



Macau logs daily record of 248,000 visitors on 2nd day of May Day holiday

Tony Wong

Macau recorded around 248,000 visitor arrivals on Saturday, the second day of the Chinese mainland's ongoing five-day Labour Day holiday period, once again setting a new record of a single-day number of visitor arrivals, Public Security Police (PSP) have announced.

According to a PSP statement released on its WeChat account on Sunday, the new record represented a 9.25 percent increase from the previous record set on February 19 this year, the third day of the Chinese New Year of the Horse, when over 227,000 visitor arrivals were recorded.

Visitor arrivals from the Chinese mainland accounted for 85 percent of the around 248,000 visitor arrivals recorded on Saturday, while those from Hong Kong, the Taiwan region, and foreign countries respectively made up 10, one, and four percent of the total, the PSP statement said.

According to historical data from the Macau Government Tourism Office (MGTO), the previous record of single-day number of visitor arrivals set on the third day of the Year of the Horse (227,917) had itself broken the preceding record set on the third day of the Year of the Pig in pre-pandemic 2019, at 226,326.

The ongoing five-day Labour Day holiday period started on Friday and ends tonight.

According to PSP daily immigration statistics released during the period, Macau recorded 203,006 on the first day of this year's five-day Labour Day holiday period, 247,729 on the second day, and 182,216 on the third day.



A Tourist Police officer (centre) works among the crowds of visitors in front of the Ruins of St. Paul's landmark yesterday, one of Macau's most popular tourist attractions. – Photo: Tony Wong

Macau logs daily record of 889,000 border crossings

Meanwhile, Sunday's PSP statement also announced that Macau recorded 889,000 entries and exits at its border checkpoints on Saturday, also setting a new record of a single-day number of border crossings, breaking the previous record of 867,000 set on February 7 this year.

According to the statement, the number of border crossings at the Barrier Gate checkpoint on Saturday accounted for 50.6 percent of the total, while the Hengqin

checkpoint, the Qingmao checkpoint, and the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge's (HZMB) Macau checkpoint respectively made up 16.6 percent, 15.0 percent, and 11.0 percent.

The entry and exit (border crossings) figures recorded by the Public Security Police, which run Macau's immigration service, comprise local residents, visitors, non-resident workers (NRWs), non-local students enrolled in Macau, and all others with a special permit to stay in Macau.

On Saturday, according to Sunday's PSP

statement, local residents accounted for 27.5 percent of the total number of border crossings at all checkpoints, while non-resident workers and visitors respectively made up 17.4 percent and 53.4 percent.

The statement also said that Macau's border-crossing figures on Saturday also broke another type of record, when the Macau-Hengqin joint checkpoint recorded nearly 148,000 entries and exits, 693 border crossers more than the previous record of around 147,000 set on New Year's Day this year. ■

Swastikas daubed on NY Jewish homes, synagogues: police

NEW YORK – Antisemitic graffiti including swastikas has been spray-painted onto Jewish homes and synagogues in New York, police and a city official confirmed yesterday.

The incident is the latest instance of antisemitic vandalism against the city's Jewish community, with previous targets including playgrounds, places of worship and the subway.

A wall outside the Rego Park Jewish Center in the borough of Queens was tagged with a swastika and the words "heil Hitler," images on social media showed.

A police spokeswoman confirmed to AFP "multiple locations had swastikas drawn with spray paint" and that no arrests had been made but the investigation was ongoing.

"Multiple synagogues and private homes in Queens were vandalized overnight with swastikas and other antisemitic graffiti," Julie Menin, speaker of the New York City Council, wrote on social media.

"The graffiti will be removed once the investigation is complete. With antisemitism on the rise here and across the globe, we will always stand up for our Jewish community and fight back against hate." – AFP

Russia declares May 9 truce, threatens attack if Ukraine breaks it

MOSCOW – Russia yesterday declared a unilateral ceasefire with Ukraine between May 8-9, when Moscow marks its annual World War II Victory Day commemorations, and threatened a "massive missile strike" on Kyiv if Ukraine violated it.

Russian President Vladimir Putin first proposed the truce last week, during a phone call with US counterpart Donald Trump.

Ukraine said last week it would seek details from Washington about the offer.

"In accordance with a decision of the

Supreme Commander-in-Chief of the Russian Armed Forces, Vladimir Putin, a ceasefire has been declared from May 8-9, 2026 ... We hope that the Ukrainian side will follow suit," the Russian defence ministry said in a post on state-backed messaging app MAX.

"If the Kyiv regime attempts to implement its criminal plans to disrupt the celebration of the 81st anniversary of Victory in the Great Patriotic War, the Russian Armed Forces will launch a retaliatory, massive missile strike on the center of Kyiv." – AFP



Xi urges all-out rescue work after Hunan fireworks plant explosion causes heavy casualties

President Xi Jinping has urged all-out efforts to search for people who are still unaccounted for and save the injured after an explosion at a fireworks plant in Hunan Province caused heavy casualties yesterday afternoon. – Story on p. 7

Mysterious world beyond Pluto may have an atmosphere: astronomers

A tiny, little-known world beyond Pluto appears to have an atmosphere, Japanese astronomers said yesterday, defying what had been thought possible for icy objects in our cosmic backyard. – Story on p. 11

Cuba slams 'unprecedented' Trump threats

US President Donald Trump's threats of military aggression against Cuba have reached a "dangerous and unprecedented level," Cuban President Miguel Díaz-Canel said on Saturday, calling on the international community to respond. – Story on p. 12

Gongbei Customs seizes 1.8 kg of stony coral products



This undated handout photo provided by Zhuhai's Gongbei Customs yesterday shows 1.8 kg of stony coral products seized by its officers at Gongbei checkpoint on March 20.

Armindo Neves

Zhuhai's Gongbei Customs announced in a statement yesterday that its officers seized 1.8 kg of stony coral products at the Gongbei checkpoint on March 20.

Gongbei Customs identified the smuggler as a male from the Chinese mainland surnamed Wu.

According to the statement, on that day, customs officers at the checkpoint's passenger inspection noticed his "unusual appearance" and "rigid gait" while he was entering the "green channel".

Customs officers intercepted Wu for inspection, the statement said, adding that they found a batch of aquatic animal products in Wu's backpack, weighing a total of 1.8 kg.

According to the statement, the products were identified by the Gongbei Customs Technical Centre as skeletal products of a species belonging to the order Scleractinia (aka stony corals). All species of the order Scleractinia are listed in Appendix II of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora

(CITES) and are classified as nationally protected wildlife at the second level.

Gongbei Customs reminded the public in a statement that carrying endangered species or their products across borders is prohibited without an official import-export certificate. Serious offences constituting a crime will result in criminal prosecution in accordance with the law

Macau Customs finds 63 kg of silver granules worth 1.16 million patacas

Meanwhile, the Macau Customs Service announced in a statement on Sunday that its officers busted 15 smuggling cases between April 24 and 29 at the Barrier Gate border checkpoint, seizing 63 kg of silver granules worth 1.16 million patacas.

According to the statement, customs officers at the Barrier Gate checkpoint's exit hall separately noticed seven local residents, three Hong Kong residents and five mainlanders acting suspiciously.

Upon inspection, it was found that the individuals had concealed suspected silver pellets in various places, including daily necessities, beverage packaging, personal belongings, clothing, and even wrapped around their bodies, to smuggle them out of Macau, the statement said.

The age of the smugglers involved in the case ranges from 20 to 67, the statement said. The Macau Customs Service has initiated legal proceedings against them in accordance with the provisions of the External Trade Law. If the alleged violations are confirmed, they face a maximum fine of 50,000 patacas. ■



This undated handout photo provided by the Macau Customs Service on Sunday shows silver granules concealed in a beverage cup.

Police take naked pedestrian to hospital for checkup

Khalel Vallo

A naked man was intercepted by police after wandering the streets yesterday afternoon and was subsequently taken to hospital for an examination, according to a Public Security Police (PSP) statement provided to public broadcaster TDM.

Police received a public report at around 5 p.m. regarding a man walking naked along Avenida do Almirante Lacerda in the Patane district. Officers later intercepted him in the Red Market area.

The man failed to respond to officers' questions at the scene, and his identity could not be immediately confirmed. He was handed over to the Fire Services Bureau (CB) and taken to the public Conde de São Januário Hospital Centre.

The police stated last night that they were still awaiting the results of the hospital's medical evaluation.

Videos of the incident circulating on social media also show the man entering a supermarket, where he was quickly removed from the premises by staff. ■



This pixelated photo taken from WeChat yesterday shows the naked man walking along a street in Macau yesterday afternoon. The Macau Post Daily cannot vouch for the authenticity of the photo.

May 30-31 joy run to mark Int'l Children's Day

Armindo Neves

EZGO Sports Development Co., Ltd.* held a press conference at the local Beautiful World Restaurant last week about a joy run activity that it will host on May 30-31 to celebrate International Children's Day.

According to the press conference, the two-day event will be held at Chimelong Hengqin Bay Hotel on May 30-31, themed on the Chinese mainland's long-running animated television series, Pleasant Goat and Big Big Wolf**.

The event will integrate IP and sporting elements, featuring a variety of highly attractive peripheral products, according to a statement released after the press conference, adding that the joy run covers around 1.5 kilometres.

The statement also said that the event targets parent-child groups from Macau and Zhuhai, including the Guangdong-Macao In-Depth Cooperation Zone, while also covering all age groups including families and couples, aiming to create a unique Hengqin cultural and sports tourism event, and offer the public a festive experience full of fun and engagement.

The event will also feature a large camping area, water play party, stage performances, cultural and creative market, game booths, DIY craft workshops, and a gourmet zone, the statement said.

Anyone wishing to sign up for the event can visit: www.ezgosports.com ■

*EZGO Sports Development Co., Ltd. is a sports management and event organisation company with a significant presence in Macau and the Hengqin Guangdong-Macao In-Depth Cooperation Zone. It focuses

on youth sports development, event coordination, and the sale of specialised sports equipment. Its activities fall into three categories: youth sports training, event management, and retail and equipment. The company regards itself as a "bridge" entity between Macau and the Chinese mainland, maintaining offices in both jurisdictions. – Gemini

** Pleasant Goat and Big Big Wolf (Xi Yang Yang yu Hui Tai Lang) is a long-running Chinese animated television series created

by Huang Weiming and produced by Creative Power Entertaining. It is a humorous animated battle of wits between a predator and prey, with no permanent harm done. It became one of the most successful and beloved Chinese animated franchises since its debut in 2005, spawning over 2,000 TV episodes, feature films, comics, merchandise, theme park attractions, and even stage plays. It is often considered a defining work of modern Chinese animation. – DeepSeek

长隆横琴湾酒店 南花园 海景草坪

羊村嘉年华 趣味欢乐跑 萌宠趣味互动 水世界乐园

欢乐跑场次		
	5月30日	5月31日
第一场	11:00	11:00
第二场	12:30	12:30
第三场	15:30	15:30
第四场	17:00	17:00

This poster provided by EZGO Sports Development Co., Ltd. promotes its International Children's Day joy run slated for May 30-31 at Chimelong Hengqin Bay Hotel in Hengqin.

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Macau Weather

MAINLY CLOUDY. SHOWERS. SHOWERS WILL EASE OFF LATER. POSSIBLE THUNDERSTORMS AT FIRST. RELATIVE HUMIDITY WILL RANGE BETWEEN 75% AND 98%.



20°C~25°C

Source: SMG

Labour Affairs Bureau to hold sales, customer service job matching sessions

Khalel Vallo

The Labour Affairs Bureau (DSAL) said in a statement yesterday that it will hold a two-day job matching session for sales and customer service positions on Friday and Saturday next week, offering over 600 vacancies, with online registration starting today.

According to the statement, the event is organised by the bureau and hosted by

the Macau Federation of Trade Unions (FAOM). It will be held on the third floor of the Macau Tower Convention and Entertainment Centre in Sai Van, the statement said, adding that more than 20 local enterprises from the integrated tourism and retail sectors will participate, providing over 600 job vacancies.

The statement noted that the positions available include shop manager, brand manager, business development and service officer, resort sales officer, marketing representative, guest relations officer, sales consultant and warehouse staff, covering both mid-level and frontline roles.

During the event, a series of thematic seminars will also be conducted, the statement said, adding that industry representatives and trainers will introduce job requirements, provide sector insights and guidance on professional skills.

Meanwhile, one-stop support services will also be available on-site, including career planning, employment guidance and emotional support, aimed at helping job seekers better prepare for interviews and improve matching outcomes, the statement pointed out.

Local residents can register online from today until next Thursday at noon on the DSAL website (https://www.dsal.gov.mo/zh_tw/standard/sales_cs_jobfair.html). Participants must attend according to their selected time slot and bring identification and resumes for on-site interviews. ■



This poster released by the Labour Affairs Bureau (DSAL) yesterday promotes its two-day job matching session for sales and customer service positions slated to be held next Friday and Saturday.

'Book for Book' swap returns to various districts to promote reading culture

Khalel Vallo

The Cultural Affairs Bureau (IC) will relaunch its "Book for Book" swap activity this month across different neighbourhoods, aiming to promote reading habits and resource sharing among residents, according to a statement by IC yesterday.

First introduced in 2024, the exchange activity has received "strong" public support, the statement said, noting that this year's edition, which is part of the "Where culture flourishes, happiness happens" initiative, will continue to provide a platform for residents to exchange books and encourage wider access to reading materials.

The first round of activities will be held this coming Sunday and Monday in Praça dos Lótus in Ilha Verde district, followed by sessions on June 13 and 14 in Rotunda de Carlos da Maia (colloquially known as the "Three Lamps" roundabout - 三盞燈), operating on both days from noon to 6 p.m., the statement added.

Additional sessions are scheduled between October and December, the statement said, underlining that the activity adopts a "one book for one book" format.

Participants can bring eligible books to exchange for the same number of titles, with a limit of 20 books per person per session, aiming to increase circulation opportunities, the statement said, adding that in order to ensure quality, certain materials are not accepted, including magazines, textbooks, outdated technical or travel books, pirated copies, damaged items and publications containing inappropriate content.

A community exhibition introducing resources and services of the Macau Public Library will also



This poster released by the Cultural Affairs Bureau (IC) yesterday promotes its "Book for Book" swap activity to be held this coming Sunday and Monday.

be held alongside the event, the statement noted, adding that both initiatives are part of the "Reading Month 2026" campaign, aimed at fostering a stronger reading culture in the community.

