambodia deported more than 600 Thais allegedly involved in online scams yesterday, the information minister said, part of a crackdown against the multibillion-dollar illicit industry that has ballooned in the country in recent years.

Cambodia has emerged as a hub for crime syndicates running fake romantic relationship and cryptocurrency investment schemes in which scammers – some willing, others trafficked – defraud internet users around the world.

Operated out of hotels, casinos and fortified compounds around the region, the global cyberscam industry has reached "industrial proportions", with estimates of its annual revenues as high as US\$64 billion, according to the UN Office on Drugs and Crime.

Cambodian Information Minister Neth Pheaktra told AFP "635 Thai nationals involved in illegal online business operations and transnational criminal networks were deported to Thailand" through

a border checkpoint yesterday.

Thirty suspects were "being processed by Cambodian authorities" over alleged criminal offences, he said.

Rights monitors and other experts have accused officials in Cambodia of complicity – allegations the government has denied.

Authorities say they have detained and deported more than 13,000 foreign nationals involved in online scams since early last year.

From January to April, more than 240,000 people, including Chinese, Indonesians, Indians and others, accused of scam involvement "voluntarily departed" Cambodia, the government said last week.

Neth Pheaktra said police searched a condominium building in Poipet city, on the border with Thailand, on Saturday.

The location was suspected of being the site of illegal online businesses, online gambling and other activities "potentially linked to transnational criminal networks", the minister said.

Nearly 4,700 mobile phones and

more than 400 computer monitors were found inside the building, he added.

"The inspection of electronic devices also uncovered numerous online gambling websites targeting customers in Thailand," he said.

The raid came two days after the United States announced sanctions on a Cambodian senator and businessman, Kok An, who Washington accused of controlling scam compounds in Cambodia and protecting a criminal network that has defrauded Americans of millions of dollars.

The US Treasury alleged Kok An's firm Crown Resorts owns casinos and other buildings, including in Poipet, that have been "converted into compounds from which criminal organisations conduct digital asset investment fraud and other scams".

Cambodian authorities raided another suspected scam compound in Poipet on Wednesday, detaining many foreigners, mostly Chinese nationals, police said. – AFP

Myanmar mass prison sentence cut trims Suu Kyi's sentence

YANGON – Myanmar's coup-chief turned president cut all prisoners' sentences by one-sixth yesterday, a blanket measure a source close to deposed leader Aung San Suu Kyi said would further shorten her detention.

Suu Kyi has been sequestered since a 2021 military coup, but the senior member of her dissolved National League for Democracy (NLD) party said while her term had been reduced, her remaining sentence is still unclear.

"We also don't know exactly how many years she has left," the source told AFP, speaking on condition of anonymity for security reasons.

The military toppled Suu Kyi's elected government five years ago, sweeping her into detention on a host of charges rights groups say were concocted to sideline her and triggering civil war.

Since then, Myanmar has been

led by Min Aung Hlaing, first as military chief before he was this month sworn in as civilian president after a tightly restricted election excluding the NLD.

Democracy monitors described the process as a rebranding of military rule, and have likewise dismissed rollbacks of some post-coup curbs as lip-service measures designed to reform the image of the government.

A statement from Min Aung Hlaing's presidential office said to mark a public holiday yesterday, prisoners will "have their remaining sentences cut by one-sixth".

It did not mention any prisoners by name, but the NLD source said 80-year-old Suu Kyi "will also get one-sixth reduction of her remaining sentences".

However, it remains unclear how much of Suu Kyi's sentence handed down inside Myanmar's opaque court system is by now considered

served, and therefore by how much her term will be trimmed.

Suu Kyi was initially convicted in closed-court trials and handed a sentence of more than three decades on charges ranging from corruption to breaching COVID-19 regulations.

A 2023 pardon of some crimes saw the Nobel Peace Prize laureate's sentence reduced to 27 years.

In one of his first acts as civilian president, Min Aung Hlaing this month issued another public holiday blanket order nearly identical to yesterday's, trimming more time off Suu Kyi's sentence.

He also pardoned Suu Kyi's top aide Win Myint who served as her ceremonial president, prompting speculation her detention may be significantly relaxed next.

Suu Kyi remains massively popular inside Myanmar, but has been held almost completely incommunicado as her family warn of her ailing health. – AFP

Iran's supreme leader defies US blockade as oil prices soar



The permanent conductor of Iran's National Music Orchestra, Homayoun Rahimian, leads a performance on the occasion of the national "Persian Gulf" Day at the Vahdat Hall in Tehran yesterday. Iran's parliament speaker Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf vowed yesterday that his country's control over the strategic Strait of Hormuz would ensure a future without US presence in the area. "Today, by managing the Strait of Hormuz, Iran will provide itself and its neighbours with the precious blessing of a future free from American presence and interference," said Ghalibaf in a post on X to mark the national "Persian Gulf" Day. — AFP

TEHRAN — Iran's supreme leader declared yesterday that the United States had suffered a shameful defeat, defiantly rejecting a warning from President Donald Trump that an economically punishing US naval blockade could be enforced for months to come.

Oil prices hit a four-year high, then fell back slightly, before Mojtaba Khamenei issued a written message read out on state television declaring that Iran was now in the driver's seat in the crisis.

"Today, two months after the largest military deployment and aggression by the world's bullies in the region, and the United States' disgraceful defeat in its plans, a new chapter is unfolding for the Persian Gulf and the Strait of Hormuz," he said, hailing Iran's control over shipping in the strait.

He went on to predict a bright future for the Gulf without the United States, saying those who interfere in the region from afar "have no place there except at the bottom of its waters".

Khamenei was wounded in the initial US-Israeli strikes that killed his father Ali Khamenei, and has not been seen in public since being named his successor as supreme leader last month.

The United States imposed a blockade on Iran's ports two weeks ago, while the Islamic republic has maintained its stranglehold over the strategic Strait of Hormuz since the start of the Middle East war at the end of February.

Now Washington is seeking to set up an international coalition comprising allied states and shipping firms to coordinate safe passage through Hormuz, a US State Department official told AFP — while maintaining its blockade of ships serving Iran.

And Iran's parliament speaker Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf said control of Hormuz would allow

Tehran to "provide itself and its neighbours with the precious blessing of a future free from American presence and interference".

Trump was expected to receive a briefing yesterday on new plans for potential military action in Iran from Admiral Brad Cooper, the head of US Central Command, two sources with knowledge of US planning told news site Axios.

Israeli Defence Minister Israel Katz warned, meanwhile, that it was "possible that we may soon have to act again" against Iran to achieve the war's objectives.

