

Govt vows to buy more clean energy: DSPA

Armindo Neves

Macau's Environmental Protection Bureau (DSPA) has announced that the government intends to increase the proportion of clean energy sourced from external power purchases to 50 percent.

The government-appointed Central District Community Service Consultative Council held its regular monthly meeting yesterday at the Patane Activity Centre on Avenida de Demétrio Cinatti. The council invited Chan Mei Pou, head of the bureau's Environmental Planning and Assessment Department, and senior official Un Pui Kei to discuss the implementation of the "Macau Long-term Decarbonisation Strategy".

In a post-meeting press briefing, council deputy convenor Pui Seng In cited a DSPA statement – released to councillors during a closed-door session – as stating that Macau's carbon emissions stem primarily from electricity supply and land transport. Together, these sectors account for over 80 percent of total emissions.

Pui noted that to align with the national "Dual-Carbon Goals" (Carbon Peaking and Carbon Neutrality), the authorities aim to achieve carbon peaking before 2030. The electricity and land transport sectors are specifically targeting near-zero emissions before 2050.



Central District Community Service Consultative Council Deputy Convenor Pui Seng In (left) and fellow councillor Chan Meng Kei look on during yesterday's press briefing after the government-appointed council's closed-door meeting at the Patane Activity Centre on Avenida de Demétrio Cinatti.

– Photo: Armindo Neves

According to the DSPA website, the strategy encompasses electricity, land transport, energy conservation in buildings, clean energy replacement, and waste treatment. The initiative aims to encourage all relevant sectors to weigh emission reduction

benefits when formulating policy, while guiding the public towards a greener society.

Regarding electricity supply, councillor Chan Meng Kei said that Macau's local power plant now operates entirely on natural gas, with fuel oil units reserved solely for

emergency backup. Chan added that later this year the local government will begin negotiations with China Southern Power Grid (CSG) to renew their cooperation framework. These talks will include plans to increase the share of clean energy in imported electricity to 50 per cent, supporting the goal of carbon neutrality by 2050.

Turning to land transport, Chan noted that the bureau has improved charging infrastructure, introduced subsidy schemes, and reduced e-vehicle charging fees twice.

Chan pointed out that as of February this year, the number of electric motorcycles has risen from 390 (prior to the 2022 launch of the current plan) to 6,700 – a 17-fold increase.

Furthermore, the share of newly purchased light electric vehicles and motorcycles among residents has risen from 2.0 percent before the plan's introduction to nearly 50 percent.

The bureau will continue to adjust the ratio of fast-to-slow charging points* and install more points for electric motorcycles. Construction is also underway on a super-charging station in Cotai, which is expected to be completed by mid-year, Pui said. ■

*In a technical context, the term refers to the numerical relationship between high-speed chargers and standard-speed chargers within a specific network. – Gemini



A foreign visitor interacts with a humanoid robot at the 2026 Chery International Business Summit in Wuhu, Anhui Province, yesterday. – Xinhua

Netanyahu says Israel 'ready for all scenarios' regarding Iran, agrees with US on removing all enriched uranium from Iran

JERUSALEM – Israel is "ready for all scenarios" in dealing with Iran, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said yesterday at a Security Cabinet meeting.

He also said Israel and the United States share the same goals, "with the

most important goal being the removal of enriched material from Iran ... and dismantling Iran's enrichment capabilities."

(More about Iran war on pages 7,9 and 10)

– Xinhua



US says warplane disabled ship that tried to break Iran port blockade

WASHINGTON, DC – A US Navy warplane fired on and disabled the rudder of an oil tanker that tried to break Washington's blockade of Iranian ports, the US military said yesterday.

It is the second time the US military has fired on a ship it said was attempting to violate the blockade, which has been in place since April 13.

US forces warned the Iranian-flagged

M/T Hasna, which was unladen, that it was in violation of the blockade, but its crew "failed to comply," so a US F/A-18 Super Hornet "disabled the tanker's rudder by firing several rounds from [its] 20mm cannon gun," Central Command (CENTCOM) said in a post on X.

"Hasna is no longer transiting to Iran," CENTCOM said, adding: "The US blockade against ships attempting to enter or depart Iranian ports remains in full effect." – AFP

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China calls for immediate full ceasefire, opposes renewed conflict, stresses priority of talks on Iran situation

China calls for an immediate and full ceasefire, opposes renewed conflict, and stresses the priority of talks on the Iran situation, Foreign Minister Wang Yi said yesterday. – Story on p. 7

CNN founder Ted Turner dies, 87

Ted Turner, the flamboyant US entrepreneur who transformed television news with the creation of CNN in 1980, has died at the age of 87, the network said yesterday.

– Story on p. 11

Chinese agricultural mission boosts rice yields, incomes for women farmers in Guinea-Bissau

In the rice fields of CAMPOSSA, a women's producers' association in eastern Guinea-Bissau, the gains from better irrigation and improved farming methods are showing up in both harvests and household incomes.

– Story on p. 12

Macau logs 873,000 visitors during May Day holiday, up 2.7 pct

Average daily number up 10 pct from 2019 level

Tony Wong

Macau recorded some 873,000 visitor arrivals during the Chinese mainland's five-day Labour Day holiday period, which started on Friday last week and ended this Tuesday, or a daily average of nearly 175,000, an increase of 2.7 percent from last year's corresponding period, the Macau Government Tourism Office (MGTO) announced in a statement last night.

Last year's Labour Day holiday also lasted five days.

The statement noted that the average daily number of nearly 175,000 visitor arrivals recorded during this year's Labour Day holiday period represented an increase of 10.4 percent from the average daily number recorded during the Labour Day holiday period in pre-pandemic 2019.

In 2019, the Labour Day holiday period lasted four days.

The statement also noted that Macau recorded around 248,000 visitor arrivals on Saturday last week, the second day of this year's five-day Labour Day holiday period, once again setting a new record of single-day number of visitor arrivals.

The previous record of single-day number of visitor arrivals was set on February 19 this year, the third day of the Chinese New Year of the Horse, when 227,917 visitor arrivals were recorded.

According to last night's

statement, the about 873,000 visitor arrivals recorded during this year's Labour Day holiday comprised around 725,000 from the Chinese mainland, 94,000 from the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR), 12,000 from China's Taiwan region, and 42,000 foreign visitors.