The bureau encourages residents to bring their unwanted books to join the exchange and share the joy of reading, the statement said, adding that more information is available via (www.library.gov.mo) or the "My Library" mobile application. ■

金沙中國片區活化項目 SANDS CHINA'S COMMUNITY REVITALIZATION PROGRAMME

草堆街

融舊立新 | 推動本澳創業者進駐草堆街 激活片區新動能

創業方案大募集2.0

Entrepreneurship Recruitment Programme 2.0
Fostering entrepreneurship on Rua das Estalagens, unlocking new district vitality

承先啟後 | 赋能店舖煥新升級 提升市場競爭力

店舖重塑計劃

Shop Rebranding Programme
Empowering shops to elevate brand appeal, enhancing market competitiveness

截止報名日期
Registration Deadline
30/06/2026

現正接受報名
Registration Is Now Open



掃碼了解更多詳情
Scan QR Code for More Details

主辦單位 Organizer

協辦單位 Co-Organizer

指導單位 Patronage

支持單位 Supporting Entities





The photos by Rui Pastorin were taken during Thursday's media visit to the exhibition at the Hong Kong Heritage Museum in Sha Tin.

HK Heritage Museum spotlights The Mona Lisa, renaissance art

Rui Pastorin in Hong Kong

The Hong Kong French May Arts Festival 2026 has kicked off in Hong Kong, with last week marking the launch of “The Hong Kong Jockey Club Series: Meet Mona Lisa & Portraying the Renaissance”, a three-month-long free-admission exhibition at the Hong Kong Heritage Museum that blends both technology and renaissance artworks.

The Hong Kong French May Arts Festival was established in 1993 and reaches over 400,000 visitors per year, according to a recent statement from the organisers, with the event described as one of the largest cultural events in Asia. Continuing to showcase various artforms, more than a hundred programmes are again featured this year.

The festival’s opening highlight programme showcased at the Thematic Galleries 3,4, & 5 of the museum in Sha Tin runs through July 27, being described during last week’s media preview and opening as offering visitors a “hybrid” experience in its presentation.

The first part, “Meet Mona Lisa”, utilises multimedia technology to tell the story behind Leonardo da Vinci’s (1452-1519) renaissance masterpiece while also making it accessible, all across six parts. Museumgoers will get to learn the beginnings of one of the most valuable paintings in the world, which started off as a commissioned portrait of noblewoman Lisa Gherardini, a piece that da Vinci continued to work on for years, though it never reached its patron.

A section also tackles the 1911 theft of the painting from the Louvre Museum by Vincenzo Peruggia, an event that put the Mona Lisa’s face all over the world. The exhibition then explores the result of the theft, as well as the Mona Lisa’s continued impact, making its way onto other artworks all the way to items like mugs and T-shirts.

Enhancing this part’s experience across the different sections is the Mona Lisa itself “narrating” its story, the use of technology such as panoramic projections, and interactive sections including one area that allows museumgoers to zoom in on the masterpiece’s various details and intricacies.

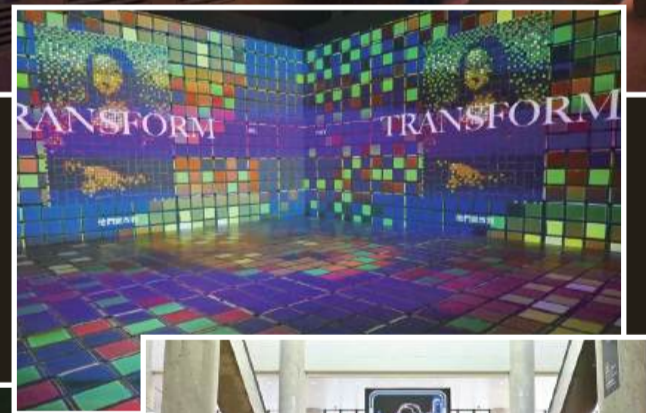
The second section “Portraying the Renaissance” highlights renaissance works, particularly portraits, created through different mediums. Among these pieces are paintings like “The Crucifixion” by Noël Bellemare and Jacob de Backer’s “Venus and Cupid”, plaster reproductions including that of Michelangelo Buonarroti’s “The Rebellious Slave”, and three works from the museum’s collection along with pieces by Nantong-born ink artist Xu Lei. Nantong is a city in Jiangsu Province. Museumgoers also get a chance to view “Sheets from the Codex Atlanticus”, which feature four of Da Vinci’s manuscripts from a collection of drawings and notes.

The two-part exhibition has been designed especially for Hong Kong. The first part was jointly produced by the Musée du Louvre and the Grand Palais Immersif, while curation for the second part of the exhibition was done 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.

This article is a continuation of story published on Friday, with more on <https://www.macaupostdaily.com/news/28101>

** According to AI chatbot Poe, The Renaissance was a rebirth of learning and art in Europe that started in the 1300s and spread through the 1400s–1500s. It was called a “rebirth” because it revived (and improved on) older knowledge - leading to major progress in art, science, and education.*



Melco wins 2 prizes at '2026 TITAN Brand Awards'



This photo provided by Melco Resorts & Entertainment on Wednesday shows Global Brand Ambassador Jing Boran (3rd from left) and Friend of the Brand Tan Yuan Yuan (2nd from left) posing with other guests during a launch event for the "Be A Dreamer" campaign at the integrated resort on March 10.

Rui Pastorin

Melco Resorts & Entertainment said in a statement on Wednesday that City of Dreams (COD) in Cotai won two accolades at the "2026 TITAN Brand Awards", receiving the highest Global Tier Platinum distinctions for "Best Brand Awareness Campaign" and "Best Integrated Marketing Campaign" for its new brand chapter "Be A Dreamer".

The new awards follow the company garnering top honours at the 2025 edition of the "TITAN Brand Awards" for its "House of Dancing Water" Premiere campaign, the statement said.

The "Be A Dreamer" campaign was unveiled on March 10 and introduces "its first-ever celebrity-led brand narrative", the statement said, collaborating with mainland

Chinese actor Jing Boran as Global Brand Ambassador and ballerina Tan Yuan Yuan, also from the Chinese mainland, as Friend of the Brand.

On its new awards, the statement quoted Melco Resorts & Entertainment Chairman and CEO Lawrence Ho Yau-lung as saying that the achievement was due to the team's "tireless pursuit of excellence and their ability to craft narratives that resonate on a global stage".

The awards are organised by the International Awards Associate (IAA) and recognise top achievement in branding and advertising, according to the statement, noting that the platform receives submissions from over 100 countries and honours projects that "deliver exceptional market impact and engagement via masterfully crafted media strategy and messaging". ■

Police nab 2 loan sharks for abducting gambler on May Day

Armindo Neves

The Judiciary Police (PJ) nabbed two men from the Chinese mainland for usury and false imprisonment of a male gambler on Labour Day, PJ spokesman Cheong Un Hong said during a regular press conference yesterday.

Cheong identified the suspects as a 41-year-old male surnamed Tan and a 35-year-old male surnamed Lin; both claimed to be jobless. Cheong also said that there were two more suspects still at large at the time of the press conference.

According to Cheong, on Friday afternoon, the Judiciary Police received a call from the victim who said that he was being held captive in a hotel guestroom in Zape due to unpaid debts. Upon receiving the report, PJ officers were dispatched to the scene, Cheong said, where they rescued the victim and arrested Tan and Lin.

According to Cheong, the investigation revealed that the victim was approached by loan sharks in the casino around 11 p.m. on April 30, offering him an instant loan for gambling.

After negotiations, Cheong said, the victim agreed to borrow HK\$30,000 (30,900 patacas) on the condition that he first transfer 17,000 yuan as "interest" and sign an IOU for HK\$30,000.



Judiciary Police (PJ) spokesman Cheong Un Hong looks on during yesterday's regular press conference.

— Photo: Armindo Neves

The victim then transferred the "interest" and signed the IOU, after which the loan sharks handed over chips worth HK\$30,000 for the victim to gamble with, Cheong said.

After about two hours of gambling, Cheong said that the victim gambled away all the chips, after which the loan sharks took the victim to the guestroom where he was held against his will, telling him that he could not leave until the debt was fully repaid, adding that after being held for about 11 hours, the victim managed to phone the Judiciary Police.

Tan and Lin have been transferred to the Public Prosecutions Office (MP), facing charges of false imprisonment and usury. ■

Community leaders urge govt to improve organisation of outdoor gigs

Staff Reporter

A concert with an audience of about 30,000, titled "K-SPARK IN MACAU", was held at the government-managed Macau Open-Air Performance Venue in Cotai on Saturday night.

The event's organisers were widely slammed by netizens on social media for poor planning of seating arrangements and failure to properly maintain the order of audience members, in response to which community leaders, in group interviews with local Chinese-language media, have urged the government to improve coordination with event organisers in the future and draw up official rules and regulations for the open-air venue with which organisers and audience members must comply.

The Macau Open-Air Performance Venue, set up on a large plot in south-east Cotai covering 94,000 square metres, is located east of the Lisboeta Macau resort and south of the Grand Lisboa Palace Resort Macau complex.

Before the concert on Saturday last week, six concerts or other types of shows had been held at the venue since it started operating in late 2024.

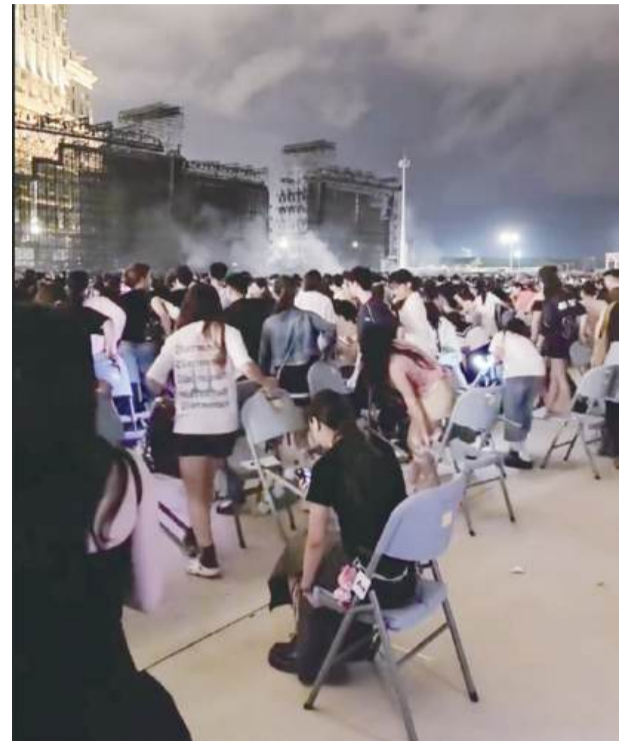
The "K-SPARK IN MACAU" event started at 7 p.m. and ended at around 10:30 p.m. on Saturday night.

This time, in the run-up to the concert on Saturday, the government made various types of preparations with the aim of ensuring that spectators could leave the venue by public transport after the event in an orderly manner. According to local Chinese-language media reports, the audience members, in general, were able to leave the venue and get public transport to leave the area in an orderly manner, thanks to the government's various types of special traffic measures in place.

Consequently, this time, no major criticisms were raised on social media concerning the government's traffic arrangements following the completion of a large-scale show. However, this time, criticisms were widely raised concerning the organisers' poor planning of seating arrangements and their failure to ensure order in the spectators' area while the concert was taking place. These criticisms raised on social media have also been reported by local Chinese-language media as well as online media in Macau and elsewhere.

Local Chinese-language media have also interviewed community leaders to comment on the organisation of this concert.

The government's special traffic measures, according to a statement by the Cultural Affairs Bureau (IC) last week, included two routes of free shuttle buses arranged by the government travelling from the Macau Open-Air Performance Venue, after the completion of the concert, to the peninsula's Praça de



This screenshot taken from a video clip on social media shows spectators moving their chairs while the concert was taking place at the Macau Open-Air Performance Venue in Cotai on Saturday night. The Macau Post Daily cannot vouch for the authenticity of the screenshot.

Ferreira do Amaral (colloquially known in Cantonese simply as "A Ma La") and to the Barrier Gate border checkpoint respectively.

Besides, service hours of the Light Rapid Transit (LRT) on Saturday night last week were extended to 1 a.m. on Sunday.

The special traffic arrangements in place on Saturday night also included a special measure in which all LRT passengers entering from the East Asian Games Station or Cotai East Station could have free rides to any other LRT stations.

Special traffic control measures were also in place in the area around the Macau Open-Air Performance Venue on Saturday.

According to the criticisms on social media that were also reported by local Chinese-language media as well as online media, the organisers failed to properly design the event's seating plan so that many people in the back rows could hardly see the singers on stage.

Many of the event's seats were folding chairs.

Due to the situation, some spectators in the back rows chose to stand on the seats in an attempt to be able to see the singers, or go closer to the front, or even move their chairs closer to the front. The online criticisms reported by local Chinese-language media described the concert on Saturday as "chaotic".

Video clips on social media, the reports pointed out, show that several spectators even fought each other following quarrels concerning seating arrangements.

During a group interview with local Chinese-language media on Sunday, Leong Meng Ian, a senior board member of the Macau Federation of Trade Unions, commonly known as Gung Luen in Cantonese, suggested that the Macau government learn from the experience of other places in organising large-scale concerts and require event organisers in the future to ensure the proper setting-up of all necessary equipment and facilities in order to facilitate the smooth operations of concerts,

such as setting up more large-sized screens and further improving audio equipment.

Leong, who heads the Gung Luen branch office in Taipa serving the islands (Taipa, Coloane, and Cotai), also urged the government draw up official rules and guidelines for the Macau Open-Air Performance Venue with which event organisers and spectators must comply, including a code of conduct for spectators guiding them to be a courteous audience member.

She also suggested that the government set up more entrances to the venue when a concert is held next time.

Meanwhile, in a group interview with local Chinese-language media on Sunday, Leong Chon Kit, a deputy convener of the government-appointed Taipa and Coloane Community Service Consultative Council, suggested that in the future the government should arrange more routes of free shuttle buses travelling to other border checkpoints following the completion of a concert, such as the pedestrian 24/7 Qingmao checkpoint.

He also suggested that the government roll out measures aiming to divert more concert spectators to the old quarters in Taipa and elsewhere in the city to boost consumption there.

He also noted that Saturday's concert had the highest number of spectators since the venue started operating, pointing out that the venue is designed to accommodate "at least" 50,000 spectators per performance. He urged the government to make further improvements to its arrangements in the future aiming to ensure that spectators can enter and leave the venue in a more smooth and orderly manner.