But the commander of the Iranian Revolutionary Guards aerospace force, Majid Mousavi, said that even a "short and tactical" enemy operation would be met with "with painful, prolonged, and extensive strikes".

"We have already seen the fate of your bases in the region; we will also see your warships" face the same, he added, speaking to state TV.

'Choking'

This week Trump has reportedly told oil executives and national security officials to prepare for a long US blockade designed to force Tehran to surrender its nuclear programme, and, speaking to Axios, said: "They are choking like a stuffed pig."

US Central Command said on Wednesday in a social media post that it had reached a "significant milestone after successfully redirecting the 42nd commercial vessel attempting to violate the blockade".

Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian called the US blockade "a disruption to lasting stability" in the Gulf that was "doomed to fail".

Oil prices struck a four-year high yesterday. International benchmark Brent crude soared more than seven percent to US\$126 a barrel, but then eased in afternoon trading in London.

UN chief António Guterres said the closure of Hormuz was "strangling the global economy"

and International Energy Agency (IEA) chief Fatih Birol told a meeting at his Paris headquarters: "The world is facing the biggest energy crisis in history."

Trump faces domestic political pressure to end the war, which is unpopular even with much of his base, and has increased costs for American consumers and unnerved US allies.

Iran's economy is also suffering and the rial has fallen to historic lows against the dollar.

'Heartbreaking'

Tehran residents speaking to AFP journalists in Paris reported a sense of despair that the Islamic republic government was clinging to power and the negotiations have stalled.

"Without pressure from the US, imagining the future with this regime is very frightening, and the experience of war is terrifying as well," one 28-year-old IT worker told AFP journalists in Paris via messaging app from the Iranian capital.

"From the Islamic Republic still being in place to the innocent people whose lives were destroyed in this war, everything is so disappointing."

Iran proposed easing its chokehold over the Strait of Hormuz if Washington lifted its blockade and broader negotiations took place. But the Trump administration has insisted that Iran's nuclear programme be on the table.

Violence has continued on the war's Lebanese front, despite a recently extended ceasefire between Israel and Hezbollah.

Israeli strikes on southern Lebanon killed at least nine people, the health ministry said yesterday, shortly after Lebanese President Joseph Aoun denounced what he called "continuing Israeli violations" of the truce.

The Israeli military said yesterday that another soldier had been killed in Lebanon's south — the 17th since the campaign there began.

— AFP

Just telling nations to quit fossil fuels 'not realistic': COP31 chief

Laurent Thomet and Ali Bekhtaoui

PARIS — The Turkish COP31 president-designate said yesterday the clean energy transition will be a top issue at the climate summit but simply telling nations to phase out fossil fuels "is not realistic".

Murat Kurum, who is also Turkey's climate minister, spoke to AFP as the war in the Middle East has fuelled calls for the world to speed up the deployment of renewable energy.

Last year's COP30 climate conference in Brazil produced a watered-down final text that lacked any explicit mention of a fossil-fuel transition.

Instead, Brazil offered to create a voluntary "roadmap" on transitioning away from fossil fuels.

Speaking on the sidelines of a high-level meeting on the energy transition at the International Energy Agency (IEA) in Paris, Kurum said that COP31 would "continue to implement" the roadmap initiated by Brazil.

But when pressed on whether the words "fossil fuels" could appear in a COP31 final decision, Kurum said: "It's not about putting some words in a text."

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

Nearly 60 nations hailed progress in the fight to exit fossil fuels on Wednesday at a conference in Colombia that gained new urgency after the COP30 failure to spell out the goal.

An urban planner by training who ran an unsuccessful campaign for mayor of Istanbul in 2024, Kurum took a diplomatic tone when talking about issues that are major sources of tension at climate summits.

"Each and every country is dependent on fossil fuels. So just telling them to phase out of fossil fuels is not realistic," he said through an interpreter.

"What should happen is that countries work on clean energy, renewable energy as soon as possible so that they can reduce their dependency on fossil fuels," he said.

"We need to do this not only by writing something, writing a statement on paper, but we need to make sure that people actually see that reality," Kurum added.

On another divisive issue that will top the COP 31 agenda — climate finance — he said pledges by developed countries to provide money to developing nations have not reached "the desired level".

"On the one hand, we are aware of the expectations of developing countries, but we are also aware of the concerns of the developed countries," he said.

'No surprises in Antalya'

Under a compromise deal following a battle over hosting COP31, Australia will lead the negotiations at COP31 while Turkey will preside over the summit in the Mediterranean resort of Antalya.

When asked if he would have a role in the negotiations, Kurum said: "Turkey will play a role anywhere, everywhere, because Turkey is the COP31 president."

Australia will lead the negotiations "in coordination" with the COP31 presidency, he said, adding: "At end of the day, the decisions will be taken by the COP31 presidency."

Kurum said he was working in "great harmony and great coordination" with Australia's Climate Minister Chris Bowen, who is steering the COP31 negotiations.

He said the goal of COP31 can be summed up in one word: sincerity.

"We want sincerity at COP31. We want promises kept at COP31," Kurum said. "At the end of the day, we want a result-orientated, implementation-oriented COP."

Kurum sounded optimistic that COP31 would run smoothly — a pledge some of his predecessors have also made but struggled to deliver as climate summits notoriously run into overtime due to tense negotiations.

"At COP31 in Antalya in November there will be no surprises," he said. "Everything will be planned, decided and implemented ahead of time." — (More on p.12) — AFP



Turkish Minister of Environment, Urbanisation and Climate Change and President of the 2026 United Nations Climate Change Conference COP31 Murat Kurum poses at the IEA (International Energy Agency) headquarters in Paris yesterday.

— AFP

Sweden fetes king's 80th birthday with flypast, banquet

Pia Ohlin

STOCKHOLM – Sweden feted its record-breaking monarch King Carl XVI Gustaf's 80th birthday yesterday with a choral tribute, a flypast and a gala banquet to be attended by royals from around the world.

The king, the longest reigning monarch in Swedish history, took part in a morning thanksgiving celebration, called a Te Deum, at the palace chapel.

Under sunny skies and unusually mild temperatures, large crowds thronged the palace grounds to then watch a military honour guard, after which young children lined up to hand over flowers to the royal.

The king, his guests and crowds thronging the streets around the royal palace were also treated to a flypast, including eight JAS Gripens, as well as a 21-gun salute and a choral tribute.

"Seeing you all gathered here feels fantastic for my guests and me, to see this choir before me and that you've all come here to sing on this day," the king told the cheering crowd from a palace balcony.

Helene Lofstrand, a 52-year-old finance sector worker, was among those who came out to show her support.

"I think, personally, that His Majesty is doing a great job. The politically independent representative that he is for the country is very important, and I think we're all very proud of him," she told AFP.