The statement said that the number of visitor arrivals from the Chinese mainland recorded during this year's five-day Labour Day holiday period represented an increase of 6.9 percent from last year's corresponding period.

Meanwhile, last night's MGTO statement also said that the average occupancy rate of hotel guestrooms reached 92.7 percent during this year's Labour Day holiday period, a level "similar" to last year's corresponding period.

The occupancy rate stood at 98.3 percent on Saturday, the highest during the five-day period, the statement said.

According to daily immigration statistics released by the Public Security Police (PSP) during the period, Macau recorded 203,006 visitor arrivals on the first day of this year's five-day Labour Day holiday period, 247,729 on the second day, 182,216 on the third day, 157,214 on the fourth day, and 83,064 on the last day. Consequently, Macau recorded a total of 873,229 visitor arrivals during the five-day period, according to the PSP data. ■



Visitors and residents alike throng Rua de S. Domingos near the S. Domingos Church on Monday, the fourth day of this year's five-day Labour Day holiday period. — Photo: Tony Wong

Health Bureau marks World Hand Hygiene Day

Khalel Vallo

The Health Bureau (SSM) said in a statement yesterday that it has called on residents to prioritise hand hygiene to prevent infections, in response to World Hand Hygiene Day on May 5.

According to the statement, the annual campaign initiated by the World Health Organisation (WHO) is themed "Action saves lives" this year. In order to tie in with the campaign, the public Conde de São Januário Hospital Centre held a promotional event in its lobby on Tuesday, featuring information booths, educational videos and a hand hygiene award ceremony for various clinical departments of the hospital, the statement noted.

Residents participated in a raft of interactive activities, including quizzes and hand-cleaning demonstrations led by healthcare workers, aimed at enhancing public awareness of proper hygiene practices, the statement said, adding that during the event, Tai Wa Hou, the public hospital's acting director, said that proper hand hygiene is key to reducing healthcare-associated infections



This handout photo provided by the Health Bureau (SSM) yesterday shows local residents actively participating in the activities during the World Hand Hygiene Day in the lobby of the public Conde de São Januário Hospital Centre on Tuesday.

and safeguarding patient safety, adding that it requires consistent support from both management and frontline medical staff.

The statement underlined that certificates of recognition were also presented to the hospital's clinical departments in a 2025 internal hand hygiene survey, recognising high compliance

rates and improvements among clinical units.

The Health Bureau stressed that hand hygiene remains one of the most effective measures to prevent infections and said it will continue promoting awareness through training, monitoring and public education initiatives, the statement concluded. ■

Job training programme with Sands China opens applications

Khalel Vallo

A new employment and training programme jointly launched by the Labour Affairs Bureau (DSAL) and integrated resort operator Sands China Ltd. opens for applications today, according to a statement by the bureau yesterday.

The "Sands China Hotel Elite Development Plan" adopts an "employment first, training later" approach to help residents enhance professional skills and support career advancement, the statement said, adding that the programme offers a total of eight vacancies for "front office supervisor trainee" and "concierge supervisor trainee" roles.

Successful applicants will undergo a 15-month training programme arranged by Sands, combining practical work experience with professional training, the statement noted, pointing out that the training content includes cross-department learning within integrated resort operations, hotel operations theory and practical training, Power BI* data visualisation courses, Forbes Travel Guide (FTG) Service Standards** training, LinkedIn learning courses, and certification programmes from the UK's City & Guilds in leadership and management.

Upon completion and passing the required assessments, participants who meet performance standards may be promoted according to their



此計劃旨在培育本澳居民成為綜合度假村酒店中層管理人才，在15個月內透過“先入職，後培訓”方式，提供專業及多元實操培訓。完成計劃及通過考核後，表現達標者可獲晉升為前台主管或禮賓主管。

This poster released by the Labour Affairs Bureau (DSAL) yesterday promotes the new employment and training programme jointly launched by the bureau and integrated resort operator Sands China Ltd.

chosen career path, with front office trainees advancing to front office supervisor roles and concierge trainees to concierge supervisor roles, alongside salary adjustments, the statement said.

Applications will be accepted online until May 17 via https://www.dsal.gov.mo/zh_tw/standard/sands2026_pg3.html. Eligible applicants will later be invited to attend a seminar and on-site interviews scheduled for May 26, where further details of the programme will be introduced, the statement noted.

The bureau said that the programme aims to promote upward mobility and employment stability among residents through structured training and career development opportunities. ■

*Power BI is an interactive data visualisation software

product developed by Microsoft with a primary focus on business intelligence. It is part of the Microsoft Power Platform. — DeepSeek

The Forbes Travel Guide (FTG) Service Standards are a globally recognised benchmark used to evaluate luxury hotels, restaurants, spas, and cruise ships. Unlike other rating systems that focus heavily on physical amenities, the Forbes system is unique because it prioritises service quality (roughly 70-75 percent of the total score) over facilities (25-30 percent). The standards are a proprietary set of approximately 900 objective criteria used by anonymous inspectors to determine a property's Star Rating (Five-Star, Four-Star, or Recommended). — Gemini

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Macau Weather

CLOUDY APART FROM SUNNY INTERVALS.
A FEW SHOWERS LATER.
FORCE 2 TO 4 EAST TO SOUTHEASTERLY WINDS.
RELATIVE HUMIDITY WILL RANGE BETWEEN 70% AND 98%.



23°C~27°C

Source: SMG

Sands China launches extended community revitalisation programme activities

Rui Pastorin

Three free-of-charge extended activities for integrated resort operator Sands China's recently-launched "Community Revitalisation Programme 2.0 for Rua das Estalagens" are set to take place this month and June.

According to a statement last night, the activities are "designed to provide practical support for aspiring entrepreneurs in Macau to seize business opportunities in the district, while also encouraging existing shop owners to upgrade and rejuvenate their operations" and are jointly organised by Sands China, government units, industry professionals and scholars.

The first of the activities, a Briefing Session, is scheduled

tomorrow at 3 p.m. at The Londoner Macao, where a Sands China representative will introduce the programme's key features and application details, while representatives from the Economic and Technological Development Bureau (DSED), the Municipal Affairs Bureau (IAM), CEM, and Macao Water have also been invited to talk more about some basics of setting up a new business.