The *Post* yesterday submitted a written enquiry to the Cultural Affairs Bureau concerning its future improvements to the organisation of shows at the venue. The bureau told the *Post* that it would comment on the matter in due course. ■

GEG, CPTTM host quality enhancement certification programme



This photo provided by Galaxy Entertainment Group (GEG) last week shows participants engaging at one of the product and service exhibition booths set up during the recent "GEG SME Series: Quality Enhancement Certification Program" Award Ceremony the Galaxy International Convention Center.

Rui Pastorin

Integrated resort operator Galaxy Entertainment Group (GEG) recently held the second Certificate Award Ceremony for the "GEG SME Series: Quality Enhancement Certification Programme", according to a statement last week.

The ceremony was held at the Galaxy International Convention Centre in Cotai.

The programme, which offers management system training courses by the Macau Productivity and Technology Transfer Centre (CPTTM), was launched in 2024, the statement noted.

During the recent ceremony, the statement said that nearly 40 suppliers who earned their certifications were recognised, while it gathered over 80 representatives from GEG suppliers and featured multiple exhibition booths

CPTTM Chief Senior Manager of Standards, Management, Training & Assessment Department Helena Lei was quoted by the statement as saying: "By leveraging our combined expertise and resources, we are helping participating suppliers to strengthen their core competitiveness and reach new heights in their growth".

The statement also quoted GEG Senior Vice President of Procurement and Warehousing Peter Chow (趙啟偉) as saying: "Through the innovative 'Theory + Practice' model, we have empowered more suppliers to enhance their quality and operational capabilities. Since its launch, the initiative has supported nearly 80 local SMEs in obtaining professional certifications".

The statement said that GEG suppliers participating in the 2025 programme obtained professional certifications such as "M-Mark" Certification, the Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point (HACCP) Food Safety Management System, and the ISO 9001 Quality Management System, covering sectors such as food and beverage, engineering, and trade".

"Beyond subsidising certification costs, GEG collaborated with CPTTM to provide tailored advisory services based on each enterprise's actual operating conditions", according to the statement.

The statement added that all three local food enterprises obtained the "M-Mark" Certification after passing comprehensive factory audits and product testing. ■

Sports empower western China youth to dream bigger, go further

URUMQI – Ili, in northwest China's Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region, is often called a land of green valleys and flowing rivers. Framed by the Tianshan Mountains and bordering Kazakhstan, it was once distant and less developed. Today, with growing support including government assistance programs, more young people are looking beyond the mountains and stepping onto a wider stage.

For marathon runner Anubek Kuwan, that journey has become a reality, taking him from his hometown to cities across China and onward to Asia, Europe and Africa.

"It feels unbelievable that I can now travel so far and to so many places," Anubek said. "My dream is coming true, but I believe I can go even farther."

RUNNING INTO DREAMS

In April, Anubek set a new course record in Kazakhstan by winning the Almaty Half Marathon, then returned to his hometown of Ili to win another local marathon, as such tightly scheduled races have become routine for him.

"My first time going abroad was because of running," the 30-year-old recalled.

In 2015, he traveled with the Xinjiang track and field team to Kyrgyzstan for competition, where racing alongside athletes from different countries and regions and interacting off the track fueled his ambition.

Anubek began running on a dirt field at a township school, encouraged by his father and supported by school coaching, progressing through disciplined training to win medals at various levels.

In 2018, he joined clubs in cities such as Beijing and Kunming for more scientific training, and in 2022 won the men's title at the Beijing Marathon, as more runners from Xinjiang have formed a growing presence in China's distance running scene.

Last year, Anubek trained in Kenya alongside thousands of elite runners.

"At dusk, when I'm exhausted and looking at the red soil flying beneath my feet, I think of the countryside where I first ran," he said. "Kenyan runners are talented and hardworking. In some ways, we're alike, as running has changed our destiny."

Back in his hometown, Anubek has become a local hero, with his former school inviting him to share his experiences and encourage students to persevere and challenge themselves, while kids gather around him shouting, "Our champion is back!"

"The dusty playground I ran on has been replaced by a standard track," Anubek said. "The new generation has better facilities and more choices, but the spirit of striving forward must never be lost."

YOUNG COACH, BIG CHOICE

On a football field in Ili, coach Zhong Doudou shouts instructions as boys practice passing drills, while a girls' team she has put through penalty laps runs nearby, contrasting with her gentle appearance.

Zhong, a former player from east China's Jiangsu Province, now works as a full-time coach at the Ili Sports School. Two years ago, she answered a government call to support sports development in Ili.

China's "pairing-assistance" program for Xinjiang, in place for decades, has aimed to promote development across sectors including sports, as many local children have natural athletic talent but limited access to professional coaching.

For Zhong, still under 25, the decision meant leaving her family behind. "But I want to provide a few more assists for the kids' future," she said.

Initially drawn by a short-term opportunity, she planned to gain experience while exploring the region but instead found herself immersed in a vibrant football culture of packed village matches and children playing in streets and alleys.

When Zhong began coaching in matches, she admitted feeling more nervous than as a player.

In one crucial match, her team scored twice in three minutes, and she fainted from excitement on the sidelines, before guiding the team to multiple titles, including the Xinjiang Youth Football Championship.

Over time, the players grew attached to her. The captain pleaded for her to stay, promising goals in exchange for her decision, while others even suggested pooling money to pay her salary.

Zhong declined offers from universities and clubs back home, choosing instead to stay.

"The children are pure and sincere. I truly can't bear to leave them," she said.

In the past three years, Zhong's hometown, Jianguo, has organized large-scale youth football exchanges with Ili, the counterpart aid region, while also investing heavily in improved sports infrastructure.

"Not every child will become a professional athlete," she said. "But football gives them courage, resilience and vision to light their path forward."

LESSONS IN TAIJI

At Tekes No. 1 High School in Ili, physical education teacher Hauziyat Sieran moves easily between football drills, group exercises and the slow, deliberate motions of Taiji.

In Tekes, a small county, sport is more than competition. It is a way to shape character, connect cultures and guide youth as they come of age.

Tekes is known across China for its distinctive urban layout. Planned by local officials in the 1930s, the town gradually developed into a complete "Bagua" city, its streets radiating in patterns inspired by traditional Chinese philosophy.

More than 30 ethnic groups, including Han, Kazakh, Mongolian and Uygur, live here, where about 8,000 residents regularly practice Taiji, a traditional Chinese discipline with a long history. At the central square, people gather to stretch, breathe and move in unison, weaving it into daily life.

"Given Tekes' unique layout and its connection with Chinese culture, we hope to encourage more participation," said Shakenaily Manasi, a local culture and sports official. "It is not only about fitness, but also a natural way to understand Chinese culture."

On campus, the practice has taken on a deeper meaning.

For Hauziyat, Taiji is a way to cultivate calm. Once quick-tempered, he began to rethink his approach after becoming a homeroom teacher in 2019 and taking responsibility for more than 50 teenagers, learning to slow down, and balance firmness with flexibility.

"Every movement in Taiji reflects balance, mutual support and inclusion," he said, referring to the balance of yin and yang.

In his class, students from six ethnic groups and diverse family backgrounds learn side by side. He hopes they can embrace differences and build unity.

"I tell them that being a person is like practicing Taiji," he said. "You need to calm your mind and stand firm, find balance through respect and learn unity through inclusion."

That strength is quietly taking root in places like Tekes.

For Madina Sadatbek, the influence is personal. Drawn to traditional Chinese culture, she often practices Taiji with her classmates on the school field, moving through each posture with growing confidence. During summer breaks, she speaks with visitors from across the country, learning about the wider world beyond her hometown.

The 16-year-old also dreams of the future. "I hope to attend university in Shenzhen, a city known for its strong tech sector, and explore a broader horizon," Madina said. — Xinhua



A family ride a jet ski in Songmen Town, Wenling City, Zhejiang Province, yesterday. Vacationers across the nation stepped out to fully enjoy their leisure time during the five-day May Day holiday ending tonight. — Xinhua

Xi urges all-out rescue work after Hunan fireworks plant explosion causes heavy casualties

BEIJING – President Xi Jinping has urged all-out efforts to search for people who are still unaccounted for and save the injured after an explosion at a fireworks plant in Hunan Province caused heavy casualties yesterday afternoon.

Xi, also general secretary of the Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Committee and chairman of the Central Military Commission, issued an instruction ordering strengthened risk screening and hazard control in key sectors, enhanced public safety management, and efforts to safeguard people's lives and property.

The explosion occurred at around 4:40 p.m. at the plant in Liuyang, a county-level city under Changsha, capital city of Hunan.

Xi demanded proper handling of the aftermath and a prompt investigation into the accident, stressing that those responsible must be held accountable.

Authorities across regions and departments must draw profound lessons from the accident and reinforce responsibility for workplace safety, Xi stressed.

Premier Li Qiang, also a member of the Standing Committee of the Political Bureau of the CPC Central Committee, urged efforts to strengthen workplace safety in key industries and sectors, and resolutely prevent the occurrence of major accidents.

The Ministry of Emergency Management has dispatched a team to Liuyang to guide the rescue and relief work. Local rescue forces have rushed to the scene to treat the injured and carry out on-site response efforts, which are still underway.

– Xinhua



This aerial drone photo taken yesterday shows the rescue scene after an explosion at a fireworks plant in Guandu Town of Liuyang City, Hunan Province. Three people were killed, and 25 others were injured, including two in serious condition, after the blast hit the fireworks plant yesterday afternoon, according to a local emergency management bureau. The explosion occurred at around 4:43 p.m. at the plant in Liuyang, a county-level city under Changsha, capital city of Hunan.

– Xinhua

Xi's spring diplomacy injects stability into volatile world

Analysis

BEIJING – President Xi Jinping has been busy this spring, leading efforts to drive international cooperation, share development opportunities and uphold fairness and justice, thereby injecting much-needed stability and certainty into a volatile world.

ENHANCING COMMUNICATION TO BOOST TIES

Amid a turbulent international landscape, Xi has deepened strategic communication with major countries, demonstrating China's strong sense of responsibility as a major country.

This year marks the 30th anniversary of the establishment of the China-Russia strategic partnership of coordination and the 25th anniversary of the signing of the China-Russia Treaty of Good-Neighborliness and Friendly Cooperation. China and the United States will host the APEC Economic Leaders' Meeting and the G20 Summit, respectively.

On February 4, Xi held a virtual meeting with Russian President Vladimir Putin and spoke by phone with US President Donald Trump, deepening strategic communication among major powers.

Red carpets were rolled out for visiting dignitaries.

From January 4 to 7, President of the Republic of Korea Lee Jae Myung paid a state visit to China, marking a reciprocal exchange of visits between the two heads of state within just over two months.

From January 4 to 8, Taoiseach of Ireland Micheal Martin paid an official visit to China, the first by an Irish Taoiseach in 14 years.

In a meeting with German Chancellor Friedrich Merz on February 25, Xi noted that Merz's visit coincided with the period of Spring Festival celebrations. The visit could be likened to an exchange between relatives and friends, reflecting the close and high-level nature of China-Germany relations, according to Xi.

On April 14, in a meeting with Spanish

Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez, who was on his fourth visit to China in four years, Xi said that despite the shifting and turbulent international situation, China-Spain relations have developed steadily all along, injecting stability into China-EU relations.

The next day, Xi, also general secretary of the Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Committee, had a long and in-depth exchange of views on the strategic issues of common concern and overall importance with General Secretary of the Communist Party of Vietnam Central Committee and Vietnamese President To Lam, reaching many new and important common understandings.

Many other foreign leaders, including Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney, Finnish Prime Minister Petteri Orpo, UK Prime Minister Keir Starmer, Uruguayan President Yamandu Orsi, and Mozambican President Daniel Chapo, also visited China in this spring.

The steady stream of visits by foreign leaders reflects a shared aspiration for peace and stability, support for win-win cooperation, and growing enthusiasm in engaging in cooperation with China.

SHARING DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES

China will open its doors still wider, and inject greater certainty and fresh momentum into the world through its high-quality development, so that countries will realize common development and shared prosperity, Xi said when receiving the credentials of 18 new ambassadors to China on Jan. 16.

Addressing the envoys, Xi encouraged the ambassadors to gain a full and in-depth understanding of the real and multifaceted China, cautioning against viewing the country through a partial lens.

During their visits to China this year, foreign leaders traveled across the country to see firsthand its development and realities today.

Accompanied by about 30 senior executives from leading German companies, German Chancellor Friedrich Merz flew to

Hangzhou, Zhejiang Province, on February 26. He visited Uniree Technology, where he interacted with humanoid robots.

Taoiseach of Ireland Micheal Martin chose Shanghai as one of his stops during his visit. He was particularly impressed by the expansion of an Irish food trade and R&D company there, which has grown from a small business with just a few employees to a big company employing over 1,400 people, highlighting the strong potential of Ireland-China economic cooperation.

This year marks the beginning of China's 15th Five-Year Plan period. In his meeting with Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez, Xi said China has firm resolve in advancing Chinese modernization and the broad-mindedness to share development opportunities with the world through high-standard opening up, adding that China will inject confidence and momentum into global economic growth through its own development.

On April 19, in Banyan Village of Huzhu Tu Autonomous County in northwest China's Qinghai Province – a far-flung place once visited by Xi during an inspection tour – Mozambican President Daniel Chapo saw China's experience and stunning achievements in poverty reduction.

To partner with China is to embrace stability, certainty and opportunities. In recent months, a series of cooperation documents were signed between China and other countries, including Mozambique, Vietnam and Uruguay.

CHAMPIONING GLOBAL SOLIDARITY

Since late February, the Iran conflict has become one of the most pressing challenges besetting the international community.

On April 14, Xi made four propositions on safeguarding and promoting peace and stability in the Middle East during his meeting with Sheikh Khaled bin Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi, the United Arab Emirates, namely staying committed to the principle

of peaceful co-existence, the principle of national sovereignty, the principle of international rule of law, and a balanced approach to development and security.

A week later, during talks with Mozambican President Daniel Chapo, Xi noted that as the impact of the Middle East conflict spills over to African countries, China stands ready to work hand in hand with Africa to address these challenges, jointly promote peace and work together to advance development.

As a major country on the global stage, China demonstrates its sense of responsibility in times of challenges.

China has never started a war, and has never taken an inch of foreign land, Xi said to UK Prime Minister Keir Starmer, emphasizing that no matter how strong and developed China becomes, it will never be a threat to other countries.