A lunch of Arctic char (a cold-water fish) and cake with berries



Sweden's King Carl XVI Gustaf (left) and Sweden's Queen Silvia applaud from the balcony as members of the Swedish Armed Forces pay tribute to the King in the Outer Courtyard of the Royal Palace in Stockholm, Sweden, yesterday, during celebrations to mark the 80th birthday of Sweden's King Carl XVI Gustaf. – AFP

for 200 guests was then held at City Hall.

In the evening, a banquet was held at the palace with a number of European royals and dignitaries invited, as well as Thailand's royal couple.

Attendees at the events included King Harald, Queen Sonja and Crown Prince Haakon of Norway; King Rama X and Queen Suthide of Thailand; Queen Sofia of Spain; and King Frederik, Queen Mary, Queen Margrethe and Princess Benedikte of Denmark.

'King all the time'

In a recent interview with the *Svenska Dagbladet* daily, the king – who was known in his youth as a car-mad playboy – spoke of the burden of responsibility that comes with his role.

"It is heavy," he said. "I am king all the time. You have to be."

Speaking on Swedish Radio yesterday, the king recalled a moment in 1966 when, as prince, he was in Sydney while sailing around the world with the Swedish navy.

An elderly weatherbeaten Swede, homesick and keen to speak some Swedish, approached him one night on the gangway, unaware of the young man's identity.

"It was one of the few times in my life that I have been completely anonymous," he said.

The king, whose role has been purely ceremonial since constitutional reform in 1974, celebrated his golden jubilee in 2023.

He was the world's youngest monarch when he was crowned

aged 27 in 1973 following the death of his grandfather Gustaf VI Adolf.

Abdication?

Born on April 30, 1946, Carl Gustaf Folke Hubertus Bernadotte was only nine months old when his father, Prince Gustaf Adolf, died in a plane crash in Denmark.

Despite occasional scandals – the biggest when a 2010 book alleged he frequented sex clubs and had numerous affairs – the monarch enjoys broad support.

A poll by the Ipsos institute in 2024 showed that 66 percent of Swedes wanted to maintain the monarchy and 20 percent wanted to abolish it.

However, the poll also indicated that 42 percent thought it was time for the king to abdicate and pass the throne to his 48-year-old daughter, Crown Princess Victoria, compared to 38 percent who thought he should stay on.

He has however made it clear he has no plans to step down, telling *Svenska Dagbladet* he would stay on "as long as I have the strength".

He paid tribute to Victoria, known for her down-to-earth attitude and diligence.

"She is ambitious," he said. "Preparing herself enormously in various fields, most recently as an officer in the different branches of the armed forces. That's tough."

Carl XVI Gustaf is the European monarch with the longest reign after the abdication of his cousin Queen Margrethe of Denmark in 2024.

– AFP

Jury of Italy's Venice Biennale resigns over Russia row

ROME – The international jury of the upcoming Venice Biennale Art Exhibition resigned yesterday in a row over the organisation's decision to allow Russia to participate in this year's event.

The resignations came a week after the jury said it would exclude countries from awards if the International Criminal Court (ICC) has issued arrest warrants for war crimes against their leaders – meaning Russia and Israel.

And just days before the exhibition is due to open on May 9.

The organisers of the event – the world's top international art exhibition – said in March that they would allow Russia to take part, but the decision has been strongly criticised by Ukraine and the EU.

Brussels warned it could cut funding, while the Italian government – which has supported Ukraine in the war – stressed the Biennale was acting "entirely independent" of Rome's wishes.

Following the resignations, the Biennale said it has "decided that the award ceremony of the 61st International Art Exhibition, previously scheduled for May 9, will take place on Sunday, November 22".

It also said it would hand out two awards, one which could be won by any one of the "National Participations included in the 61st Exhibition, as per the official list, following the principle of inclusion and equal treatment".

"This is consistent with the founding spirit of La Biennale, based on openness, dialogue, and the rejection of any form of closure or censorship," it said in a statement.

"La Biennale seeks to be, and must remain, a place of trace in the name of art, culture, and artistic freedom," it said.

– AFP

Ex-FBI director Comey appears in court over Trump threat charge

WASHINGTON, DC – Former FBI director James Comey surrendered to authorities in Virginia on Wednesday after being charged with threatening President Donald Trump's life with a social media post.

Comey, an outspoken critic of the US president who faced other federal charges that were subsequently thrown out, posted a photo to Instagram in May 2025 of seashells arranged in the shape of the numbers 86 and 47* on a beach in North Carolina.

Trump said this gesture was a coded threat.

Comey faces one count of "willfully making a threat to take the life of and to inflict bodily harm upon the president of the United States" and another of making an interstate threat.

Each charge carries a maximum penalty of 10 years in prison.

The former FBI director appeared for a hearing in Alexandria, Virginia, where he did not enter a plea and was later allowed to leave.

Acting Attorney General Todd Blanche, speaking to reporters, said he did not know when Comey's next court appearance would be.

Blanche defended the indictment when asked if anyone who posted the numbers "8647" would face charges.

"Every threats case is different," he

said. "Every time there is a threat against the president it doesn't necessarily lead to an indictment.

"It depends on the investigation. It depends on all kinds of factors," he said.

Trump said the former FBI chief knew "full well" the connotations.

"86 47 means 'kill President Trump.' James Comey, who is a Dirty Cop, one of the worst, knows this full well!" Trump said in a post on his Truth Social platform after the court hearing.

'Petty retribution'

Comey apologized at the time for the Instagram post and said he "didn't realise some folks associate those numbers with violence."

"It never occurred to me but I oppose violence of any kind so I took the post down," he said.

In September, Comey was charged with making false statements to Congress and obstructing a congressional proceeding in what was widely seen as retribution by the Republican president against a political opponent.

A federal judge threw out that case on the grounds the prosecutor handpicked by Trump who brought the charges was unlawfully appointed.

Democrats are viewing this latest indictment in a similar light.

Senator Dick Durbin called

the charges "baseless" and "petty retribution."

"This is another case of a weaponized Justice Department lashing out on behalf of a vengeful president," Durbin said in a statement.

Comey served as FBI director from 2013 to 2017.

During his tenure, he oversaw the investigation of Hillary Clinton's use of a private email server and the investigation of Russian interference in the 2016 election, among other notable cases.

Comey was fired by Trump in May 2017.

– AFP

*In the context of the recent legal actions involving former FBI Director James Comey and the Trump administration, "86 47" refers to a social media post that has become the centre of a federal indictment. The numbers are interpreted as a coded anti-Trump message: 86: In restaurant and bar slang, "to 86" something means to cancel an order, eject a person, or get rid of an item. 47: Refers to Donald Trump as the 47th President of the United States.