On May 14, two "SME [small and medium-sized enterprises] Training Courses" will take place at The Londoner Macao. The first course is titled "Macao SMEs: From Transformation of Traditions to Startup Innovation", with University of Macau (UM) Centre for Continuing Education

Director and UM Faculty of Business Administration Prof. Matthew Liu Ting Chi as the invited speaker, exploring market trends and industry developments, among others. The second session "Effective Business Plan and Marketing Strategy" will focus on skills for drafting business proposals and market promotion.

Both the briefing session and training courses will require prior registration, while the last activity, "Rua das Estalagens Open Days", is open to walk-ins during its two weekends from May 15-17 and June 12-14. Shop units available for lease in the district will be open, welcoming visits and gaining "first-hand experience on the environment of the district and shop spaces", the statement noted.

Activity registration for the extended activities is available on <https://tinyurl.com/RuadasEstalagens2026>

The two key initiatives this year are "Entrepreneurship Recruitment Programme 2.0 for Rua das



This undated handout photo provided by integrated resort operator Sands China yesterday shows participants taking part in an activity of the previous entrepreneurship recruitment programme.

Estalagens" that invites applications for a new batch of businesses to operate in the district, and the inaugural "Shop Rebranding Programme" targeting the area's

existing businesses and enhancing their competitiveness. For the *Post* article about the programme launch and details, visit macaupostdaily.com/news/28089. ■

Artyzen Grand Lapa Macau pays playful tribute to George Chinnery

Rui Pastorin

Artyzen Grand Lapa Macau is paying playful tribute to English painter George Chinnery (1774-1852) through a collection of plush toys, kids' amenity travel bags and a City Walk Map featuring and introducing the character "Little Chin".

Chinnery was based in Macau for nearly 30 years from 1825 until his death in 1852. He is buried in the Old Protestant Cemetery.

The statement released by the hotel on Monday highlights its "deep connection" with the artist, being home to the aptly named Chinnery Ballroom that also features art inspired by his legacy.

"By reimagining George Chinnery – a Western artist who made Macau his home – as part of a collectible guest experience, Artyzen Grand Lapa Macau celebrates the city's unique East-meets-West identity and invites guests to discover this

cultural fusion in an engaging and family-friendly way", according to a statement from the hotel operator, adding that the character encourages guests to "explore Macau through art and discovery".

Elaborating on the collection, the statement said that the "Little Chin Plush Toy" features the character accompanied by his brown dog "Gatchai", while the reusable Kids' Amenities Travel Bag is filled with gentle, kid-safe products.

The City Walk Map, meanwhile, is available from the concierge and features the self-guided routes "Heritage and Art Walk", which explores the city in Chinnery's footsteps, and the "Family Fun Walk" that highlights family-friendly attractions near the hotel.

The statement said that families who book the "Macao Exploration Room Package" will receive the Little Chin amenities collection as a welcome perk. ■



This undated handout photo provided by the Artyzen Grand Lapa Hotel Macau on Tuesday shows the Little Chin and Gatchai plush toy.

Nearly 200 participants join SJM, Vivienne Westwood Team educational programme



This handout photo taken on April 29 and provided by SJM Resorts yesterday shows Vivienne Westwood Chief Operating Officer Giuseppe Aragoni (left) and Global Brand Director Christopher Di Pietro (centre) engaging with participants in the recent seminar at Grand Lisboa Palace (GLP) in Cotai.

Rui Pastorin

Nearly 200 participants from Macau and elsewhere in the Greater Bay Area (GBA) were gathered for an educational programme on April 29 jointly held by SJM Resorts and the Vivienne Westwood Team at the Grand Lisboa Palace in Cotai, according to a statement by the integrated resort operator yesterday.

Featuring a guided tour and seminar, the recent event, titled "An Insight into the world of Vivienne Westwood - connecting fashion, culture and community", was held in conjunction with the recent launch of the ongoing free-admission Vivienne Westwood & Jewellery Exhibition at the integrated resort. Participants in the educational

programme comprised designers, teaching staff and students from leading educational institutions from the GBA, the statement noted.

The statement pointed out that the event invited speakers including Vivienne Westwood Chief Operating Officer Giuseppe Aragoni and Global Brand Director Christopher Di Pietro. Insights into fashion marketing strategies and brand building and identity were among the topics discussed, while also enabling direct engagement with participants, the statement underlined.

"The open dialogue allowed aspiring designers, creatives, faculty staff and students to understand how a fashion house can interact at both a local and global level. In addition, how

internationally recognised collections, heritage and craftsmanship can evolve with cultural relevance", the statement said.

The event included students from the University of Macau (UM), the Macao Polytechnic University (MPU), Macao Productivity and Technology Transfer Centre (CPTTM), Pui Ching Middle School of Macau, Pui Ching Middle School (Coloane Campus), University of Hong Kong, Hong Kong Design Centre, Shenzhen Polytechnic University and the School of Jewellery, Shenzhen City Polytechnic.

Meanwhile, the free-admission exhibition is on until July 15, with exhibitiongoers able to visit from 11 a.m. to 8 p.m. daily. ■



Kuok Pak Yu, head of the Na Tcha Temple Association's Youth Division, poses during a media interview on the sidelines of the Na Tcha themed market's opening ceremony in front of the UNESCO World Heritage-listed Na Tcha Temple last Friday.

– Photos: Armindo Neves

Na Tcha Temple's 'Three banquets' showcase spirit of cultural transmission

Armindo Neves

A seven-day Na Tcha themed market, titled "Lotus Door Three Banquets: China-chic Banquets"* , concluded on Sunday in front of the Na Tcha Temple near the Ruins of St Paul's – both of which are listed by UNESCO as World Heritage sites.

Kuok Pak Yu, head of the Na Tcha Temple Association's Youth Division, expressed hope that the event would be able to integrate intangible cultural heritage into daily life, showcasing the spirit of cultural transmission. According to Kuok, the "Three Banquets" concept aims to evolve with the times to spark creativity, carry forward ancient traditions to preserve social order, and fuse art to expand imagination.

Kuok made the remarks in a speech at the market's opening ceremony outside the temple last Friday.