China's commitment to peaceful development stems from its profound cultural heritage. Just as Xi noted, traditional Chinese culture values peace and pursues harmony without uniformity.

Uruguayan President Yamandu Orsi, a former history teacher, reflected on the continuity of Chinese civilization, noting that Uruguay is a partner sharing common values with China, and isolationism and unilateralism offer no solution to global challenges.

Noting that division, confrontation and zero-sum games have no future, and returning the world to the law of the jungle is unpopular, Xi said global solidarity and cooperation represents the only right path forward.

"We need to safeguard the UN-centered international system and the international order underpinned by international law, promote an equal and orderly multipolar world and a universally beneficial and inclusive economic globalization, and foster the building of a community with a shared future for humanity," Xi said during his meeting with Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez.

– Xinhua

Singapore, NZ sign deal on fuel, food security

SINGAPORE – Singapore agreed to the continued flow of refined fuel to New Zealand in exchange for food security yesterday as the trade partners firmed up supply chains choked by the Mideast War.

New Zealand imports about a third of its refined fuel from Singapore, including diesel, which is vital for its farming industry.

Singapore, in turn, relies on New Zealand for about 14 percent of its total food imports.

Under the Agreement on Trade in Essential Supplies signed in the city-state during a visit by Prime Minister Christopher Luxon

yesterday, both countries committed “not to impose unnecessary export restrictions on agreed essential supplies”, even during supply chain disruptions.

Singapore’s Prime Minister Lawrence Wong said the deal is key “because in difficult times, every country will be tempted to look inward”.

Luxon agreed, lauding Singapore’s diesel as a commodity that “underpins the farming and freight systems that keep New Zealand’s food moving into the region”.

Despite having no domestic reserves, Singapore is a major global oil refining and

trading hub and exports massive amounts of fuel.

The two countries signed the agreement as supplies passing through the Strait of Hormuz are likely to remain limited even if the key waterway is reopened.

It will likely take months to clear mines, restore damaged energy port infrastructure and return confidence in the waterway, through which about a fifth of global crude oil and liquefied natural gas (LNG) transits during peacetime, Wong said.

Shipping through the Strait of Hormuz has

been disrupted since the United States and Israel began a bombing campaign against Iran on February 28.

Last month, Singapore and Australia signed a non-binding agreement requiring them to make “maximum efforts to meet each other’s energy security needs”.

Australia relies on imports for an estimated 90 percent of its refined fuel products, of which around a quarter comes from Singapore.

Singapore buys around 32 percent of its liquefied natural gas requirements from Australia. – AFP

Indonesian train crash kills 4: police

SEMARANG – A train hit a car in Indonesia on Friday, killing four people including two children, police said, days after another deadly train crash outside the capital Jakarta.

The driver of the car involved in the collision in Central Java province did not see the oncoming train on a level crossing due to thick fog, local traffic officer Eko Ari Kisworo said in a statement issued by the police.

The train then collided with the car, which carried nine people and was flung about 20 metres before hitting a pole and flipping into a rice field, Eko said.

Four passengers, including a two-year-old girl and another who was 10, were killed, while the driver and the remaining passengers were injured, the officer added.

The accident came just days after a long-distance train slammed into the last, women-only carriage of a stationary commuter train near the Bekasi Timur station in West Java last Monday, killing 16 women and injuring at least 90 people.

President Prabowo Subianto has blamed that incident on unsafe level crossings and ordered a countrywide upgrade with guard posts or flyovers.

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

A major train crash in January 2024 killed four crew members in West Java province.

In 2015, 16 people were killed when a commuter train crashed into a minibus on a level crossing in Jakarta. – AFP



Japan's Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi walks past poppies on the Roll of Honour during her visit to the Australian War Memorial in Canberra yesterday. – AFP

Ancient Australian reefs linked to origins of modern marine biodiversity: study

SYDNEY – The waters between Australia and Southeast Asia were once a hotspot for new and mammoth coral reefs, laying the foundations for today’s marine biodiversity, new research has revealed.

The study, led by Australia’s Edith Cowan University (ECU), shows the largest expansion of coral reefs in the past 100 million years happened 20 to 10 million years ago in this region, now the world’s most biologically-rich marine area, said an ECU statement released yesterday.

“Coral reefs are among the most biodiverse ecosystems on Earth, supporting around a quarter of all marine species while covering less than one percent of the oceans,” said Alexandre Siqueira with ECU’s Center for Marine Ecosystems Research, the study’s lead author.

The research, combining geological records, fossil and genetic data, showed

changes in environmental, biological and tectonic conditions about 20 million years ago promoted the dramatic expansion of coral reefs across the region, now known as the Indo-Australian Archipelago.

“These independent lines of evidence allowed us to pinpoint when and where modern reef biodiversity began to take shape,” Siqueira said, adding that coral reefs expanded dramatically at a key point in time, coinciding with the emergence of many modern coral and iconic fish lineages, including parrotfish.

“As reefs grew larger, they likely created new habitats and ecological opportunities, allowing species to evolve and diversify,” he said.

The findings, published in *Science Advances*, suggest that reefs off northwestern Australia may be remnants of what was once one of the largest reef systems to have ever existed. – Xinhua

Magnitude-6.0 earthquake strikes central Philippines: USGS

MANILA – A magnitude-6.0 earthquake struck the central Philippine island of Samar at 2:09 p.m. [local time] yesterday, the United States Geological Survey said.

The quake hit at a depth of 73.3 kilometres, about nine kilometres from the province’s coastal town of San Julian.

A local police officer told AFP the earthquake had been “strong and sudden” though there had been no immediate reports of injury.

“Here at the police station, one of the beams where our roof was attached was broken ... I saw some furniture moving,” he said, adding he and his fellow officers were

now outside for fear of aftershocks.

Earthquakes are a near-daily occurrence in the Philippines, which is situated on the Pacific “ring of fire”, an arc of intense seismic activity stretching from Japan through Southeast Asia and across the Pacific basin.

Eastern Mindanao was rocked by a pair of earthquakes of 7.4 and 6.7 magnitude in October that killed at least eight people.

These followed a magnitude 6.9 quake days earlier that killed 76 people and destroyed or damaged 72,000 houses in Cebu province in central Philippines, according to government figures. – AFP

Seoul says ‘explosion and fire’ on S Korean ship in Hormuz strait

SEOUL – Seoul said yesterday that an “explosion and fire” had struck a South Korean ship in the Strait of Hormuz, the crucial Middle Eastern waterway effectively blocked following US-Israeli attacks on Iran.

The foreign ministry said that, at around 8:40 p.m. local time, “an explosion and fire occurred on a vessel operated by a South Korean shipping company... anchored in waters near the United Arab Emirates inside the Strait of Hormuz”.

There had been “no casualties to date” among the 24 crew members on board, who include six South Koreans and 18 foreign nationals, the ministry said in a statement.

“The cause of the explosion and fire, as well as the specific extent of the damage, are currently being investigated,” it said.

The vessel involved, the HMM Namu, is a cargo ship of almost 180 metres sailing under the flag of Panama, data from tracking site MarineTraffic showed.

Seoul’s announcement came after Iranian state media said yesterday that Tehran’s navy had fired “warning shots” in the strait, following the entry of American cruisers into the Gulf under a plan to help trapped commercial vessels leave.

Like many Asian economies, South Korea is highly dependent on fuel imports from the Middle East, much of which transit through the Strait of Hormuz.

Seoul has sought new sources of oil since the war caused the virtual shutdown of the waterway, although it also said last month that a South Korean tanker had made it through safely.

“The Korean government will communicate closely with relevant countries regarding this matter and take necessary measures to ensure the safety of Korean vessels and crew members within the Strait of Hormuz,” the foreign ministry said yesterday. – AFP

(More on Middle East war on p.10)



Female pygmy hippo and viral internet sensation Moo Deng is seen inside her enclosure at Khao Kheow Open Zoo in Thailand's Chonburi province on Sunday. – AFP

Bangladesh's measles outbreak kills 311 children since March

DHAKA – Bangladesh has recorded 311 child deaths since March in one of its worst measles outbreaks in decades, government data showed yesterday.

The number of suspected cases has reached 41,793, while authorities logged the highest daily death toll since the outbreak began on March 15, with 17 children dead within 24 hours.

“Some children were already in a critical condition to a point of no return,” government health services spokesman Zahid Raihan told AFP. “That’s why the recorded deaths are still increasing.”

Measles is highly contagious, spreading through coughs and sneezes, and has no specific treatment once caught.

Complications can include brain swelling and severe breathing problems. While the disease can affect anyone, it is most common among children.

Most cases recorded in Bangladesh during the current outbreak have been among children aged between six months and five years.

Health officials are working to vaccinate children in the country of 170 million people, with support from the UN children’s agency, the World Health Organisation (WHO) and security forces.

The WHO estimates as many as 95,000 measles deaths globally every year, mostly among unvaccinated or under-vaccinated children under the age of five, according to its latest statistics. – AFP

Nepal PM defends squatter settlement clearances



A woman carries her belongings as residents remove household items during the authorities’ project to demolish squatter settlements in Kathmandu on Friday. Nepali authorities have been demolishing informal settlements to thousands of people along river banks of the capital, despite criticism from rights groups. – AFP

KATHMANDU – Nepal’s newly elected Prime Minister Balendra Shah defended yesterday his push to clear informal settlements from stiff criticism by rights groups, in rare public comments since assuming office.

Authorities last month began demolishing informal settlements home to thousands of people on government land in the capital Kathmandu.

Squatters have been living for decades on the banks of the Bagmati river and its tributaries which crisscross the Kathmandu valley. Many lived in flimsy shelters of wood and sheet metal shacks.

Shah, 36, who was elected in March, said in a post on social media the process was “in accordance with the law”.

He criticised what he called “intentional attempts to create suspicions and spread fear” about the process among residents of informal settlements.

“The government is fully committed to ensuring safe, dignified and permanent housing for every landless citizen,” Shah said.

“No citizen will be allowed to become homeless.”

Bal Krishnan Rajagopal, the outgoing UN special rapporteur on the right to adequate housing, said in April that he was “very concerned about the threat of forced eviction

looming over several thousands of residents”.

Amnesty International said that forced evictions reflect “a dangerous erosion of lawful governance and signals an increasingly authoritarian approach”.

Shah rejected that, saying that “all the steps taken are not aimed at evicting citizens, but at ensuring the right to housing and finding a permanent solution to the problem”.

About 3,500 houses and structures, home to about 25,000 people, have been demolished, according to Nepal Mahila Ekata Samaj, a network of landless women.

The evictions took place peacefully but under heavy police presence, with residents carrying bags and loading furniture and belongings into small trucks.

“There is a situation of uncertainly right now. The people don’t have a place to stay, nothing to eat and their jobs and schools have been disrupted,” Bhagwati Adhikari of Nepal Mahila Ekata Samaj told AFP.

A total of 1,816 families have registered as squatters, according to the government, with 794 transferred to government holding centres.

The Supreme Court yesterday issued a show-cause order to the government, following petitions against the decision to remove squatters from public land. – AFP

Modi celebrates ‘record’ win in opposition-held West Bengal

Sailendra Sil

KOLKATA – Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi claimed a “record” victory yesterday in key elections in opposition-held West Bengal state after official trends and partial results showed a thumping majority for his Hindu nationalist party.

Votes were still being counted under tight security in the state of more than 100 million people, one of five states and territories that held elections in April and May where results were also being announced yesterday.

The results should put Modi on a stronger footing while he battles a series of economic and foreign policy challenges, including high unemployment rates and a pending US trade deal, ahead of a general election in 2029

In keenly fought West Bengal, where Modi’s Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has never won before, the party was leading in 156 of the 293 seats and had won 48 others, according to the Election Commission of India.

“The 2026 West Bengal Assembly Elections will be remembered forever,” Modi said on social media. “People’s power has prevailed and BJP’s politics of good governance has triumphed.”

“BJP’s record win in West Bengal would not be possible without the efforts and struggles of countless Karyakartas (workers) over generations,” Modi said.

Senior party leaders and thousands of supporters celebrated on the streets of the state capital Kolkata, joyously swaying to victory tunes.

The BJP, the ruling party in the national parliament, waged an



A Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) supporter dressed as Mahatma Gandhi sits in a street during vote counting for the West Bengal Legislative Assembly elections, near the party head office in Kolkata yesterday. – AFP

aggressive campaign to dislodge the powerful regional party of firebrand leader Mamata Banerjee, in power in West Bengal since 2011.

Scuffles broke out outside several counting centres in the state, and police used batons to control the crowd. Past elections have resulted in violence.

This campaign was marked by protests over the removal of millions of names from voter rolls, billed as removing ineligible voters but which critics said was skewed against marginalised and minority communities.

‘New face’

Veteran politician MK Stalin, chief minister of the southern state of Tamil Nadu, lost his seat in another major electoral shock.

Stalin’s ruling Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK)

came a distant second behind a party floated by the actor-turned politician C. Joseph Vijay.

Vijay, 51, one of India’s most bankable actors, launched his TVK party in 2024 on the plank of youth employment and good governance in Tamil Nadu, a key industrial hub with more than 80 million people.

Results showed that Stalin, 73, had lost in his Kolathur stronghold to TVK’s V.S. Babu.

The trends indicated a surprise result for TVK in a state where most exit polls had suggested Stalin’s DMK would return to power.

“This result (in Tamil Nadu) shows that the youth want a new face. It is not just anti-incumbency,” political scientist Ramu Manivanan told AFP.

“Vijay as an actor has a large female fan base as a cinema star. All that has influenced the outcome,” Manivanan said.

In neighbouring Kerala, the Congress party-led alliance ousted the ruling Communists, bagging 63 out of 97 seats.

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi thanked the people of Kerala for a “truly decisive mandate”.

He also heaped praise on party workers for ensuring a “hard-fought, well-run campaign”.

The BJP returned to power in the northeastern state of Assam and in the small coastal territory of Puducherry, where it was a part of the ruling coalition.

Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma celebrated a “hat-trick” of wins in the state of more than 31 million after the BJP sealed victory for the third successive time. – AFP



Iranian crew members from a US-seized vessel speak with security officials (right) at Pakistan’s Gwadar border as they are handed over to Iranian authorities in Gwadar, Balochistan province, yesterday.