The issue stems from an Instagram photo Comey posted in May 2025 while on vacation in North Carolina. The photo showed seashells on a beach arranged to spell out "86 47" with the caption, "Cool shell formation on my beach walk." – Gemini

Countries urged to 'go further' as fossil fuel exit talks wrap in Colombia

Nick Perry and Anna Pelegri

SANTA MARTA, Colombia – Nearly 60 nations hailed progress in the fight to exit fossil fuels as a breakaway conference wrapped up in Colombia on Wednesday – but now face the harder work of turning words into action.

Ministers and envoys gathered in the coal port of Santa Marta in the hope of speeding the shift away from planet-heating fossil fuels and breaking a stalemate at the UN climate talks.

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 it gained momentum after the US-Israel attacks on Iran ignited a global energy crisis – underscoring the risks of reliance even as some nations looked to fossil fuels to plug supply gaps.

From tiny island states to European powers and emerging markets, nations attended the conference voluntarily after an effort to tackle fossil fuels head-on at last year's COP30 failed.

"Countries are taking steps," said Dutch Climate Minister Stientje van Veldhoven, whose country co-hosted.

"Everybody who is here is here because they want to move further than where they are right now, and they think that we can be stronger together.

"Together we can be stronger – and we can go further."

No binding commitments had been expected but Colombian Environment Minister Irene Vélez Torres said "big results" were achieved nonetheless.

She pointed to the creation of an expert panel of world-renowned climate scientists tasked with helping governments on their own transitions – a daunting task in particular for developing nations dependent on oil and gas.

She thanked nations for coming together "to talk about the challenges [and] to talk about the taboos."

"When they look back at us from the future...They will remember that we were there and working on the challenges of our time," she said.

The climate-threatened Pacific nation of Tuvalu was also named as host of next year's conference with Ireland in what was seen as a crucial signal that the momentum would carry on beyond the first edition.

'Good atmosphere'

Many major fossil fuel producers turned out for the event, from



Colombia's Environment Minister Irene Vélez (left) and Netherlands' Climate and Green Growth Minister Stientje van Veldhoven applaud during the International Conference on the Just Transition Away from Fossil Fuels in Santa Marta, Colombia, on Wednesday. – AFP

wealthy economies like Canada and Norway to developing oil giants like Angola and Brazil.

The United States, China, Saudi Arabia and Russia – among other major producers and consumers of fossil fuels – did not show up.

The conference bypassed the United Nations climate process altogether, reflecting a growing impatience with its failure to tackle fossil fuels, the main driver of global warming.

Many nations spoke of the

relief at not having to cobble an agreement by consensus between nearly 200 nations – a process that takes nearly two weeks at the annual COP climate summits and often ends in bitter disappointment.

"You could really feel it there – that it's somehow a new beginning or a wake-up call, like things can't go on this way," German environment state secretary Jochen Flasbarth told reporters, noting "a very good atmosphere here."

Away from the conference

rooms on the Caribbean coast, oil prices surged on Wednesday to their highest level since early 2022, underlining the risk of fossil fuel reliance.

The global energy crisis triggered by the Middle East war dominated the talks, with fossil fuels cast as a threat to energy independence as much as the climate.

Tough message

For many nations – particularly developing fossil fuel producers – phasing out a major source of state revenue is easier said than done.

"Not phasing out – phase down. That is the message," Onuoha Magnus Chidi, an adviser to Nigeria's regional development minister, told AFP in Santa Marta.

"People are going to lose their jobs...How are you trying to re-engage them in other sectors?" said the delegate from one of Africa's biggest oil and gas producers.

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

The discussions in Santa Marta would feed into a voluntary "roadmap" aimed at moving the world away from fossil fuels being compiled by Brazil, said Ana Toni, CEO of last year's COP30. – AFP

Brazil's Senate rejects Lula's Supreme Court candidate

BRASÍLIA – Brazil's opposition-controlled Senate rejected President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva's Supreme Court nominee Jorge Messias on Wednesday, in a highly unusual move reflecting deep political divisions.

The secret ballot recorded 42 votes against Messias and 34 in favour, the first time a candidate for one of the top court's 11 seats has been rejected in over a century, according to Brazilian media.

Messias, currently serving as attorney general, has played a key role in implementing some of Lula's more contentious legal policies, such as tightening social media regulation.

A close Lula ally, Messias sought to win over lawmakers by presenting himself as a moderate evangelical Christian – a significant religious constituency in Brazil.

But his candidacy effectively became a referendum on the government and the Supreme Court.

The Supreme Court has come under heavy political strain over rulings including the 2025 conviction of far-right opposition leader and former president Jair Bolsonaro for plotting a coup.

The court sentenced the former leader to 27 years in prison for attempting to cling to power after narrowly losing an election – a ruling that triggered reprisals from the administration of US President Donald Trump.



Brazil's President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva (right) poses with Attorney General Jorge Messias during the induction ceremony of the members of his cabinet, at Planalto Palace in Brasília on January 1, 2023, after his inauguration ceremony. On Wednesday, the Brazilian Senate rejected Messias, Lula's nominee for a seat on the Supreme Court, marking a setback for the president just months before the presidential election. – AFP

'Defeating Lula'

Its reputation has recently suffered a blow following the revelation of alleged links between several judges and a banker accused of multimillion-US-dollar fraud.

Lula will seek a fourth non-consecutive presidential term in elections in October, when he will face off against the former president's son, Senator Flávio Bolsonaro.

"This is not about defeating President Lula in this vote – whoever wants to take him on can do so in October," Senator Weverton Rocha urged his colleagues, speaking at a committee session ahead of the full chamber vote.

Before the vote, when the younger Bolsonaro asked Messias if he would grant amnesty to his father and supporters convicted for the attempted coup, Messias responded that "the discussion about amnesty belongs in the political sphere."

He did, however, refer to the events of January 8, 2023 in Brasília as "one of the saddest episodes in recent history."

It had been thought that Messias, an evangelical Christian who opposes the legalisation of abortion, might have been able to persuade conservative senators to support his nomination.

During his confirmation hearing, he had assured lawmakers he would be guided by "spiritual values." – AFP

'Football Leaks' hacker Rui Pinto acquitted in 2nd trial

LISBON – Rui Pinto, the hacker behind the "Football Leaks" revelations that exposed dodgy dealings in world football, was acquitted on Wednesday of all charges in a second Portuguese trial, despite having previously been convicted for similar offences.