"The fusion of these elements is not only an innovation in form but a breakthrough in cultural boundaries," Kuok said. "It allows centuries-old heritage to step out of history and into the modern day, enabling tradition to engage in a genuine dialogue with the present."

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

Huangyang Weiyi, a student of the Macao Polytechnic University's (MPU) Master of Interdisciplinary Arts programme, told the *Post* on the sidelines of the opening ceremony that he has developed two digital interactive systems to address challenges in transmitting Na Tcha belief traditions. Using 3D modelling, a virtual museum, and an interactive narrative game, his systems aim to transform historical legends into a visual experience.

"The systems break the spatial and temporal limitations of traditional processions," Huangyang explained. "It allows younger generations to learn about the connection between Na Tcha and Macau through video games."

Huangyang conducted 3D scans of physical artefacts,

including statues, carvings, and ceremonial drums. He transformed these into modular visual exhibits within a virtual space, featuring adjustable viewing perspectives and an integrated quiz system.

The digital game, designed with a 2D workflow, recreates the historical memory of the Na Tcha Temple. Users navigate the site via avatars, interacting with non-player characters (NPCs) to learn about different historical periods. During the market, the system attracted a large number of visitors, including many children, injecting new vitality into heritage preservation.

Ku Kei Ieng, a lecturer at the Macao University of Tourism (UTM), told the *Post* she has volunteered for 18 years to promote the temple's culture. Initially, she focused on translating cultural information into English for visitors and academic conferences.

She noted that most tourists walk downhill from the Ruins of St Paul's towards the city's main square, Largo do Senado, rarely turning towards Chi Lam Vai (Pátio do Espinho).

Pátio do Espinho ("Courtyard of the Thorn") – Chi Lam Vai (茨林圍) in Cantonese – is a 400-year-old walled village that lies just a street away from the Na Tcha Temple, one of Macau's two temples dedicated to the tutelary deity.

Ku pointed out that the patio is the only inhabited walled village remaining in Macau, surrounded by several distinctive temples. Ku said she hopes that the nearby Na Tcha Temple's activities will guide visitors to explore these areas more deeply, moving beyond simple photo-taking to a true understanding of Macau's unique culture.

Li Xintong, a member of the UTM Heritage Club, was responsible for guiding tours and introducing the architectural features of the temple during the three-day event. She noted that the Na Tcha Temple's proximity to the Ruins of St Paul's perfectly reflects Macau's signature fusion of Chinese and Western cultures.

*The term "China-chic" refers to a popular trend in China that blends traditional Chinese cultural elements with modern, trendy aesthetics.

In the case of the "Three Banquets" fair, "China-chic Banquets" denoted the market as a banquet-style event – instead of a sit-down dinner; the "Three Banquets" referred to a themed market and cultural feast held in front of the Na Tcha Temple, inviting the public to "feast" on heritage, song, and dance. – Gemini, MPD



Huangyang Weiyi, a student of the Macao Polytechnic University's (MPU) Master of Interdisciplinary Arts programme, wearing Na Tcha-related traditional garb, poses in front of the Na Tcha Temple last Friday.

HK records 1.19 million visitors over May Day holiday

HONG KONG – Hong Kong welcomed about 1.19 million visitors over the Chinese mainland's five-day Labour Day holiday, marking a rise of eight percent compared to the same holiday a year ago.

Arrivals from the mainland increased 10 percent to about 1.01 million during the May 1-5 period, according to figures released by the Immigration Department yesterday.

Most of them opted to travel to Hong Kong via the Lok Ma Chau Spur Line Control Point, followed by the Express Rail Link West Kowloon checkpoint.

Hotel occupancy rates reached 90 percent, which was slightly higher than last year, despite a 10 percent rise in room prices compared to long holidays in the past.

Chief Secretary Eric Chan Kwok-ki said in a statement that the surge in visitor arrivals provided a boost for various sectors.

"Representatives of some shopping malls indicated that consumption in various retail categories saw year-on-year double-digit increases," he said.

Chan also noted that this generated "considerable economic benefits" for the catering sector. – RTHK, MPD

Dinosaur tracks in N China suggest one of slowest meat-eaters

BEIJING – Scientists have uncovered fossil tracks in north China, left at least 134 million years ago by what they believe to be one of the slowest meat-eating dinosaurs ever recorded.

Made by a three-toed theropod dinosaur that moved at a pace of 0.28 meters per second (about 1 km per hour), these tracks suggest the creature either stopped intermittently or took an extremely slow walk, a stark contrast to the faster running speeds commonly associated with its kind.

The discovery, published yesterday in the *Paleontological Journal*, stems from two track sites at Xuanhua in the city of Zhangjiakou in Hebei Province. They are located at the Tuchengzi Formation dated to between 154 and 134 million years ago. An international team of researchers from China, Brazil and Australia analyzed 16 larger footprints (23.2-26.7 cm long) and 11 smaller ones (10.1-14.6 cm long).

One particular track consists of five footprints with stride lengths of 32 cm to 46 cm, roughly the step length of a toddler. The estimated speed of 1 km/h is likely one of the most unhurried theropod tracks known globally, according to the study.

"Such short strides and wide tracks indicate the track maker may have been pausing frequently or moving extremely slowly," said lead researcher Xing Lida, an associate professor at China University of Geosciences (Beijing). Xing speculated that the dinosaur could have been scanning the ground for small invertebrates or vertebrates, or checking the path ahead for safety. For comparison, other tracks at the same sites yielded estimated speeds of 9.18 km/h to 14.11 km/h, which is a trotting pace.

The study, in addition, highlighted a "microbial mat" layer on the track surface. These microbial mats acted as a natural preservative film, preserving the footprints for over 100 million years.

The research team also recorded eight footprints of sauropods, which are giant four-legged plant-eating dinosaurs. In 2020, local geological surveyors discovered a vast exposed surface at Xuanhua, covering

approximately 30,000 square meters and preserving more than 5,000 dinosaur footprints, including sauropod tracks and medium-sized theropod tracks. The two new sites reported in this study together paint a more complete picture of the ancient dinosaur community.

"Dinosaur tracks are not simply fossilized footprints," Xing added. "They capture living moments, such as behavior and interaction with the environment, and offer information that dinosaur bones alone cannot provide."