Pakistan said yesterday it had facilitated the transfer of 22 Iranian crew members from a US-seized vessel, describing the move as a “confidence-building measure” amid fragile diplomatic contacts between Washington and Tehran. – AFP

Sri Lanka arrests 37 Chinese at suspected scam centre: police

COLOMBO – Sri Lankan police have arrested 37 Chinese nationals suspected of running a cyberscam centre in the capital Colombo, a spokesman said on Sunday, in the latest crackdown on foreign-run online fraud.

The suspects, aged between 23 and 44 and including one woman, were arrested after a tip-off, the police spokesman said.

“They had entered the country on tourist visas and were illegally employed, while two of them had overstayed their visas,” he added.

A local police source said

35 tablet computers, 147 mobile phones and 100 SIM cards were seized at the suspected scam centre in the Colombo suburb of Talangama.

The arrests came a month after 152 foreign nationals, mostly Chinese, were detained for allegedly running a cyberscam operation out of a hotel in the island’s northwest.

Immigration authorities arrested 135 Chinese men and women in March for allegedly running a similar scam operation. They have since been deported.

Beijing’s embassy in Colombo said at the time it was working closely with local authorities to prevent Chinese nationals from carrying out scam operations in Sri Lanka.

The embassy said Sri Lanka’s developed telecommunications infrastructure, favourable geographical location and relatively lenient visa policies encouraged fraud gangs to move to the South Asian nation.

In 2024, Sri Lankan authorities detained 230 Chinese nationals and 200 Indian nationals accused of operating cybercrime centres in various parts of the island. – AFP

Iran fires 'warning shots' as US Navy says its ships entered Gulf via Hormuz

Tehran, Iran

TEHRAN – Iran's navy fired 'warning shots' at US warships in the Strait of Hormuz yesterday, state media said, after the American military sent destroyers into the Gulf as part of a plan to help trapped commercial vessels leave.

Earlier, US President Donald Trump had announced a plan to guide ships from neutral countries out of the Gulf, saying it was a humanitarian effort to help their stranded crews.

Negotiations between Washington and Tehran have been deadlocked since a ceasefire in the US-Israeli war against Iran took effect on April 8, with Tehran's stranglehold on the strait a main point of contention.

"For the good of Iran, the Middle East, and the United States, we have told these [non-combatant] Countries that we will guide their Ships safely out of these restricted Waterways," Trump posted on Truth Social, saying operations would begin on May 4.

Once out, "they will not be returning until the area becomes safe for navigation," Trump added.

In response to Trump, the Iranian military's central command said any safe passage through Hormuz must be coordinated with its forces "under all circumstances".

US media reported that the US Navy would not escort vessels through the strait but would provide guidance on traversing the narrow seaway. News site Axios said US ships would be "in the vicinity" to prevent Iranian attacks on commercial vessels.

CENTCOM said yesterday that "guided-missile destroyers are currently operating" in the Gulf, having transited Hormuz.

It added that, as "a first step" in Project Freedom, that two "US-flagged merchant vessels" had travelled out of the Gulf.

Iranian state media then reported that "following the Zionist American destroyers' disregard for the initial warning, the Navy issued a warning shot by firing cruise missiles, rockets, and combat drones around the aggressor enemy vessels".



In this picture obtained from Iran's ISNA news agency yesterday, two men sitting in a skiff are fishing near a vessel anchored in the Strait of Hormuz off Bandar Abbas in southern Iran. Iran's Revolutionary Guards on May 4 denied that any commercial ships had crossed the Strait of Hormuz, after the US military earlier said two US-flagged merchant vessels had transited through the vital waterway. – AFP

The Fars news agency had earlier reported that Iran hit a US warship with missiles, a claim that CENTCOM immediately denied.

There was also a brief missile attack alert sent to mobile phones in the UAE yesterday, which was later lifted.

'Positive discussions'

As of April 29, more than 900 commercial vessels were located in the Gulf, according to maritime intelligence firm AXSMarine.

The British maritime agency UKMTO also reported yesterday an attack on a tanker off the UAE with "unknown projectiles".

Later in the day, the UAE said Iran had fired drones at a tanker affiliated with its state-owned oil giant ADNOC.

By blocking the strait, Iran has choked off major flows of oil, gas and fertiliser to the world economy, while the United States has imposed a counter-blockade on Iranian ports.

Trump in his post said he was "fully aware that my Representatives are having very positive discussions with the Country of Iran, and that these discussions could lead to something very positive for all."

But he made no direct mention of a 14-point plan that Tehran said it put forward last week to end the war.

Speaking yesterday, Iran's foreign ministry spokesman Esmail Baqaei

said Iran's "priority is to end the war" but blamed the US for a lack of progress.

"The other side must commit to a reasonable approach and abandon its excessive demands," he said.

He had earlier said Washington had responded to the 14-point plan in a message to Pakistani mediators.

'Impossible operation'

On Sunday, Iran's Revolutionary Guards sought to put the diplomatic onus back on Trump, saying he must choose between "an impossible operation or a bad deal with the Islamic Republic".

Oil prices are currently about 50 percent above pre-conflict levels, piling economic pressure on countries around the world including the United States.

Trump declined on Sunday to specify what could trigger new US military action.

But in his post on the Hormuz plan he said that "if in any way, this Humanitarian process is interfered with, that interference will, unfortunately, have to be dealt with forcefully".

US Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent said the US naval blockade was only part of a broader economic embargo.

"We are suffocating the regime, and they are not able to pay their soldiers," he told Fox News. "This is a real economic blockade, and it is in all parts of government." – AFP

Lebanese president says security deal with Israel must come before Netanyahu meeting

BEIRUT – Lebanese President Joseph Aoun said yesterday that a security deal and an end to Israeli attacks were needed before any meeting with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, sought by Washington.

Aoun's office said in a statement that the president "reiterated his view that the timing is not appropriate now for a meeting" with Netanyahu.

The statement quoted Aoun as saying: "We must first reach a security agreement and stop the Israeli attacks on us before we raise the issue of a meeting between us."

Israeli and Lebanese representatives last month met twice in Washington – the first such meetings in decades, which came after Iran-backed Hezbollah drew Lebanon into the Middle East war on March 2, sparking heavy Israeli strikes and a ground invasion.

After the first talks, US President Donald Trump announced a 10-day ceasefire in Lebanon that began on April 17, and a three-week extension after the second round.

The two countries are preparing for direct negotiations.

The statement from Aoun's office said a third round of "preparatory talks" were expected "in the coming days".

At the second meeting later in April, Trump said he expected Aoun and Netanyahu to meet jointly with him at the White House "over the next couple of weeks".

Last week, the US embassy in Beirut urged such a meeting, saying that "Lebanon stands at a crossroads. Its people have a historic opportunity to reclaim their country and shape their future," adding that "the time for hesitation is over".

A direct meeting between Aoun and Netanyahu, "facilitated by President Trump, would give Lebanon the chance to secure concrete guarantees" including on sovereignty, the embassy added, at a time when Israeli troops are still operating in south Lebanon.

The planned negotiations have caused a rift in Lebanon, with Hezbollah rejecting direct negotiations as well as Beirut's previous commitment to disarm it.

Hezbollah chief Naim Qassem earlier yesterday criticised direct talks, saying they put Lebanon "under tutelage", and instead called for diplomacy that leads to an end to the war.

"Direct negotiations are a gratuitous concession, without results," Qassem said.

Aoun said "there is no turning back from the path of negotiations, because we have no other option", according to the statement from his office, reiterating that the process sought to achieve an Israeli withdrawal from Lebanon.

Israeli strikes have killed almost 2,700 people in Lebanon, including dozens since the ceasefire. – AFP



Smoke rises from the site of an Israeli airstrike that targeted the southern Lebanese village of Mayfadoun in the Nabatieh district on Saturday. – AFP

Israel bans Jewish pilgrimage near Lebanese border

JERUSALEM – Israeli police yesterday warned people not to defy the cancellation of a major pilgrimage near the border with Lebanon, scrapped because of hostilities with Hezbollah, while local media reported thousands had gathered at the site.

Fighting between Israeli forces and Iran-backed militant group Hezbollah is ongoing in southern Lebanon despite a ceasefire in effect since mid-April.

Israeli media reported thousands of people had gathered at the pilgrimage site yesterday despite the cancellation and a ban on large gatherings due to ongoing hostilities.

Authorities announced the pilgrimage's cancellation on Friday, citing the "security situation," sparking the closure of roads leading

to the Mount Meron site starting Sunday morning (local time).

Israeli authorities fear that some worshippers will attempt to circumvent the roadblocks and warned that "police will not allow extremist elements to turn this sacred place into a scene of violence," a police statement said.

It added that police "will act to bring to justice anybody who will incite violence or act against officers fulfilling their duty".

The Mount Meron pilgrimage occurs on the Lag BaOmer holiday, when mainly ultra-Orthodox Jews through the site of the tomb of revered second-century rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai.

The pilgrimage was cancelled in 2024, and took place with

restrictions in 2025, both times due to hostilities between Israel and Hezbollah which began after the start of the war in Gaza.

On April 30, 2021, a stampede in the section reserved for men caused the deaths of 45 pilgrims, including at least 16 children.

A commission of inquiry concluded three years later that there was "personal responsibility" on the part of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

In a video on Sunday, Israel's Chief Rabbi David Yossef lambasted those wanting to go to Meron despite the bans.

"The risk of endangering one's life overrides all religious commandments, and security experts say there is a real danger," he stressed. – AFP

2 held after arson attack on London memorial for Iranian protesters

LONDON – Two people were arrested on suspicion of arson with intent to endanger life after a fire at a London memorial wall commemorating Iranians killed in anti-government protests, police said yesterday.

The wall in Golders Green in north London, where two Jewish men were stabbed this week, also commemorates victims of the October 7, 2023 attack by Palestinian Hamas militants on Israel.

The area is home to a large Jewish community.

The incident is the only one of a spate targeting the Jewish community in recent weeks that has not been

claimed by a little-known group, the Iran-linked Harakat Ashab al-Yamin al-Islamiya (HAYI), according to SITE Intelligence group.

A 46-year-old man and a 38-year-old woman, who have not been named, were arrested in Romford, east London, earlier yesterday, the capital's Metropolitan Police said.

On Friday a 45-year-old man appeared in court charged with stabbing two men in Golders Green on Wednesday, the latest incident to rock London's Jewish community.

The attack has left community members feeling increasingly vulnerable and highly critical of authorities. – AFP

Mysterious world beyond Pluto may have an atmosphere: astronomers

Daniel Lawler

PARIS – A tiny, little-known world beyond Pluto appears to have an atmosphere, Japanese astronomers said yesterday, defying what had been thought possible for icy objects in our cosmic backyard.

If confirmed, the roughly 500-kilometre-wide rock would become just the second world past Neptune in our Solar System to host an atmosphere – after only Pluto itself.

Formerly classified as a planet, Pluto was demoted to dwarf planet status in 2006, in part because astronomers were discovering other similar objects in a distant region called the Kuiper Belt.

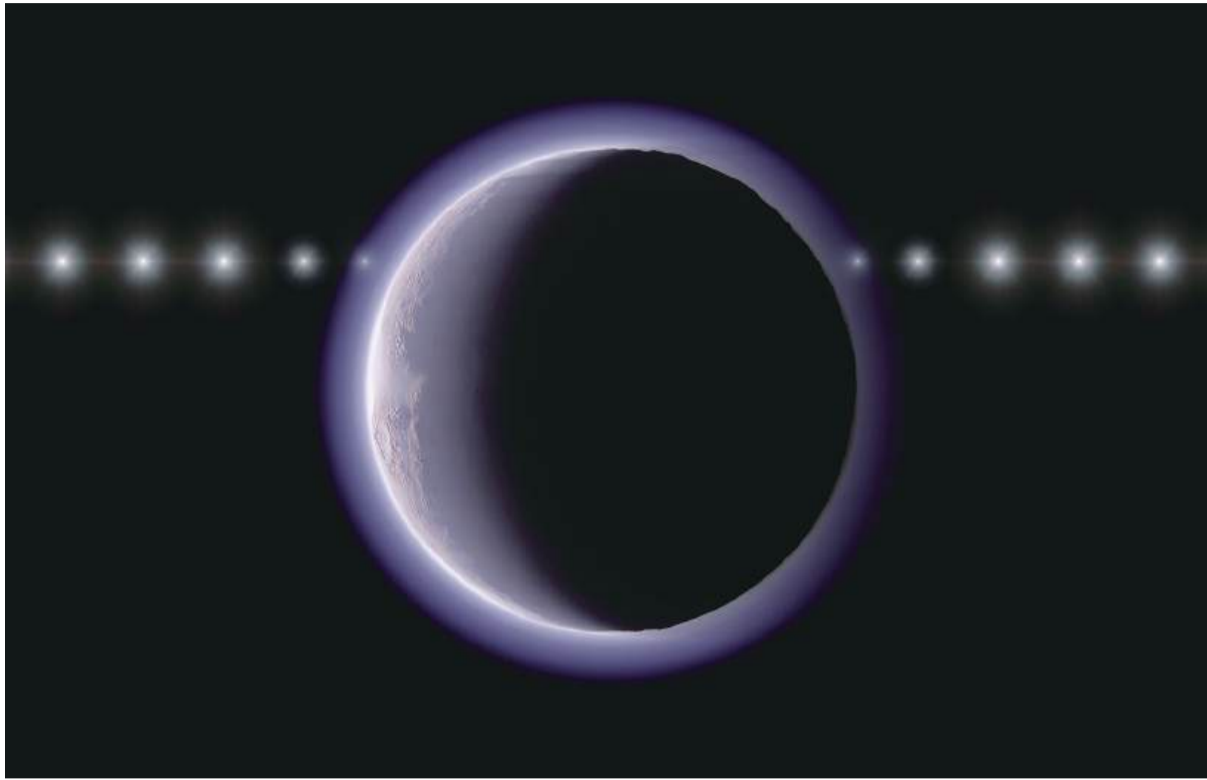
While NASA under US President Donald Trump has floated the idea of restoring Pluto's planet status, the discovery of another atmosphere nearby could undermine the argument for its reinstatement.

For the new discovery, Japanese researchers and an amateur astronomer pointed their telescopes at an object with the unwieldy name of (612533) 2002 XV93.

The icy world is nearly 40 times further from the Sun than Earth – or roughly six billion kilometres away.

These dark objects can only be seen when they pass in front of a distant star.

When this happened in January 2024, the astronomers observed that the starlight did not immediately reappear, suggesting a thin



This undated handout artist's impression released yesterday shows the trans-Neptunian object (612533) 2002 XV93 occulting a background star as observations of a stellar occultation in January 2024 revealed gradual fading and recovery of the starlight, providing evidence for a very thin atmosphere around the object.