The 37-year-old had been on trial since January 2025 over 241 alleged counts of illegally accessing email accounts belonging to several Portuguese sports bodies, including top club Benfica, law firms, as well as judges and the tax authority.

The case was dismissed after the court ruled that the charges were "invalid", as it pertained to a case for which Pinto had already been tried and convicted in September 2023.

He was at the time handed a four-year suspended prison sentence for a series of cybercrimes, as well as attempted extortion targeting a sports investment fund.

"The prosecution violated the rights of the defendant," who was subjected to "procedural violence", the court said in its ruling, quoted by several local media outlets.

Pinto has held the dual status of defendant and protected witness in Portugal and has also cooperated with investigators in other European countries, including France.

At his first trial, he admitted using illegal means to obtain millions of documents, which he began publishing online in late 2015.

Between 2015 and 2018, Pinto shared 18.6 million documents on the internet and with a consortium of European newspapers, which published details of the revelations that shook the football world.

The leaks revealed the salaries of superstars Lionel Messi and Neymar, and brought global attention to a rape allegation lawsuit involving Cristiano Ronaldo, which was later dismissed by a US judge.

Pinto was arrested in January 2019 by Hungarian police in Budapest, where he was living as Portuguese officials sought his extradition.

He spent more than a year in pre-trial detention before agreeing to cooperate with authorities in other cases, granting them access to encrypted data.

In 2023, he was given a six-month suspended prison sentence in France for hacking the emails of Paris Saint-Germain executives.

He is also behind the "Luanda Leaks", an investigation published in 2020 about Isabel dos Santos, the fabulously rich daughter of late Angola president José Eduardo dos Santos, who ruled Angola for 38 years. – AFP

Afghan women footballers celebrate 'historic moment'

Football

Kirsty Needham

SYDNEY – A FIFA rule change allowing Afghanistan's women footballers to compete in official matches is a "historic moment" and "basic human right", former captain Khalida Popal told AFP yesterday.

Afghanistan will in future be eligible to qualify for the Women's World Cup and the Olympics, something Popal said was the culmination of a "long fight".

"I woke up this morning imagining a young Afghan girl opening her eyes and saying, 'I've got the right to play'. This is a basic human right," Popal said from Copenhagen.

She added: "It's fantastic news, it's a historic moment we are trying to absorb."

The Afghanistan Women's National Team was founded by Popal and other players in 2007 in Kabul.

After the Taliban authorities

retook power in 2021, about 100 players and family were evacuated to Melbourne in Australia, with team members also relocating to Europe, Britain and the United States.

Women in Afghanistan are banned from participating in sport, and the Taliban authorities have shut down clandestine exercise groups held behind closed doors.

A team of Afghan refugee players was formed between Europe and Australia, playing their first international matches at the FIFA Unites: Women's Series last year in Morocco.

The team could not play official competitions because FIFA rules previously required the approval of the Taliban-controlled Afghanistan Football Federation.

The FIFA amendment this week allows the official recognition of the Afghanistan team through agreement between FIFA and the Asian Football Confederation.

It will also apply to other teams in



Former Afghan football player Khalida Popal, founder and director of Girl Power Organisation, speaks during the She Is Global Forum in Medellin, Colombia on August 9, 2024.

– AFP

exceptional circumstances that may be unable to register a national team.

"It has been a long fight but we are so grateful this history is made not only for the women of

Afghanistan," said Popal.

"No team, if they face a situation like us, will suffer what we have sacrificed and suffered."

Afghanistan's women footballers

hope to build an internationally competitive team drawing from players scattered across the globe, she said.

"This announcement will allow us to find the talent within the diaspora," she said.

The next step is for players to go for trials, ahead of a possible game in June.

Afghanistan will not be eligible to qualify for the 2027 Women's World Cup but will be able to try and reach future editions.

"This is a powerful and unprecedented step in world sport," FIFA president Gianni Infantino said following the decision.

"FIFA has listened to these players as part of its responsibility to protect the right of every girl and woman to play football and to represent who they are."

He added: "FIFA is proud to lead this historic initiative and to stand alongside these courageous players on and off the pitch." – AFP



Osasuna winger Munoz suffers calf injury, World Cup hopes hit

MADRID – Osasuna winger Victor Munoz's hopes of earning a place in Spain's World Cup squad have suffered a setback after he picked up a calf injury that will sideline him for at least two weeks.

The winger, who received his first Spain call-up in March and scored on his debut against Serbia, has impressed in his first La Liga season. His form has reportedly attracted transfer interest from FC

Barcelona and Real Madrid, which still owns 50 percent of his rights.

His display for Spain further strengthened his case for a summer call-up, especially after Lamine Yamal's season-ending hamstring injury, which could leave the Barcelona forward short of full fitness for Spain's opening match in the United States.

Meanwhile, Nico Williams is still searching for form after

a campaign disrupted by pelvic problems, while Alex Baena's level has dipped since his move to Atletico Madrid from Villarreal last summer.

Munoz will now miss this weekend's match against Barcelona, as well as upcoming games against Levante, Atletico Madrid and possibly Espanyol, fixtures that could have helped him further convince Spain coach Luis de la Fuente. – Xinhua



Inter on brink of Serie A title as refereeing scandal rocks Italian football

Terry Daley

MILAN – Serie A leaders Inter Milan could be crowned champions of Italy this weekend when they take on Parma at the San Siro, as a brewing referee scandal threatens the integrity of Italy's top flight.

Holding a 10-point lead over Napoli, who are at Champions League chasers Como tomorrow evening, Inter need just one win in their final four matches to secure a 21st league title and third in six seasons.

But when Inter fans take to their seats on Sunday evening, their Scudetto celebrations might already be underway, if Napoli lose to Como and AC Milan - 12 points back in third - fail to win at Sassuolo on Sunday afternoon.

Parma have nothing to play for and should be easy meat for Inter, but the same could have been said last weekend when the league leaders threw away a two-goal lead to draw at mid-table Torino.

In reality, both Napoli and Milan's remaining realistic target is sealing qualification to the Champions League.

Napoli would do just that if they beat Como and Roma then failed to win against Fiorentina on Monday night.

Napoli are eight points ahead of both fifth-placed Como and Roma,

who sit sixth, with that pair trying to sneak into the top four in the final weeks of the campaign.

Como and Roma are three points behind Juventus, who sit in the fourth and final Champions League qualification spot, with Milan a further three points ahead.

Calcio in crisis

But overshadowing the on-pitch action is a scandal in which the head of referees for Serie A and Serie B is being investigated by prosecutors in Milan for the crime of "sporting fraud".

Gianluca Rocchi suspended himself on Sunday after the news broke that he, VAR chief Andrea Gervasoni and two others were suspected of the same offence, which carries a maximum prison sentence of six years.