Dinosaur tracks were once considered rare discoveries in China. In recent years, however, new dinosaur fossils and footprints have been constantly uncovered in Hebei. Scientists have previously named two track types after locations in this province: Changpeipus and Lockleypus.

In late 1999, Chinese and Japanese scientists jointly announced the discovery of 75 dinosaur track fossils in Luanping County, dated to over 130 million years ago. In 2013, a team found numerous theropod footprints at a site in Zhangjiakou, dating back 140 to 150 million years, while in 2019, a chicken-sized theropod fossil was unearthed in Fengning County and weeks later, nearly 300 Late Jurassic footprints were found in Chengde Mountain Resort, an imperial garden and temple complex in Hebei.

The new study stands out because it unveiled a very slow meat-eater.

"These tracks are precious because most have not been heavily eroded," said Li Jianjun, a dinosaur researcher at the National Natural History Museum of China, who was not directly involved in the study.

Li said conditions for footprint preservation are extremely demanding: sediment must be neither too dry nor too wet, and once tracks are made, they must dry and harden before being rapidly buried.

Thanks to abundant footprints, rare slow-speed tracks and the microbial mats in preservation, scientists can know more about dinosaur diversity, behavior and burial processes in Earth's history, the study noted. – Xinhua

Govt plans smaller population & larger green areas for undeveloped area near central Taipa

Tony Wong

The government has published a revised version of its urban development plan for the largely undeveloped area in Taipa where Cheok Ka Village and Sam Ka Village are located, according to which the neighbourhood near central Taipa is now earmarked to have a smaller population and to be covered by larger green areas, compared to the previous version published in 2013.

The plan's new version aims to advance urban development of the area, where numerous privately-owned plots of land are scattered and irregularly shaped, while also ensuring stronger protection of officially-listed old trees in the area.

The plan's new version aims to create a residential and commercial area, integrated into the surrounding hillside landscape, bringing together diverse lifestyles and business activities.

The newly revised plan was uploaded onto the DSSCU website yesterday.

The urban development plan for the area is officially known as Taipa Northern Zone Urban Development Plan.

Lands and Urban Construction Bureau (DSSCU) officials briefed members of the Urban Planning Council (CPU) about the new version of the Taipa Northern Zone Urban Development Plan during a regular meeting of the government-appointed council yesterday.

The meeting, chaired by DSSCU Director Lai Weng Leong, was open to the media. The council is a consultative body tasked with advising the government on its urban planning policies.

The area of two adjacent villages, Cheok Ka Village (卓家村) and Sam Ka Village (三家村), which is still largely undeveloped, is situated between the former campus of the University of Macau (UM) and the Lago (Lake) subsidised home-ownership scheme (HOS) housing estate (湖畔大廈).

In the newly revised plan's introduction, the government states that in compliance with new urban planning requirements listed in Macau's official urban master plan, which took effect in February 2022, it decided to revise its Taipa Northern Zone Urban Development Plan, with the aim of promoting the development and use of land in the area, advancing the neighbourhood's urban development, and improving the living environment of those living in and near the area.

The total area covered by the urban development plan's new version amounts to 222,000 square metres, around the same as the previous version.

The plan's new version notes that Macau's official urban master plan earmarks the area as a



This artist's rendition in the revised version of the government's Taipa Northern Zone Urban Development Plan released yesterday shows the future park surrounded by future buildings where the current cluster of 10 officially protected old trees is situated.



This artist's rendition in the plan's new version shows the future extension of the current Avenida de Guimarães skywalk into the currently undeveloped area, integrating with podium areas of future buildings there.

residential neighbourhood.

The plan's revised version earmarks 54 plots for urban development in the area, 28 of which are earmarked for residential projects.

Other plots in the area, according to the revised version, are earmarked for commercial and office spaces, government buildings, and infrastructure, as well as tourism, cultural, education, social service, recreational, health, and municipal facilities.

According to the plan's new version, the gross construction areas of the various buildings and facilities will amount to 1.05 million square metres, a decrease from the 1.26 million listed in the previous version.

The new version of the plan earmarks a population of 20,000 in the area, 45.2 percent down from the 36,500 residents there envisaged in the 2013 version.

According to the plan's revised version, the government plans to extend the current elevated walkway along Avenida de Guimarães (基馬拉斯大馬路) in central Taipa, through the area, to the Macau Anglican College located near the former UM campus.

According to the new version, the government plans to set up two parks in the area, one of which will be built where the current cluster of 10 officially protected old trees is situated.

The Macau Special Administrative Region's (MSAR) urban master plan for 2020 to 2040 divides the city into 18 "subareas for planning".

After the urban master plan took effect in February 2022, the government drew up its first urban development plan for a subarea for planning, i.e., Eastern District 2, which covers the Zone A land reclamation area. The government's Eastern District 2 urban development plan took effect in March 2024.

The Eastern District 2 urban development plan is the first and so-far the only one currently in force for a subarea for planning listed by the urban master plan. The government is still working on drafting urban development plans for several other subareas required by its urban master plan.

According to the urban master plan, the Cheok Ka Village and Sam Ka Village area is covered by the Taipa Central District 2 urban development plan, which the government is currently still drafting, and on which a public consultation is yet to be launched.

In addition to the undeveloped Cheok Ka Village and Sam Ka Village area, Taipa Central District 2 also covers central Taipa, the island's "city centre" where numerous high-rise residential buildings are concentrated. ■

May Day holiday consumption-related sales revenue up 14.3 pct

BEIJING – The sales revenue of China's consumption-related industries rose 14.3 percent year on year during the May Day holiday, reflecting a further release of consumption potential, value-added tax (VAT) invoice data showed yesterday.

The data, released by the State Taxation Administration, pointed to strong consumer demand for tourism, entertainment, cultural and sports services.

Sales revenue of tourism, sightseeing and entertainment services rose 21.2 percent year on year, while

cultural services and sports services registered sales revenue increase of 42.3 percent and 44.1 percent year on year, respectively.

Life services maintained sound growth, with sales revenue of household services increased by 14.2 percent year on year.

Among them, laundry services, pet services and automobile repair and maintenance services saw their sales revenue increase 38.1 percent, 49.5 percent and 12.6 percent, respectively.

Health-related consumption also

increased, with sales revenue of health services for residents up 40.1 percent year on year, while health consultation services related to healthcare and health management rose 40.5 percent and fitness and leisure services increased 28.7 percent.