– AFP

atmosphere was filtering some of the light.

They estimate that the world has an atmosphere five to 10 million times thinner than Earth's, according to a new study in *Nature Astronomy*.

"This is important because, until now, Pluto was the only trans-Neptunian object with a confirmed atmosphere," lead study author Ko Arimatsu of the National Astronomical Observatory of Japan told AFP.

Such small worlds had not been thought capable of hosting an atmosphere.

"This discovery therefore challenges the conventional view that small icy worlds in the outer Solar System are mostly inactive and unchanging," he added.

Ice volcanoes or comet smash?

The researchers could not say for

sure what created the atmosphere, which is nowhere near thick enough to support life.

But they suggested it could have been made by gas being shot out from the world's interior by erupting ice volcanoes.

Or it could have been kicked up by a comet smashing into the world, which would mean it will gradually disappear.

José-Luis Ortiz, a Spanish

astronomer not involved in the research who studies dwarf planets beyond Neptune, said the results were interesting, but urged caution.

"I still doubt that it is an atmosphere. We need more data," he told AFP.

An alternative explanation for the observations could be that the object has a ring close to its body, Ortiz said.

Ko Arimatsu acknowledged that he could not rule out "exotic alternatives" to an atmosphere.

However, "a nearly edge-on ring does not seem consistent with the main features of our observations," he added.

Both astronomers called for further observations to reveal more about this strange world – particularly with the James Webb space telescope.

There have also been suggestions that a dwarf planet called Makemake, which is slightly smaller than Pluto, could have a very thin atmosphere, though some scientists are sceptical.

Last week, NASA administrator Jared Isaacman suggested the US space agency was considering reinstating Pluto as a fully-fledged planet.

Isaacman made the comments while endorsing a proposal to halve NASA's science budget, riling some astronomers, *Nature* reported.

"It's wild to 'make Pluto a planet again' while decimating the careers of those of us that study it!" planetary scientist Adeene Denton wrote on *Bluesky*. – AFP

23 bystanders killed in Sweden shootings in 3 years: police

Stockholm, Sweden

STOCKHOLM – Twenty-three innocent bystanders have been killed and 30 wounded in gangland shootings in Sweden in the past three years, according to statistics released yesterday that highlighted its battle to rein in violent crime.

The Nordic country has struggled for more than a decade to contain gang violence linked primarily to score-settling and battles to control the drug market.

The innocent victims include people hit by stray bullets, cases of a mistaken identity by the shooter and relatives of targeted gang members, according to the police statistics.

Alexander Wallenius, operations coordinator at the Swedish police's department of national operations, told news agency TT that one reason for the number of bystanders injured was that many of the shooters were young.

"We are dealing with very young perpetrators who, in many cases, have no previous experience of violent crime, which means a greater risk that

third parties or the wrong target will be hit," Wallenius said.

Swedish gangs often use social media and encrypted apps to recruit teens who are paid to carry out crimes.

The recruits are often under the age of 15, Sweden's age of criminal responsibility – meaning they cannot be prosecuted and fall under the responsibility of social services, making them valuable assets to gangs.

The minority right-wing government, propped up by the far-right Sweden Democrats, has been pushing through proposals cracking down on crime and immigration ahead of a general election on September 13.

Last week it said it planned to introduce legislation requiring social media platforms like TikTok and Snapchat to take down gangs' 'murder adverts' within an hour or face hefty fines.

The government has previously announced plans to lower the age of criminal responsibility from 15 to 13 for crimes punishable by at least four years in prison.

– AFP

France launches one-euro university meals for all students

AMIENS – French university canteens began offering one-euro meals to all students regardless of income yesterday, in a measure designed to address financial hardship.

The move follows a push by student unions to extend the one-euro rate (US\$1.17) for a three-course meal to all students, down from the usual 3.30 euros.

The price, which covers a starter, main course and dessert, was previously only available to those with low incomes or receiving financial aid.

For Alexandre Ioannides, an 18-year-old student in Paris, the measure will

slash his monthly canteen expenses.

"I come here 20 times a month. That's about 60 euros. Whereas now, I'll pay 20 euros," he said, adding the savings would go towards "going out or eating at a restaurant".

The policy aims to alleviate financial strain for students in France, where a January survey by a student union organisation found 48 percent have gone without food for financial reasons and 23 percent do so several times a month.

Around 667,000 students benefited from the one-euro lunch scheme in 2024, a 5.3-percent

increase from the previous year, with around 46.7 million meals served at both the discounted and standard 3.30-euro rates, according to university restaurant operator Crous.

Authorities are preparing for a rise in demand, with Higher Education Minister Philippe Batiste promising 120 million euros in 2027 to back the scheme.

"It is a small internal revolution," said Batiste, who pledged to oversee the programme to ensure it does not lead to an excessive workload for canteen staff or a decline in food quality. – AFP

Mother convicted for locking up daughter in Germany

BERLIN – A German woman convicted of keeping her young daughter locked up at home for years was sentenced to five years in prison yesterday.

The woman, who had kept her daughter confined to the home of the girl's grandparents, was found guilty of kidnapping, abduction of a minor and mistreatment of a vulnerable person, according to a court spokeswoman.

The grandmother was given a two-year suspended sentence for the same charges, while the grandfather

also received a suspended sentence as an accomplice.

The girl, who is now 11 years old, was kept locked up for about seven years in the town of Attendorn in the Sauerland region of western Germany before being freed in September 2022.

The girl received neither schooling nor medical care during that time, according to prosecutors, who said the girl suffered severe developmental problems as a result of the isolation.

According to the indictment, the mother fabricated a story claiming

she had moved to Italy with her daughter, and severed all contact with the child's father.

The grandparents allegedly helped by running errands and spreading the false claims that the child was in Italy.

"The girl's family was part of the community," a resident of Attendorn told public broadcaster ARD, adding that it was "incredible that no one noticed".

According to ARD, the mother attempted suicide at the start of the trial, which began earlier this year after numerous delays. – AFP

Passengers isolating on cruise after Cape Verde ban over suspected virus deaths

PRAIA – Passengers are isolating aboard a cruise ship on which a suspected outbreak of hantavirus has killed three people, its operator said yesterday, after Cape Verde refused them entry.

The island nation's denial to disembark came even as WHO Europe said the risk to the wider public remained low.

People from Spain, Britain and the United States are among 23 nationalities of the 149 people aboard the MV Hondius.

They are under "strict precautionary measures" on the ship, its operator Oceanwide Expeditions said in a statement, including isolation, hygiene protocols and medical monitoring.

The company has confirmed three deaths among those on board the cruise, which was travelling from Ushuaia in Argentina to Cape Verde off the coast of west Africa.

Two died on board and one after disembarking the ship. One passenger is in intensive care in Johannesburg and two others "require urgent medical care", the statement said.

Hantavirus, an illness usually transmitted to humans from rodents, has been confirmed in the passenger currently in intensive care in Johannesburg, the operator said.

However, it has not yet been established whether the virus caused the three deaths, said Oceanwide Expeditions.

The president of Cape Verde's National Institute of Public Health (INSP) said that the ship "was not granted authorisation to dock at the port of Praia" off which it is anchored, in an interview with RTC public broadcaster on Sunday.

The move was meant "to protect the Cape Verdean population," Maria da Luz Lima said, adding that "there would be no contact between the passengers and the country".



This aerial picture shows a general view of the cruise ship MV Hondius stationary off the port of Praia, the capital of Cape Verde, yesterday. – AFP

Spain's Canary Islands are under consideration for disembarkation, "where further medical screening and handling could take place", the operator said.

Dutch authorities have agreed to lead a joint effort to organise the repatriation of two symptomatic individuals on board MV Hondius to the Netherlands, the Oceanwide Expeditions operator said.

Such a repatriation would depend on several factors, including authorisation from local officials in Cape Verde, it added.

In a statement sent to AFP, the Dutch foreign ministry said it was "busy looking at the possibilities to medically evacuate a few people from the ship".

"If this can take place, the ministry of foreign affairs will coordinate it," said a spokesperson.

'Acting with urgency'

While local doctors have visited to assess the medical condition of the two sick crew members, no permission was given to evacuate them to shore.

Despite the concern, "risk to the wider public remains low", the World Health Organization's director

for Europe Hans Kluge said in a statement, adding that "there is no need for panic or travel restrictions".

He added that hantavirus infections were "uncommon and usually linked to exposure to infected rodents".

The WHO said it was "acting with urgency to support the response to the hantavirus event on board a cruise vessel in the Atlantic, following the tragic loss of life".

"WHO Europe is working with the countries involved to support medical care, evacuation, investigations and public health risk assessment."

There has been no confirmation of hantavirus in the two symptomatic people still requiring attention on the ship.

"The exact cause and any possible connection are under investigation," said the ship's operator.

On Sunday, the WHO said one case of hantavirus had been confirmed and that there were "five additional suspected cases".

"While rare, hantavirus may spread between people and can lead to severe respiratory illness and requires careful patient monitoring, support and response," the United Nations health agency said. – AFP

Cuba slams 'unprecedented' Trump threats

HAVANA – US President Donald Trump's threats of military aggression against Cuba have reached a "dangerous and unprecedented level," Cuban President Miguel Díaz-Canel said on Saturday, calling on the international community to respond.

During a speech in Florida on Friday, Trump said the United States would be "taking over" the Caribbean island "almost immediately."

"The US president is escalating his threats of military aggression against #Cuba to a dangerous and unprecedented level," Díaz-Canel wrote in a post on X.

He called on the international community to take a stance on whether such a "drastic criminal act will be allowed to satisfy the interests of a small but wealthy and influential group, eager for revenge and domination."

"No aggressor, however powerful, will find surrender in Cuba," Díaz-Canel added.

Trump's comments in Florida,

home to the largest Cuban diaspora, were made just hours after he signed an executive order tightening sanctions against the government in Havana and entities that collaborate with it.

Trump has repeatedly mused about taking over Cuba, which lies 145 kilometres from Florida and has been under a nearly continuous US trade embargo since Fidel Castro led a communist revolution on the island in 1959.

Already in the throes of economic stagnation, Cuba's plight deepened when Washington imposed a fuel blockade in January, with only one Russian oil tanker making it through since then.

On Friday, huge crowds marched to the US embassy in Havana to mark May Day, denouncing threats of aggression from Washington.

Díaz-Canel led the march, along with 94-year-old former president Raúl Castro, Fidel's brother. – AFP



Cuban President Miguel Díaz-Canel (front, second from left), former president Raúl Castro (front, centre) and former vice-president José Ramón Machado Ventura (front, second from right) attend a May Day rally marking International Workers' Day in Havana on Friday. – AFP

Spain to deploy over 13,000 officers for pope's June visit

MADRID – Spain will deploy more than 13,000 police officers to stave off "multiple" potential threats to Pope Leo XIV's visit from June 6 to 12, the interior minister said yesterday.

The pope is expected to draw huge crowds in the historically deeply Catholic nation when he travels to Madrid, Barcelona, and the Canary Islands.

Interior Minister Fernando Grande-Marlaska told reporters in Madrid that the highest level of a special security plan would be activated throughout the visit, the first by a pope to Spain since 2011.

More than 11,000 police officers and 2,200 Civil Guard (gendarmery) officers would be deployed, while the contribution of additional local forces in the northeastern region of Catalonia that includes Barcelona was to be established, Marlaska added.

Marlaska reeled off a list of "multiple" potential threats, including terrorism, "but also radicalism, other movements such as social movements, which may

naturally seize the opportunity to make themselves heard".

After staying in the capital, Leo will inaugurate the newest and tallest tower of Barcelona's Sagrada Familia ("Holy Family") Basilica, 100 years since the death of its Catalan architect Antoni Gaudí.

The Catholic Church declared Gaudí "venerable" in 2025 – the first step on the path to sainthood.

The US pope will then travel to the Canary Islands, an archipelago off the northwestern coast of Africa that is a major route for Europe-bound migrants.

Leo is a vocal defender of migrants, an issue which was also dear to his predecessor Pope Francis.

The fact that the visit "takes place in different territories obviously creates greater complexity for ensuring that it unfolds normally", as all locations are "very different", Marlaska said.

Simultaneous major events, such as a series of concerts in Madrid by Puerto Rican superstar Bad Bunny, "do not make it easy", but Spain "has the resources" to secure all the sites, Marlaska said. – AFP

Mexican governor accused by US of drug trafficking steps down temporarily

MEXICO CITY – The governor of a Mexican state who has been accused by the United States of ties to drug trafficking said on Friday he was temporarily stepping down to facilitate investigations.

Sinaloa Governor Ruben Rocha Moya and nine others were charged by the US Justice Department last week for working with the notorious Sinaloa cartel to distribute "massive quantities" of narcotics to the United States.

Rocha Moya, a member of Mexican President Claudia Sheinbaum's left-leaning Morena party, has decried the allegations as "false and malicious."

"I inform the people of Sinaloa that today I submitted to the State Congress my request for a temporary

leave from the position of governor," he said in a YouTube video on Friday.

Rocha Moya, who is close to former leftist president Andrés Manuel López Obrador, has been governor of the northwestern state of Sinaloa since 2021.

Juan de Dios Gámez, the mayor of Sinaloa's capital Culiacan who was among those named by the US Justice Department, also announced that he would step down.

The two men leaving office no longer enjoy immunity and can be subject to investigation.

The resignations came after Sheinbaum demanded "solid and irrefutable" evidence from the United States.

Sheinbaum noted it was the first time that the United States

had made narcotrafficking charges public against a sitting governor or other high-ranking official in her country.

The stunning charges add to already strained diplomatic relations with US President Donald Trump's administration, following the recent death of two US agents – reportedly CIA personnel – in connection with a drug bust operation.

The Sinaloa Cartel is one of six Mexican narcotrafficking groups designated as foreign terrorist organisations by the Trump administration.

Sheinbaum has faced pressure from Washington to accept US intervention, such as drone strikes or military personnel, to fight cartels. – AFP

Forest sink woeful Chelsea to boost survival bid

Steven Griffiths



LONDON — Nottingham Forest took a huge step towards Premier League survival with a 3-1 win at Chelsea yesterday that dealt a major blow to the Blues' hopes of qualifying for the Champions League.

Taiwo Awoniyi marked his 100th Forest appearance with the early opener at Stamford Bridge and Igor Jesus's penalty doubled their advantage soon afterwards.