The 52-year-old Rocchi did not speak to prosecutors at a hearing yesterday, but Gervasoni will be questioned over accusations that the selection of referees has, in some instances, been piloted and that VAR officials have received outside communication from both him and Rocchi on what decisions to make.

Another official, Daniele Paterna, is accused of giving false testimony on an incident in which Rocchi is suspected of banging on

the door of the VAR room to get him to change his ruling on a handball offence during Udinese's 1-0 win over Parma in March last year.

Rocchi is also suspected of having decided on the selection of Andrea Colombo as the referee for Inter Milan's 1-0 defeat at Bologna in April last year as he was "liked by Inter".

Gervasoni, according to a report from daily La Repubblica, is suspected of having instructed a VAR official to make sure that a penalty was not given to Inter for a foul on Yann Bisseck during their 1-0 home defeat to Roma, which was also played last April.

Napoli ended up winning the league title by a single point ahead of Inter.

Five matches are under suspicion, none from the current season, and all five people officially under investigation are match officials, with no one from any football club as yet in prosecutors' sights.

But a drawn-out scandal is the last thing Italian football needs after the national team's catastrophic failure to reach the World Cup for the third time in succession, with the country's football federation not set to elect a new president until late June.

The Como vs Napoli game will be played at 12 a.m. Sunday morning Macau time. – AFP/MPD

Burnley boss Parker leaves club after relegation



LONDON – Scott Parker has left his position as head coach of Burnley by mutual consent following the club's relegation from the Premier League, it was announced yesterday.

Burnley said in a statement that Parker and the board had "mutually agreed that his time at Turf Moor would conclude" following one season back in the English top division.

Parker led the Clarets to promotion last year but this season has been a struggle, with just four league wins in total.

Burnley's fate was confirmed on April 22 after a 1-0 home defeat by Manchester City, two days after Wolves were relegated.

Parker, who has previously managed Fulham, Bournemouth and Belgian side Club Brugge, signed a three-year contract in July 2024, succeeding Vincent Kompany.

He oversaw a remarkable 2024/25 season in the Championship, which included a 31-match unbeaten run and 30 clean sheets, taking them back into the Premier League at the first time of asking.

But Burnley have conceded 68 goals in 34 league matches in the current campaign, the most of any side, and were knocked out of the FA Cup and League Cup by third-tier teams.

"The club would like to place on record its sincere thanks to Scott for his professionalism, dedication and contribution," Burnley said in a statement.

"He leaves with the respect and gratitude of everyone connected with Burnley Football Club."

Former England midfielder Parker, 45, said in a statement on the club's website that it had been an "immense privilege" to lead Burnley.



Burnley's English manager Scott Parker reacts on the touchline during the English Premier League match against Manchester City at the Etihad Stadium in Manchester, north-west England, on September 27, 2025.

– AFP

"I have enjoyed every moment of our journey together, but feel that now is the right time for both parties to move in a different direction," he said.

"I reflect back with great pride on what we achieved during my time at the club, especially our unforgettable promotion season in 2024/25, and it was a true honour to lead this team into the Premier League."

The club said Parker's assistant, Mike Jackson, would take charge for the club's four remaining Premier League fixtures, beginning with Friday's match at Leeds United.

It said the process of appointing a new permanent head coach ahead of the 2026/27 season had begun. – AFP

Vietnam claims women's beach handball gold on final day of Asian Beach Games

SANYA – Vietnam beat China 2-1 in a shootout to win the women's beach handball gold medal yesterday in the final event of the 6th Asian Beach Games.

Vietnam took the first set 20-18 with a series of quick attacks before China held its nerve to edge the second 21-20 and force a shootout. Vietnam then prevailed 9-6 to secure the title.

"All our players gave their full effort and competed with total commitment," said China coach Shang Xi, who admitted the team "made a few mistakes and failed to adjust in time."

"Vietnam is very strong. We have learned valuable lessons and will prepare better for future competitions," Shang added.

Thailand beat Turkmenistan 2-0 to claim the women's bronze medal.

In the men's event, Iran won its first

beach handball gold on Wednesday, defeating three-time champions Qatar 2-1 in the final.

"In my opinion, it came down to our own mistakes. We managed to make up for some of them in the second half, but we missed too many crucial shots," said Qatar's Mutasem Mohamed.

The bronze medal went to Thailand, which beat Bahrain 2-0.

Closing ceremony

The 6th Asian Beach Games closed yesterday in south China's tropical Sanya, with the closing ceremony held at the seaside Yasha Park.

Olympic Council of Asia (OCA) President Sheikh Joaan bin Hamad Al Thani declared the Games closed as fireworks lit up the sky above Sanya Bay.

From April 22 to 30, more than 1,600 athletes from all 45 OCA members competed across 14 sports, 15 disciplines and 62 events. The

Games marked the first time Hainan Province has hosted a continental-level beach sports event, and the first major international sporting event since the Hainan Free Trade Port began island-wide operations last December.

"Together, as one Asia, we have made history," Sheikh Joaan said in his speech. "United by our love of sport and a shared dream, we showed the very best of our continent."

Chen Xi, mayor of Sanya, handed the OCA flag to Gao Zhidan, president of the Chinese Olympic Committee and the Sanya Asian Beach Games organizing committee, who then passed it to Sheikh Joaan. Sheikh Joaan subsequently presented the flag to Philippine Olympic Committee president Abraham Tolentino, marking the handover to Cebu, which will host the next edition of the Asian Beach Games in 2028. *- Xinhua*

Photos on page 16



Japanese boxer Naoya Inoue (left), the current unified WBA, WBC, IBF, and WBO world superbantamweight champion, and his compatriot Juntō Nakatani pose during a press conference ahead of their fight on Saturday, in Tokyo yesterday. Undisputed superbantamweight world champion Inoue puts his belts on the line for the seventh time in one of the biggest bouts in Japanese boxing history. *- AFP*

Antonelli bids for hat-trick as F1 returns in Miami

F1

MIAMI – Italian teenager Kimi Antonelli, the youngest championship leader in F1 history, will seek to complete a hat-trick of early season victories this weekend as Formula One returns after a month's enforced absence due to the Middle East war.

The 19-year-old Mercedes driver, triumphant in China and Japan, leads team-mate George Russell, who won the season-opening Australian race, by nine points ahead of what is effectively the start of another season, complete with revised rules and widespread car upgrades, at the Miami Grand Prix.

"After a month without any racing, we are ready to get back on track," said Mercedes team chief Toto Wolff. "We've used this break to analyse the opening races, address our weaknesses and raise our level."