Catering and accommodation consumption grew rapidly, as many localities launched distinctive catering activities during the holiday.

Sales revenue of catering services rose 31.4 percent year on year, with snack services, bar and teahouse services, and full-service restaurants

up 41.6 percent, 51.5 percent and 26.8 percent, respectively.

Goods consumption also gained momentum, with sales revenue of general retails up 12.4 percent year on year.

Offline retailers such as supermarkets improved consumer experience by optimizing consumption scenarios, driving their sales revenue up 15.6 percent year on year.

Quality goods consumption posted strong growth, as sales revenue of cosmetics, gold and silver jewelry, and arts and crafts

rose 55.8 percent, 28.8 percent and 57.4 percent, respectively.

Huang Lixin, an official with the administration, said VAT invoice data showed that consumption continued to heat up during the May Day holiday, with consumption potential effectively released.

As policy measures to promote service consumption continue to take effect, service consumption is upgrading and maintaining strong momentum, injecting robust impetus into high-quality economic development, Huang said. – *Xinhua*

Holiday consumption market underscores new growth drivers of Chinese economy

Analysis

BEIJING – The just-concluded 2026 May Day holiday has offered a vivid snapshot of China's booming consumer market, with both service and goods consumption logging stellar growth, pointing to robust endogenous momentum underpinning the world's second-largest economy.

POLICY SUPPORT SPARKS VITALITY

China has stepped up policy support to unlock the potential of the holiday economy, with targeted measures ranging from optimized vacation arrangements to trade-in incentives effectively unleashing consumption vitality.

China logged around 1.52 billion inter-regional passenger trips during the 2026 five-day May Day holiday, a 3.49-percent increase compared with same period a year earlier, the Ministry of Transport said on Wednesday.

On the logistics front, between April 27 and May 3, national railway freight transport reached 80.8 million tonnes, up 1.63 percent month on month, while cargo throughput at monitored ports hit 278.23 million tonnes, rising 7.64 percent month on month.

China also saw a surge in cross-border travel during this holiday, with nearly 11.3 million entry-exit trips recorded, fueled by growing arrivals of international visitors, including those entering under visa-free policies. Daily border crossings averaged 2.26 million during the holiday that began on May 1, up 3.5 percent from a year earlier and peaking on May 2.

Ministry of Commerce data shows that from May 1 to 4, foot traffic and business revenue of 78 key monitored pedestrian streets and commercial districts rose 5 percent and 5.3 percent year on year, respectively.

Figures from local life services on the TikTok platform reveal that sales of hotel group purchases on the platform surged 86 percent year on year during the holiday, while sales of health and leisure services jumped more than 50 percent from pre-holiday levels.

A 2026 May Day consumption insight report released on May 5 by Meituan, a major online lifestyle platform in China, shows that, driven by the combination of spring holiday and extended leave arrangements, mid-to-long distance trips of over 300 kilometers accounted for 46

percent of total travel orders during the holiday, with Beijing, Chengdu, Shanghai, Chongqing, Guangzhou, Hangzhou, Xi'an, Shenzhen, Wuhan and Nanjing ranking as the top 10 most popular destinations.

"Experience-oriented consumption, through the whole-chain linkage of 'food, accommodation, transportation, travel, shopping and entertainment' and the integration of multiple formats including commerce, culture, tourism, sports and exhibitions, has become an important force to stimulate the deep vitality of domestic demand," said Dong Yu, executive vice president of the China Institute for Development Planning at Tsinghua University.

In addition to the explosive growth in service consumption, goods consumption, especially large-ticket items, has also picked up steam, supported by favorable trade-in policies.

The National Development and Reform Commission and the Ministry of Finance in April allocated 62.5 billion yuan in new ultra-long special treasury bonds to local governments, the second batch of funds raised through such bonds for the programs this year, to support the steady implementation of consumer goods trade-in programs.

Many localities, meanwhile, rolled out targeted policies to boost trade-ins during the May Day consumption window.

As of May 4, the 2026 consumer goods trade-in program had benefited 86.2 million people, driving total sales of 629.27 billion yuan, official data reveals.

SUPPLY-DEMAND INNOVATIONS

This year's May Day consumption market has presented notable new trends, marking the transition of China's consumer market from quantitative recovery to qualitative upgrading, while there is still considerable room for domestic demand to be unleashed, said Hong Yong, associate researcher at the Chinese Academy of International Trade and Economic Cooperation.

Hong pointed out three major shifts – consumption motivation has changed from "destination-driven" to "interest-driven," consumption scenarios have expanded from "standardized scenic spots" to "personalized experience spaces," and policy effects have upgraded from "single subsidy" to "ecosystem coordination."

Young consumers are increasingly pursuing in-depth travel experiences. Meituan data reveals that the total order value of small group tours in Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region in northwest China rose 20 percent year on year during the May Day holiday, while average daily consumption of "exclusive family group tours" soared 555 percent year on year in this region.

On the goods consumption front, AI-enabled home appliances have become top sellers, with sales up 63 percent year on year between May 1 and 5, while passenger flow at core stores rose 50 percent, according to data provided by Suning, a leading Chinese home appliance retailer.

Holiday travel and recording demand has, notably, boosted sales of trendy gadgets including high-end camera phones, AI glasses and action cameras.

Innovative ecosystem coordination practices have also emerged across the country to boost consumption. Xinxiang, a city in central China's Henan Province, has launched a "ticket stub economic alliance" covering 166 shops, where tourists can enjoy a discount of 5 percent at restaurants and 20-percent discount at chain hotels and homestays via any consumption receipt from alliance merchants, connecting the consumption closed loop of accommodation, catering and retail.

"One ticket stub connects hundreds of stores, which not only allows consumers to enjoy discounts, but also improves the mutual drainage efficiency of merchants, encouraging tourists to stay longer, have a meal and shop more," yesterday's *People's Daily* quoted an official with the Xinxiang Municipal Bureau of Commerce as saying.

Zhang Li, assistant minister of commerce, said China will continue to promote the pilot construction of new consumption formats, models and scenarios, accelerate the cultivation of carriers such as service consumption clusters, and build a number of new consumption scenarios integrating commerce, tourism, culture, sports and health, to further unleash consumption momentum.