Cole Palmer compounded Chelsea's misery when he missed a penalty late in the first half.

Awoniyi struck again after the interval and Joao Pedro's eye-catching bicycle kick in the closing stages was no consolation for lacklustre Chelsea.

Languishing in ninth place, Chelsea's wretched run has left them on the verge of failing to reach next season's Champions League.

Chelsea have lost six consecutive league games for the first time since 1993.

Scoring for the first time in six league matches was the only positive in a shambolic display.

Calum McFarlane's team are 10 points behind fifth-placed Aston Villa, with only nine points available in the race for the top-five finish that secures Champions League qualification.

However, sixth will also earn a Champions League berth if Villa



Chelsea's Spanish defender Marc Cucurella (left) tries to head the ball with Nottingham Forest's English midfielder Omari Hutchinson in front of goal during the English Premier League football match between Chelsea and Nottingham Forest at Stamford Bridge in London yesterday. — AFP

finish fifth and win the Europa League, leaving Chelsea - currently four points adrift of sixth-placed Bournemouth - still with a slender chance.

Forest's third successive league victory moved them six points clear of the relegation zone, with four

more points needed to guarantee survival.

There are just three games left for each club in Forest's scrap with fourth-bottom Tottenham and third-bottom West Ham.

Pereira made eight changes from Forest's previous league game as he

prioritised holding onto their 1-0 lead in Thursday's Europa League semi-final second leg at Aston Villa.

The gamble paid off and Pereira's side, unbeaten in their last 10 games in all competitions, can now focus on finishing off Villa to reach their first European final since 1980.

McFarlane last week insisted Chelsea remain an attractive club for prospective managers despite their latest turbulent campaign.

Liam Rosenior was sacked in April, just 106 days after arriving from Strasbourg to replace Enzo Maresca, whose 18-month reign ended in January following hints of a lack of support from Chelsea's hierarchy.

Potential replacements for Rosenior might disagree with McFarlane's spin after such a moribund performance.

Miserable Chelsea

Even Forest's understudies were too strong for lethargic Chelsea.

They took the lead after just 97 seconds when Dilane Bakwa evaded Marc Cucurella for a cross that reached Awoniyi, who punished Chelsea's sloppy marking with a powerful header from six yards.

Chelsea were inches away from a quick-fire equaliser as Enzo Fernandez's low curler cannoned off the far post from the edge of the penalty area.

But the Blues lost their composure again when Gusto needlessly conceded a 15th minute penalty.

Awoniyi's shirt was tugged by the Chelsea defender as they contested Bakwa's cross and although Anthony Taylor ignored Forest's initial appeals, the referee changed his decision after consulting the pitch-side monitor.

Jesus stepped up to fire the penalty straight down the middle for his 16th goal in all competitions this season.

Chelsea earned a penalty in first-half stoppage time after teenager Jesse Derry was felled by Forest's Zach Abbott in a nasty collision that forced the Blues youngster to be stretchered off with a head injury.

But adding insult to injury, Palmer's spot-kick was superbly saved by Matz Sels as jeers rained down from the stands.

Back from a serious knee injury, Chelsea defender Levi Colwill came on at half-time for his first appearance since July.

But Forest still bagged their third in the 52nd minute when Morgan Gibbs-White picked out Awoniyi and he tapped in as Chelsea appeared in vain for offside.

By the time Joao Pedro scored with a spectacular overhead strike from 10 yards in added time, the Bridge was virtually empty in a fitting backdrop to another calamitous afternoon. — AFP

Football shorts

Madrid's Mendy suffers another injury setback



MADRID — Injury-plagued Real Madrid defender Ferland Mendy has suffered a thigh injury, with Spanish media reporting yesterday that he will be sidelined for several months.

Left-back Mendy was replaced after just 14 minutes of Sunday's 2-0 win over Espanyol, which delayed Barcelona winning the La Liga title.

The France international will undergo surgery in the coming hours after suffering his 16th injury since joining Madrid from Lyon in 2019.

"Following tests carried out today on our player Ferland Mendy... he has been diagnosed with a rectus femoris tendon injury in his right leg," Madrid said in a statement.

Mendy made his last France appearance in June 2024 and was unlikely to be in contention for a place in Didier Deschamps's World Cup squad. — AFP

Coach Marcelino to leave Villarreal at end of season



MADRID — Villarreal coach Marcelino will leave at the end of the season despite guiding the Yellow Submarines into next season's Champions League, the club announced yesterday.

It is the second year running that the 2021 Europa League winners have qualified for Europe's top club competition, but Marcelino was unable to agree to an extension with

the club, according to local press.

The 60-year-old Spaniard is in his second spell at the club having coached Villarreal from 2013-16 and then rejoined the team in 2023.

He took the team away from the relegation zone in 2023/24 and up to an eighth-placed finish, and the following season led Villarreal to fifth and Champions League qualification.

Their 5-1 thrashing of Levante on Saturday ensured a top four finish - they are currently third - and a second consecutive Champions League appearance for the first time.

According to local press, Rayo Vallecano coach Inigo Perez is in the running to succeed Marcelino.

Mid-table Vallecano are playing in Europe for only the second time in their history and take a 1-0 first-leg lead into their Europa Conference League semi-final second leg away to Strasbourg on Thursday. — AFP

N Korean club to play rare football match in South: Seoul



SEOUL — A North Korean women's football club will be the first sports team from the country to play in neighbouring South Korea since 2018 when they visit this month, Seoul's unification ministry said yesterday.

The two Koreas technically remain at war after their 1950-53 conflict ended in an armistice rather than a peace treaty and sporting and cultural exchanges between them are very rare.

The ministry said North Korean authorities sent the South a "notification of a 39-member delegation" from Naegohyang Women's FC, who will play the South's Suwon FC Women on May 20 in the semi-finals of the Champions League.

The delegation will include 27 players and 12 club staff, the ministry said. It did not say when exactly the team would arrive in South Korea.

The winner of the match will play the final of Asia's top women's club competition on May 23 against either Australia's Melbourne City or Japan's Tokyo Verdy Beleza.

"The losing team in the semi-final will return home on Thursday, May 21, with no third-place playoff scheduled," the ministry said in a press release.

The match will be the first time a North Korean sports team has played in the South since shooting, youth football and table tennis delegations travelled there in 2018.

The last time Pyongyang sent a women's football team to the South was in 2014, when the North Korean national team took part at the Asian Games in Incheon.

North Korea's national team is one of the dominant forces in Asian women's football, winning multiple international titles in recent years, especially at youth level.

The most recent one came in November last year, when they defeated the Netherlands 3-0 in the final of the FIFA U-17 Women's World Cup. — AFP

Simeone laughs off 'cheaper' Atletico hotel switch before Arsenal clash



LONDON — Diego Simeone laughed off claims that Atletico Madrid's decision to switch hotels before their Champions League semi-final against Arsenal was motivated by superstition.

The Spanish club stayed in the Marriott Hotel near London's Regents Park before a 4-0 defeat at Arsenal in the group stage in October.

With their last-four clash poised at 1-1 heading into today's second leg at the Emirates Stadium, Simeone and his squad snubbed the Marriott this time as they moved across the capital to the Courthouse Hotel in Shoreditch.

It had been reported that Simeone ordered the move on the belief that using the same base as their previous visit could bring his players bad luck.

But asked about the decision yesterday, Simeone told reporters: "The hotel was cheaper. That's why we changed."

Atletico forward Julian Alvarez, who scored from the penalty spot in the first leg, is set to overcome an injury to face Arsenal.

Alvarez, who has scored 20 times this season, did not feature in Atletico's win at Valencia last Saturday but has travelled to London with the rest of the squad.

"Julian Alvarez is important in this game because he knows the English league very well,"

Simeone said of the former Manchester City player.

"He played really well last week, and I hope he can bring what he needs in the game tomorrow.

"As coaches, we have to think about what could happen but it is down to the players. We have to manage our emotions and play as well as possible."

Antoine Griezmann has scored 212 goals in 494 appearances for Atletico, but has agreed to join Major League Soccer side Orlando City at the end of the season.

Today's match will be the 35-year-old's last in Europe's elite club competition if they do not progress to the final.

"It is not something I am thinking about. I am looking forward to the game tomorrow [today]," he said.

"I hope we can have the right attitude and play with the right pressure and build on our second-half performance from the first leg.

"Every time we start a Champions League campaign you can see yourself lifting the trophy, and any child in their bedroom would do the same.

"We are just two games away now and we have to get it right, tactically defensively and going forward, and of course we need more goals."

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

Thompson-Herah shines at world relays, Tebogo helps Botswana to win



Jamaica's Elaine Thompson-Herah (centre) leads ahead of Canada's Donna Ntambue (left) and Italy's Alessia Pavese in the women's 4x100m relay final during the Gaborone 26 World Athletics Relays at the National Stadium in Gaborone, Botswana on Sunday. — AFP

Athletics

GABORONE, Botswana — Elaine Thompson-Herah ran a stunning anchor leg to hand Jamaica victory in the women's 4x100m event at the World Relays on Sunday, while Letsile Tebogo helped host nation Botswana win the second fastest 4x400m in history.

Thompson-Herah, 33, took the baton from third-leg runner Lavanya Williams and headed into the final straight a couple of metres down on Canada's Donna Ntambue. But the second-fastest woman ever in the 100m, a five-time Olympic champion, turned on the power and reeled in the Canadian.

The Jamaican foursome, also comprising Briana Williams and Jodean Williams, won in 42.00sec, with Canada second in 42.17 and Spain 42.31 rounding out the podium.

There was a dream finish to two days of high-octane action in the Botswanan capital as the country's men's team won the 4x400m relay.

Lee Bhekempilo Eppie led the Botswanans out in front of a raucous crowd, before reigning Olympic 200m champion Letsile Tebogo took over.

But the country's first-ever Olympic champion pulled up badly at the end of his lap, handing South Africa's Lythe Pillay the advantage.

It left world 400m bronze medallist Bayapo Ndori a mountain to climb on the third leg. He tracked down South African Leendert Koekemoer but could not break free.

It was neck-and-neck between Botswana, South Africa and Australia at the final baton handover.

But Botswana's world 400m champion Collen Kebinatshipi broke free from South Africa's Zakithi Nene 40 metres from the line to win in a blistering 2min 54.47sec, just 18 hundredths of a second slower than the world record set by a US quartet featuring Michael Johnson in 1993.

Competition was fierce with places at next year's world championships in Beijing were up for grabs, as well as qualification for the inaugural World Athletics Ultimate Championship in Budapest in September.

Big US names absent

The men's 4x100m saw American anchor leg Pjai Austin hold off a fast-finishing Akani Simbine of South Africa for the win in 37.43sec.

With better-known US runners including Noah Lyles absent, Ronnie Baker, Max Thomas and Lance Lang completed the US team.

Jamaica set a new world record in the mixed 4x100m, a relatively new addition to the schedule at

major championships.

Ackeeem Blake, Tina Clayton, Kadrian Goldson and Tina's twin sister Tia Clayton raced to victory in a dominant 39.62sec.

The Jamaican quartet had become the first team to dip under 40 seconds when clocking an initial world best of 39.99sec in Saturday's heat.

"It's a great feeling, this event is somewhat new to us, this is my third time running it and all I can say is it was fun running with the guys," said Tia Clayton.

"To come out here and execute in the way I did and to do my ultimate best, I'm very grateful. And I finished the race injury-free, so yes, I'm very grateful."

There was a national record for the Jamaicans in the 4x400m mixed relay, but it was only good enough for second place behind the US winners.

Bryce Deadmon, Paris Peoples, Jeniah McKiver and Bailey Lear clocked 3:07.47 for victory, with the Jamaicans finishing 0.37sec off their pace.

Henriette Jaeger delivered a top-class final lap to hand Norway's women victory in the 4x400m relay in 3:20.96.

Jaeger outsprinted Blanca Hervas, who guaranteed Spain second spot ahead of Canada.

— AFP

Mosley fired as coach after Magic's first-round NBA playoff exit



WASHINGTON — Jamahl Mosley was fired as coach of the Orlando Magic yesterday, hours after the team was eliminated from the NBA playoffs with a blowout loss in Detroit.

The top-seeded Pistons rallied from a 3-1 deficit in their best-of-seven Eastern Conference first round series to eliminate Orlando with a 116-94 triumph in game seven on Sunday.

The Magic was barely back in Florida before team president of basketball operations Jeff Weltman announced Mosley's dismissal.

"We're grateful to Jamahl for all he has done for the Orlando Magic," Weltman said. "We appreciate his leadership and the positive contributions he made as head coach."

"While this was a difficult decision, we feel it's time for a new voice and fresh perspective."

Mosley, 47, served as an assistant coach for Denver, Cleveland and Dallas before being hired by the Magic as head coach in July 2021.

His five seasons marked the longest tenure for any Magic coach since Stan Van Gundy, who guided Orlando to the 2009 NBA Finals, where they lost to the Los Angeles Lakers.

But the Magic have not won a playoff series since 2010, falling in the first round seven times and missing the playoffs nine times since then.

Under Mosley, the Magic went 189-221, including a 45-37 record this past campaign, and made the playoffs the past three seasons before making quick exits. — AFP



Head coach Jamahl Mosley of the Orlando Magic reacts against the Detroit Pistons during the fourth quarter in Game Seven of the First Round of the NBA Eastern Conference Playoffs at Little Caesars Arena on Sunday in Detroit, Michigan. — AFP

Badminton no.1 An brings 'fire' as S Korea win Uber Cup

Badminton

COPENHAGEN — World number one and Olympic champion An Se-young "started the fire" as South Korea toppled China to win badminton's prestigious Uber Cup women's world team title.

China meanwhile beat France to lift the Thomas Cup, the men's crown, also in the Danish city of Horsens.

South Korea won the Uber Cup for a third time with a 3-1 victory over title-holders China late on Sunday.

Top-ranked An put the Koreans on their way, dismantling world number two Wang Zhiyi 21-10, 21-13.

China levelled in the first doubles rubber through Tan Ning and Liu Shengshu, before Kim Ga-eun stunned Chen Yufei 21-19, 21-15 to put South Korea within sight of glory.

Baek Ha-na and Kim Hye-jeong fought back to defeat Jia Yifan and

Zhang Shuxian 16-21, 21-10, 21-13 to seal the triumph.

"An started the fire going," said team captain Lee So-hee, who reserved special praise for Kim Ga-eun following her surprise victory over Tokyo Olympic champion Chen.