"We've started the season well, but that counts for very little if you stand still. We know our competitors will have used this time to improve and build a deeper understanding of their cars so we expect the field to be closer in Miami."

"That's the reality of F1 - it's a challenge we must rise to."

Antonelli's early triumphs made him the first Italian driver since Alberto Ascari in 1953 to win two

consecutive races. Ascari completed his treble that season.

Wolff also addressed the tweaks to the regulations to be introduced in Miami, aimed at making the cars and the spectacle more natural with reduced battery re-charging in qualifying and increased super-clipping power to reduce dangerous speed differentials.

He said the revised rules would "respect the DNA of our sport" and deliver an improved spectacle without any significant reduction to Mercedes' early-season performance advantage.

For Mercedes, this Sunday's race is an opportunity for a first win in Florida since the event was launched five years ago. It has been won twice by four-time champion Max Verstappen for Red Bull and twice by McLaren with a win apiece for world champion Lando Norris and team-mate Oscar Piastri.

'Completely new car'

They will harbour hopes of claiming points too with success in Saturday's sprint race, won last year by Norris, but Ferrari are widely expected to be strong contenders too as they arrive in Miami, like McLaren, who are bringing an almost "completely new car", with a heavily revised package.

"It was one of our best tracks for pure pace, compared to others, last year," said Norris. "It's a different

track and it may still suit us a little more than others."

After winning in 2022 and 2023, Verstappen will be aiming to stop Mercedes' winning run and revive Red Bull's challenge this year after a discouraging start. He is ninth, on 12 points, 60 adrift of Antonelli, with team-mate Isack Hadjar 12th on four.

Ferrari's duo of Charles Leclerc and seven-time champion Lewis Hamilton are third and fourth respectively on 49 and 41 points with many paddock observers suggesting they are poised to fight for a first win since Carlos Sainz's success in Mexico in October 2024.

Leclerc's eighth and last win came at Austin, Texas, shortly before Sainz's triumph while Hamilton is chasing his 106th win and first since the 2024 Belgian race before he joined Ferrari. After a desultory first year, the Briton said he is relishing the challenge of a new formula that has seen him rediscover his racing mojo.

"We're all re-charged after the break," said Russell, expressing the feelings of most drivers. "I'm hoping we can continue where we left off."

It will mark newcomers Cadillac's first racing appearance on home soil in the United States when Sergio Perez and Valtteri Bottas venture out at the Hard Rock Stadium in a new American livery. *- AFP*

2026海南·三亚 第六届亚洲沙滩运动会 MEDAL TABLE SANYA HAINAN 2026 6th Asian Beach Games					
Rank	NOC				Total
1	China	24	18	13	55
2	Thailand	10	9	9	28
3	Islamic Republic of Iran	9	1	0	10
4	Viet Nam	3	5	5	13
5	Philippines	3	4	2	9
6	India	3	2	1	6
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
15	Pakistan	0	2	1	3
17	Democratic People's Republic of Korea	0	2	0	2
18	Chinese Taipei	0	1	4	5
19	Mongolia	0	1	3	4
20	Japan	0	1	2	3
21	Cambodia	0	1	1	2
22	Iraq	0	1	0	1
22	Oman	0	1	0	1
24	Myanmar	0	0	3	3
25	Saudi Arabia	0	0	2	2
26	Bahrain	0	0	1	1
26	Bangladesh	0	0	1	1
26	Kyrgyzstan	0	0	1	1
26	Lebanon	0	0	1	1
26	Malaysia	0	0	1	1
26	Nepal	0	0	1	1

Kiss frontman produces plane disaster movie

Paula Ramon

LOS ANGELES – For those who fear flying, the thriller “Deep Water” reveals a new nightmare: surviving an emergency landing, only to find yourself surrounded by man-eating sharks.

Starring Oscar-winner Sir Ben Kingsley (“Gandhi”) and Aaron Eckhart (“Batman: The Dark Knight”), the disaster flick premiered in the US yesterday and was produced by “Kiss” singer Gene Simmons.

The film blends action with horror – two genres well known to its director.

Finnish filmmaker Renny Harlin, who has previously helmed hits like “Die Hard 2,” “Cliffhanger,” and “A Nightmare on Elm Street 4,” said “Deep Water” is actually a human drama.

“If you took away the plane crash and you took away the sharks...it’s all about those people put in an extraordinary situation and seeing who they really are,” he told AFP.

The survival thriller marks another aquatic plunge for the 67-year-old director, who was also behind “Deep Blue Sea” (1999), starring Samuel L. Jackson.

This time, his characters plunge into a new nightmare when the plane taking them from Los Angeles to Shanghai makes an emergency landing in the middle of the ocean, leaving them at the mercy of a school of hungry mako sharks.

The director, who has worked

with screen tough guys like Bruce Willis and Sylvester Stallone said flying, however commonplace, remains “unnatural” and can be terrifying for many people.

“When you put characters in a situation that feels dangerous to begin with, and then you take them through something extreme, which is a plane crash...ending up in the water and being surrounded by sharks, then obviously, you have a situation that is scary,” he said.

“It’s one of those things where you really put yourself into that situation, and imagine what you would do.”

The director’s involvement attracted Gene Simmons, the make-up wearing bassist and vocalist of “Kiss,” to produce the film.

Simmons said he feels constantly drawn to the creative process that makes the magic of cinema possible.

But the film brought back some less-than-scary memories for the musician, a frequent traveller who toured the world with the “I Was Made For Lovin’ You” outfit.

The musician recounted how on one overnight flight to Tokyo, he had got up from his seat to use the facilities, but seemingly forgot to lock the door.

An off-duty flight attendant “had to go too, but she maybe accidentally opened my restroom,” the veteran rocker said.

“She decided there was room for two,” he added with a grin.

– AFP

D4vd used Amazon chainsaws to hack up teen’s body: prosecutors

LOS ANGELES – R&B singer D4vd used chainsaws he bought from Amazon to cut up the body of the teenage girl he murdered and left to rot in the trunk of his Tesla, prosecution documents alleged on Wednesday.

The internet breakout star killed Celeste Rivas Hernández because she threatened to reveal their long-standing and illegal sexual relationship, which began when she was just 13, charging papers allege.

He then hacked up her corpse, using a plastic paddling pool to contain the blood, and stuffed it into bags that he left in his car on the streets of the swanky Hollywood Hills neighbourhood, before leaving for his music tour around the United States, prosecutors alleged.

The 21-year-old, whose real name is David Burke, could face a life sentence or the death penalty if convicted of the child’s murder. He denies the charge.

A short court appearance in Los Angeles on Wednesday revealed the first full accounting of what detectives believe happened to Celeste, who had been reported missing from her home east of Los Angeles.