Analysts noted that the strong performance of the May Day consumption market fully demonstrates the considerable resilience and upgrading potential of China's domestic demand, which will provide solid support for the steady growth of the Chinese economy throughout the year. – *Xinhua*



Visitors look at a bicycle displayed at the 2026 China International Bicycle Fair in Shanghai yesterday. The four-day 2026 China International Bicycle Fair kicked off at the Shanghai New International Expo Centre yesterday. – *Xinhua*

'Experience economy' brews new vitality for Yunnan coffee

KUNMING – In the lush mountains of Pu'er in Yunnan Province, Liu Xiaodong, head of a coffee estate, runs a "field classroom" in his coffee plantation.

Surrounded by verdant trees, he guides tourists through the nuances of coffee varieties and processing methods using cupping samples.

"Visitors can see the plantation environment and learn how to appreciate a professional brew," said Liu. "The experience is far more meaningful than simply drinking a cup of coffee."

This is the new face of the coffee industry in southwest China's Yunnan Province, the country's largest coffee-growing region. By shifting from raw material production to an "experience economy," Yunnan is integrating coffee with education, tourism and rural living.

At Coffee Cherry, a boutique roasting factory in the provincial capital Kunming, the aroma of freshly roasted beans fills the air, with coffee enthusiasts gathering around cupping tables to grind, brew and taste under the guidance of professional baristas.

"Today consumers look beyond the caffeine kick; they value the atmosphere and cultural depth," said Yang Yu, founder of Coffee Cherry. The space has evolved from a simple production site into a cultural hub hosting regular tasting events and workshops.

The trend extends deep into the countryside. After taking over Nandahe TYZ Coffee in 2020, Liu Xiaodong abandoned the traditional path of selling raw beans in bulk. Instead, he developed a

model combining "coffee, study tours and homestays."

The shift has proven lucrative. His estate now maintains a steady flow of 50 to 100 visitors daily, peaking at 800 during holidays. It provides jobs for over a dozen nearby villagers, proving that the "coffee classroom" can be a catalyst for rural prosperity.

According to the Yunnan provincial department of culture and tourism, the province has helped develop nearly 60 boutique coffee manors. By deepening the integration of coffee with creative industries and rural stays, Yunnan has made coffee a new "calling card" for tourism.

In Xinzhai Village of Baoshan City, the integration is even more seamless. Li Wei, a tourist from Zhejiang Province, spent her holiday there visiting the "Coffee Village," where she tried her hand at making coffee-scented soap.

"It's amazing to be at the source," Li said. "I can taste different flavors of Yunnan coffee while enjoying the rural scenery."

The local infrastructure in Xinzhai now includes cafés, processing experience centers and cultural workshops. Xie Xianwen, head of Xinzhai Coffee Manor, reported that his estate received over 210,000 tourists last year, generating more than 12 million yuan in revenue.

As the boundaries of the industry continue to expand, the fusion of agriculture and tourism is breathing new life into Yunnan's hills, turning the humble coffee bean into a sustainable engine for rural revitalization. – *Xinhua*

Lai Ching-te's trip to Eswatini shows 'Taiwan independence' separatism just shady business: spokesperson

BEIJING – The fact that Taiwan region's leader Lai Ching-te sneaked in and out of Eswatini shows exactly that "Taiwan independence" separatism is just shady business and unacceptable to the international community, foreign ministry spokesperson Lin Jian said yesterday, calling his act nothing but a scandalous stunt.

Lin made the remarks at a regular news briefing when asked to comment on Lai's sneaking into Eswatini on its plane. While in Eswatini, he spoke about "diplomatic independence." Yet the international community and people in Taiwan described his action as "thief-like" and an "international joke."

Even though there was widespread opposition, Lai sneaked onto a foreign plane and cheated himself into Eswatini by concealing passenger information with the country. On his return flight, after use of airspace was rejected by relevant countries, Lai again slipped onto the plane and forced his way through these countries' skies, Lin said.

The whole thing showed the world how little Lai respects relevant countries' airspace and sovereignty and cares for the opinion of the world, Lin said, describing what he did as extremely dangerous and outrageous.

Lin said some politicians in Eswatini who are on Taiwan's payroll have been wrongly providing space for "Taiwan independence," adding that China strongly condemns it.

"In recent years, we've heard people from various sectors in so-called Taiwan's 'diplomatic allies' strongly call on their countries to grow ties with China. Which is the right thing to do? To see where the arc of history bends and follow their people's will, or to continue serving as a political prop and keeping up the appearances for Lai and his kind?" Lin said, urging the politicians in these countries to come to the wise decision and stop going further down the doomed path.

He reiterated that there is but one China in the world and Taiwan is an inalienable part of China's territory, and the one-China principle is an international consensus that has solid support and is simply unshakable.

"The pursuit of 'Taiwan independence' is a dead end and its days are numbered. Any new attempt Lai makes to advance his separatist agenda will only box himself further in. We urge those separatists to turn back from the wrong path and mend their ways sooner rather than later," he said. — Xinhua



Foreign Minister Wang Yi (right), also a member of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Committee, shakes with Bangladeshi Foreign Minister Khalilur Rahman in Beijing yesterday. — Xinhua

Die-hard Taiwan secessionists, relatives not allowed to profit from mainland: spokesperson

BEIJING—The Chinese mainland will not allow die-hard "Taiwan independence" secessionists or their relatives to invest in or profit from business activities in the mainland, a spokesperson said yesterday.

Chen Binhua, a spokesperson for the State Council Taiwan Affairs Office, made the remarks in response to a media query regarding a company linked to Yen Wen-chun, nephew of die-hard secessionist Liu Shih-fang.

The company issued a statement a day earlier to announce the removal of Yen from all positions in both its Taiwan headquarters and mainland branches.

"We will not allow Taiwan individuals who support secessionism and damage cross-Straits relations to make money on the mainland on one hand, while backing secessionist activities on the other hand," Chen said.

He stressed that these measures target only a few secessionists and do not affect the majority of people or businesses in Taiwan.