"Ga-eun was in a tough match, but she did it, I'm very proud of her."

Kim, the world number 17, was delighted to have played her part after being dropped from the semi-finals.

"I wasn't in the lineup for the tie against Indonesia in the semi-finals as I hadn't played well earlier," she said.

"But that helped me save energy and it was also good motivation for the game."

China, badminton's superpower, retained their Thomas Cup crown with a 3-1 win over France.

It was France's first Thomas Cup final, underlining the country's rise in the sport. — AFP

China advances into women's last-16 at table tennis team worlds

Table Tennis

LONDON — China opened its knockout campaign with a 3-1 win over Poland yesterday to advance to the women's team last 16 at the 2026 ITTF World Team Table Tennis Championships Finals.

Top-ranked Sun Yingsha gave China a strong start with an 11-3, 11-6, 11-8 victory over Zuzanna Wielgos.

Facing world No. 59 Natalia Bajor, team worlds debutant Kuai

Man cruised to an 11-3 win in the first game. But the momentum shifted afterwards as Bajor, the highest-ranked player in Poland's squad, fought back strongly to win the next three games 11-9, 11-9 and 15-13 and level the tie.

"I got into the match early, but when leading in the second game, I had some unforced errors, and she put me under pressure with her serves and first three strokes. When it came to the crucial points in the fourth game, I was a little bit

flustered," Kuai said.

"I need to improve on the mentality and the ability to read the game. Sometimes I would over think the result. I need to believe in myself more," she added.

Playing her first match in London, world No. 2 Wang Manyu put China back in front after overwhelming Katarzyna Wegrzyn 11-5, 11-4, 11-4.

"As it was my first match here, I was a little nervous at the start," Wang admitted. "But as the match

progressed, I was more focused on the court."

In a meeting between the two sides' top singles players, Sun sealed victory for China with a commanding 11-2, 11-3, 11-5 win over Bajor.

"We met some problems today, which was normal. In a team competition, our aim is to get the three points, so we don't need to put too much pressure on ourselves. Like today, whatever the score was, we were just focused on our own game," Sun said.

China will next face Sweden, which eliminated Kazakhstan 3-1.

In other women's fixtures, Hong Kong edged Wales in a five-match thriller, and Ukraine beat host England 3-1.

In the men's team event, Japan beat Belgium 3-1, Hong Kong swept North Korea 3-0, Croatia notched a 3-2 win over Italy, and Kazakhstan defeated Spain 3-1.

China will play Australia in the men's team round of 32 today.

— Xinhua

'Devil Wears Prada 2' takes top spot in N American box office

LOS ANGELES – “The Devil Wears Prada 2” debuted atop the North American box office this past weekend, industry estimates showed on Sunday, 20 years after the hit original took audiences inside the cutthroat world of haute couture.

The sequel sees Anne Hathaway's character return to work under tyrannical editor Miranda Priestly, portrayed again by Meryl Streep, as their fashion magazine faces an existential crisis.

Stanley Tucci and Emily Blunt also return as leads, while a host of A-list additions and celebrity cameos round out the star-studded cast.

Released by 20th Century Fox and with returning director David Frankel, the film took in US\$77 million in the US and Canadian market, according to Exhibitor Relations.

“This is a sensational opening for a comedy drama,” said analyst David A. Gross of Franchise Entertainment Research, noting “very good” reviews and themes of power, image and success that “are more recognisable and relevant today than ever.”

Streep won a Golden Globe and received an Oscar nomination for best supporting actress in her first turn as Miranda Priestly – who is not-so-subtly based on longtime *Vogue* chief Anna Wintour.

The previous week's box office winner “Michael,” the biopic about late superstar Michael Jackson, fell to second place but still took in US\$54 million, according to

Exhibitor Relations.

Directed by Antoine Fuqua and distributed by Lionsgate, the film chronicles the legendary artist's rise from a child star to one of the world's most famous pop icons.

In the starring role is Jaafar Jackson, the popstar's nephew.

Following a whopping US\$97 million debut last weekend in North America, the movie has taken in over US\$423 million at the global box office.

“The Super Mario Galaxy Movie” came in third with US\$12.1 million, taking its cumulative domestic haul over US\$400 million.

The animated sequel from Universal and Illumination Studios has earned nearly US\$900 million at the global box office, Exhibitor Relations reported.

Fourth place went to Amazon MGM's hit sci-fi adventure comedy “Project Hail Mary,” with another US\$8.6 million.

The film, starring Ryan Gosling as a teacher-turned-astronaut who must save Earth from a dimming sun, has earned over US\$625 million worldwide, in an extended theatrical run.

In fifth place with US\$6.4 million was indie horror film “Hokum,” a low-budget Irish production which Gross said had earned “excellent” reviews from critics and audiences.

Directed by Damian McCarthy and starring Adam Scott (“Severance”), the film follows an author who travels to a mysterious hotel in rural Ireland. – AFP

Shakira thrills 2 million fans in Copacabana

Lucia Lacurcia

RIO DE JANEIRO – Latin pop queen Shakira delighted an estimated crowd of two million that packed Rio's famed Copacabana beach under a full moon on Saturday, delivering fan-favourite hits and words of love for Brazil.

The 49-year-old Colombian superstar took the stage dressed in Brazil's national colours shortly after 11 p.m. (local time), more than an hour behind schedule, heralded by drones overhead forming the image of a she-wolf – Shakira's nickname.

“Brazil, I love you! It's magical to think that here we are, millions of souls together, ready to sing, dance, be moved and remind the world what really matters,” Shakira told the crowd in Portuguese.

“Two million people. The she-wolf made history in Rio,” city mayor Eduardo Cavaliere wrote on X, citing an estimate by the city's official tourism promotion agency.

The beach has hosted the biggest divas in pop in recent years, with Madonna striking a pose for a crowd estimated at 1.6 million in 2024 and Lady Gaga singing her greatest hits to an estimated 2.1 million fans last year.

Shakira on Saturday performed hits such as “Hips Don't Lie,” “La Bicicleta” (“The Bicycle”), “La Tortura” (“Torture”) and “Estoy Aquí” (“I'm Here”) on a huge stage outside the legendary Copacabana Hotel measuring 1,345 square meters.

The concert, featuring 10 outfit changes, saw Shakira performing local-style funk with Brazilian pop star Anitta, and featured guests including Brazilian pop music legends Caetano Veloso and Maria Bethania.

'She loves Brazil so much'

With more than 90 million records sold, four Grammys, 15 Latin Grammys and a generation-spanning repertoire including



Colombian singer Shakira performs during a free concert at Copacabana beach in Rio de Janeiro on Saturday. – AFP

bangers “Hips Don't Lie,” “Waka Waka” and “Whenever, Wherever,” Shakira enjoys immense popularity in Brazil, where she has performed numerous times.

“I'm very inspired by her, she's a Latin woman at the top,” 26-year-old designer João Pedro Yellin told AFP, dressed in an overcoat made of scraps representing Latin American flags.

“She loves Brazil so much and the love she has for us is the love we have for her,” said superfan Graciele Vaz, who slept on the beach on Friday night after travelling four hours from the resort town of Paraty.

“I've been a Shakira fan for more than 20 years,” the 43-year-old said, sporting a large she-wolf tattoo on her back.

Shakira's 2025 tour kicked off in Rio and has already earned a Guinness World Record for highest-grossing tour for a Latin artist.

Rio energised

Rio had been readying for the concert for days, with huge posters blanketing the city.

Copacabana vendors were busy on Saturday hawking beer, caipir-

inhas*, T-shirts and little vials of “Shakira's tears,” a nod to her current “Women No Longer Cry” tour.

Security was also tight, with nearly 8,000 officers deployed, along with drones, facial recognition cameras and 18 screening points with metal detectors.

Last year, after Lady Gaga's performance, police said they had foiled a bomb plot by a group that disseminated hate speech against the LGBTQ+ community.

Some Shakira fans camped out in front of the Copacabana Palace, where she was staying, hoping to glimpse her at a window.

City officials estimated the event would inject the equivalent of more than \$160 million into the local economy.

National tourism officials said airline bookings were up 80 percent last week compared to 2024. – AFP

*Brazil's best-known cocktail, known for its refreshing, citrusy, and potent profile, consisting of cachaça (a spirit distilled from fermented sugarcane juice); lime, cut into wedges and muddled; sugar; usually white granulated sugar; and ice, typically crushed or cubed.



Cosplayers of Star Wars, a popular science fiction franchise, pose during a promotional event for an upcoming film on a street in Jakarta on Sunday, ahead of Star Wars Day yesterday, May 4, a fan celebration inspired by a pun on the film's famous line “May the Force be with you”. – AFP

AI actors & writers not eligible for Oscars: Academy

LOS ANGELES – Actors created with artificial intelligence (AI) will not be eligible for an Oscar, the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences said on Friday as it launched a crackdown on the use of AI.

New rules include a requirement that only real, live human performers – not their AI avatars – are eligible for the film world's biggest prizes, and screenplays must have been penned by a person, rather than a chatbot.

“In the Acting category, only roles credited in the film's legal billing and demonstrably performed by humans with their consent will be considered eligible,” the Academy said.

“In the Writing categories, the rules codify that screenplays must be human-authored to be eligible.”

The ruling comes days after an AI version of the late Val Kilmer

was unveiled to an audience of cinema owners, a year after the “Top Gun” star's death.

A youthful, digital version of Kilmer appeared in the trailer for archaeological action pic “As Deep as the Grave,” telling another character: “Don't fear the dead and don't fear me.”

The project was created with the enthusiastic support of the actor's family, who granted access to Kilmer's video archives, which were used to recreate the actor at multiple stages of his life.

The use of AI remains one of the most sensitive issues in the entertainment industry and was central to the 2023 strikes that shut down Hollywood, as actors and writers warned that unchecked technology threatened their livelihoods.

Other updates to the Academy's rules include a change in the way

that films can be nominated for best international feature.

Until this year, only a film selected by an official national grouping could be entered – a problem for any critical movie made in an authoritarian state.

For example, Iranian director Jafar Panahi's “It Was Just an Accident” was nominated earlier this year as a submission from France.

Under the new rules, a non-English language film also can be submitted in the category if it wins a qualifying award at a major international film festival, including Cannes, Berlin, Busan, Venice or Toronto.

In that same category, the film will be deemed the nominee and not the country, and its director will be “listed on the statuette plaque after the film title” along with the country if applicable, the Academy announced. – AFP

World Weather

CHINA	ASIA-PACIFIC	WORLD	LUSOPHONE
Beijing 18°C~30°C	Manila 24°C~35°C	New York 17°C~28°C	Lisbon 11°C~20°C
Shanghai 15°C~27°C	Bangkok 26°C~34°C	London 9°C~18°C	Rio de Janeiro 19°C~28°C
Hong Kong 21°C~23°C	Tokyo 13°C~23°C	Frankfurt 11°C~21°C	Luanda 22°C~28°C
Taipei 19°C~23°C	Singapore 24°C~33°C	Vancouver 11°C~22°C	Maputo 20°C~33°C
Guangzhou 19°C~24°C	Kuala Lumpur 24°C~34°C	Paris 9°C~16°C	Dili 23°C~32°C
Nanjing 14°C~29°C	Jakarta 24°C~32°C	Moscow 12°C~25°C	São Tomé 26°C~32°C
Guilin 18°C~29°C	Seoul 9°C~22°C	Las Vegas 13°C~24°C	Praia 20°C~29°C
Xi'an 16°C~30°C	Sydney 11°C~23°C	Monte Carlo 13°C~18°C	Bissau 21°C~35°C



1. Cool canine

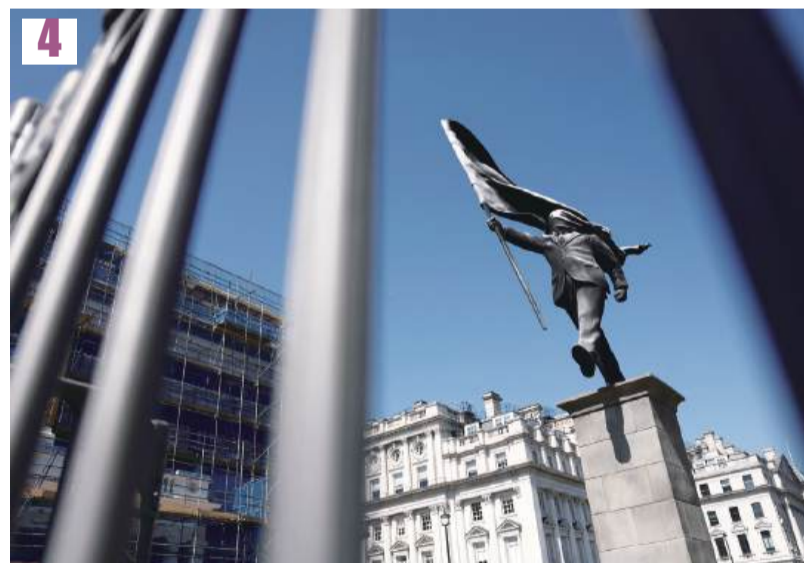
A dog cools off under a stream of water during high temperatures at Omar Torrijos Herrera Recreational and Cultural Park in Panama City, Panama on Sunday. — AFP

2. 10,000 lights

A festival participant spins an elaborate three-metre-tall decorated lantern tower known as Mantō through the streets of Fuchu during the Kurayami Matsuri, or "Festival of Darkness," at Okunitama Shrine in western Tokyo yesterday, as neighbourhood groups compete in an ancient tradition to keep their 50-kilogram towers twirling the longest while judges assess the artistry of each team's decorated pole. — AFP

3. Sunday trip

A drone photo taken on Sunday shows yachts during the ongoing May Day holiday in Sanya, Hainan Province. — Xinhua



4. From walls to monuments

A statue by British street artist Banksy, is pictured in Waterloo Place in central London on Friday. Elusive street artist Banksy on April 30 confirmed he was behind a new work drawing crowds in central London: a statue of a suited man striding into the void while holding a flag that blocks his view. The monument, which has Banksy's name scrawled on the base, first appeared on Wednesday just off the central street of Pall Mall. — AFP

5. Mobile cloth shop

A woman walks past a vehicle covered with textiles for sale at the Old City of Baku, Azerbaijan, on Friday. The Walled City of Baku, also known as the Old City of Baku, was inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List in 2000. — Xinhua

6. Would you? Could you?

Two second-hand toilet and sink vendors wait for customers at a shop in Jakarta yesterday. — AFP