Los Angeles County Deputy District Attorney Beth Silverman filed a brief outlining the evidence she intends to present at any eventual trial.

The document says numerous text messages between Burke and Celeste – which include references to sex, pregnancy and emergency abortion, as well as explicit photographs – attest to an on-going sexual relationship between the two that prosecutors believe continued even after they officially broke up in November 2024, two months after Celeste’s 14th birthday.

In April last year the teenager, who had seemingly become jealous,



US singer-songwriter D4vd looks on during his arraignment for the murder of Celeste Rivas Hernández at Clara Shortridge Foltz Criminal Justice Center on April 20, 2026 in Los Angeles, California. – AFP

told Burke she would expose their relationship – potentially derailing the imminent release of his first studio album, an event that was expected to kickstart a multi-million US dollar career.

“Knowing he had to silence the victim before she ruined his music career as she had threatened, very soon after her arrival at his home, defendant stabbed the victim to death multiple times and stood by while she bled out,” the document states.

Over the coming weeks, he ordered two chainsaws from Amazon, as well as a body bag, heavy duty laundry bags and an inflatable pool.

“After placing her body into the blue inflatable pool to prevent her blood from spilling onto his garage floor, defendant used a chainsaw and perhaps other tools to cut off her limbs,” the document alleges.

“In order to distance himself from the victim, he amputated her left ring and pinky fingers because her ring finger contained a tattoo of

his name. Her fingers have not been recovered.

“Defendant then placed her head and torso into the cadaver bag he purchased. He placed her limbs into a garbage bag, which he deposited into his front trunk, laying the cadaver bag on top. For several weeks, or possibly months, defendant left the victim’s body to decompose inside his Tesla.”

Her body was found in the vehicle after it had been taken to a tow yard, following an official report that it had been abandoned.

Detectives who were called to the yard because of a foul smell emanating from the car discovered Celeste’s remains within days of what would have been her 15th birthday.

Burke has denied one count each of murder, continuous sexual abuse of a child under the age of 14, and unlawful mutilation of human remains.

The singer remains in jail. His case is next expected to be dealt with on May 12. – AFP

Rob Reiner autopsy report not ready, court hears

Huw Griffith

LOS ANGELES – Autopsy reports into the deaths of US movie director Rob Reiner and his wife have not yet been completed, a Los Angeles court heard on Wednesday, as the couple’s son made a brief appearance charged with their murders.

Nick Reiner, who wore a yellow jail top and blue jail pants, faces two counts of first-degree murder over the double killing that sent shockwaves through Hollywood days before Christmas.

The 32-year-old was arrested on December 14 after the bodies of his filmmaker father and his mother, photographer Michele Singer Reiner, were discovered at their home in the upmarket Brentwood neighbourhood of Los Angeles.

Prosecutors said 79-year-old Rob Reiner – who helmed huge hits including “When Harry Met Sally” and “A Few Good Men” – and his wife, 70, were stabbed to death.

Nick Reiner appeared on

Wednesday for a hearing that had been intended to determine if there was enough evidence for him to stand trial.

However, attorneys said they were still gathering evidence, with a prosecutor telling the judge that autopsy reports were still pending.

Reiner, who has a history of addiction, has previously pleaded “not guilty” to the charges. He was ordered to return to court on September 15 and remains in jail in the meantime.

If convicted as charged, Reiner could face life in prison without parole, or the death penalty, although California does not typically carry out capital punishment.

Last week, his brother paid emotional tribute to the men’s parents, calling their deaths “almost too impossible to process.”

“We lost more than half of our family that night in the most violent way imaginable,” Jake Reiner wrote in his first detailed public remarks about the gruesome killings.

“Any loss of a parent is devastating, but nothing compares to losing both of them at the same time and, on top of that, having your brother be at the center of it,” he wrote in a Substack post titled “Mom and Dad.”

Rob Reiner, the son of legendary comedian Carl Reiner, started his showbiz career in acting.

He won fame as the oafish son-in-law Michael “Meathead” Stivic on groundbreaking 1970s sitcom “All in the Family,” before transitioning to directing.

As a director, he struck Hollywood gold.

His output included classic films like 1984’s rock music mockumentary “This is Spinal Tap,” fantasy gem “The Princess Bride” from 1987, and seminal coming-of-age movie “Stand By Me.”

“A Few Good Men,” starring Hollywood heavyweights Tom Cruise and Jack Nicholson, earned an Oscar nomination for Best Picture. – AFP



Theatrical release poster for “Deep Water” – Image courtesy of ebay.com

World Weather

CHINA	ASIA-PACIFIC	WORLD	LUSOPHONE
Beijing 15°C~27°C	Manila 24°C~36°C	New York 10°C~18°C	Lisbon 13°C~22°C
Shanghai 15°C~26°C	Bangkok 27°C~35°C	London 11°C~25°C	Rio de Janeiro 20°C~27°C
Hong Kong 22°C~25°C	Tokyo 12°C~20°C	Frankfurt 9°C~24°C	Luanda 23°C~28°C
Taipei 18°C~25°C	Singapore 24°C~33°C	Vancouver 11°C~20°C	Maputo 19°C~31°C
Guangzhou 20°C~27°C	Kuala Lumpur 24°C~34°C	Paris 13°C~25°C	Dili 22°C~31°C
Nanjing 15°C~26°C	Jakarta 24°C~33°C	Moscow 2°C~9°C	São Tomé 27°C~32°C
Guilin 19°C~28°C	Seoul 11°C~25°C	Las Vegas 16°C~29°C	Praia 19°C~27°C
Xi'an 14°C~17°C	Sydney 15°C~23°C	Monte Carlo 13°C~20°C	Bissau 22°C~39°C



Lu Ngoc Trinh (left) of Vietnam vies with Zhang Xiaomei of China during the beach handball women's final match between China and Vietnam at the 6th Asian Beach Games in Sanya, Hainan Province, yesterday. - Xinhua

Members of Macao's delegation parade during the closing ceremony of the 6th Asian Beach Games in Sanya, Hainan Province, yesterday. - Xinhua

This photo taken yesterday shows the flag handover ceremony during the closing ceremony of the 6th Asian Beach Games in Sanya, Hainan Province. - Xinhua



Dancers perform during the closing ceremony of the 6th Asian Beach Games in Sanya, Hainan Province, yesterday. - Xinhua

Photo taken yesterday shows the general view of the closing ceremony of the 6th Asian Beach Games in Sanya, Hainan Province. - Xinhua



The mascots perform during the closing ceremony of the 6th Asian Beach Games in Sanya, Hainan Province, yesterday. - Xinhua