He reiterated that the mainland will continue to welcome and support Taiwan residents and enterprises seeking to develop on the mainland, sharing opportunities arising from Chinese modernization and enhancing their sense of well-being and fulfillment. — Xinhua

China calls for immediate full ceasefire, opposes renewed conflict, stresses priority of talks on Iran situation: Wang Yi

BEIJING – China calls for an immediate and full ceasefire, opposes renewed conflict, and stresses the priority of talks on the Iran situation, Foreign Minister Wang Yi said yesterday.

Wang, also a member of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Committee, made the remarks during talks with Iranian Foreign Minister Seyyed Abbas Araghchi in Beijing. Noting the international community's common concern over restoring normal and safe passage through the Strait of Hormuz, Wang urged relevant parties to respond to global calls as soon as possible.

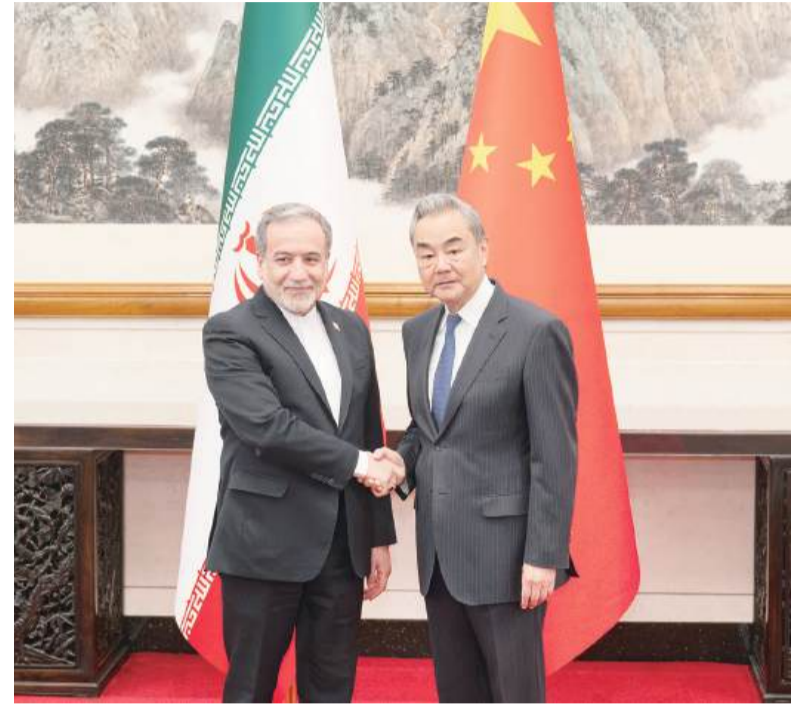
The Iranian foreign minister briefed Wang on the latest developments in Iran-US negotiations and Iran's considerations for the next steps. He said that Iran will firmly safeguard national sovereignty and dignity, while continuing to build consensus through peaceful negotiations in pursuit of a comprehensive and permanent solution.

Araghchi stressed that at present, the issue regarding the opening of the Strait of Hormuz should be handled properly and resolved as soon as possible.

Iran highly appreciates and endorses China's four-point proposal on promoting peace and stability in the Middle East, and commends China for its unremitting efforts to play a constructive role in preventing the situation from deteriorating and spilling over, Araghchi said.

He added that Iran places its trust in China and expects China to continue its active role in promoting peace and ending hostilities. Iran also supports the establishment of a new post-war regional architecture that can balance development and security, Araghchi said.

Noting the Iran-China comprehensive strategic partnership,



Foreign Minister Wang Yi (right), also a member of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Committee, shakes hands with Iranian Foreign Minister Seyyed Abbas Araghchi in Beijing yesterday. — Xinhua

Araghchi said Iran consistently adheres to the one-China principle and supports China in safeguarding its core interests. He also added that Iran is willing to strengthen communication and coordination with China in multilateral affairs and continuously deepen the partnership.

Wang emphasized that since the outbreak of the conflict, China has consistently and actively promoted peace talks.

He noted that the current situation has reached a critical juncture over whether the conflict can be brought to an end, expressing support for Iran in safeguarding its national sovereignty and security, and appreciation for Iran's willingness to seek a political resolution through diplomatic channels.

Wang said China appreciates Iran's commitment to not developing nuclear weapons, while also recognizing Iran's legitimate right to the peaceful use of nuclear energy.

China encourages Iran and more Gulf nations to engage in dialogue and foster good-neighborly relations, and supports regional countries in building a peace and security architecture based on broad participation, safeguarding shared interests, and achieving common development, Wang said.

He added that China will remain committed to deescalating tensions and ending hostilities, and will continue to provide support for initiating peace talks, playing a greater role in restoring peace and tranquility in the Middle East.

On bilateral relations, Wang said China is a trusted strategic partner of Iran, adding that China is willing to work with Iran to consolidate and deepen political mutual trust, maintain and strengthen high-level exchanges, deepen mutually beneficial cooperation across various fields, and continue to advance the China-Iran comprehensive strategic partnership. — Xinhua

China responds to Japan launching offensive missiles overseas

BEIJING – A foreign ministry spokesperson said yesterday that Japan's right-wing forces are pushing for the acceleration of remilitarization, adding Japan's neo-militarism is rising and posing a threat to regional peace and stability.

Spokesperson Lin Jian made the remarks at a daily press briefing, in response to a query about reports saying that Japan recently fired Type 88 missiles in the joint military exercise "Balikatan" between the US and the Philippines, the first time Japan launched offensive missiles overseas after the WWII.

Lin noted Japan once invaded

Philippines and other Southeast Asian countries, and thus shoulders grave historical responsibilities. As the world marks the 80th anniversary of the opening of the Tokyo Trials, not only has Japan, the aggressor, failed to deeply reflect on its historical crimes, it has even sent military forces overseas and fired offensive missiles under the pretext of security cooperation.

Lin said this is yet another example of the Japanese right-wing forces' push for accelerated remilitarization of Japan. They have repeatedly breached Japan's exclusively defense-oriented policy and relevant rules in international and domestic laws.

Some of their policies and moves have gone far beyond the scope of self-defense.

The serious lack of education on true history, the fundamentally wrong historical views, compounded by strategies for military rearmament and preparation for war, have led to the malevolent emergence of neo-militarism in Japan and put regional peace and stability under threat, said the spokesperson.

"We urge the Japanese side to deeply reflect on its history of militarist aggression, and honor its commitments and stay prudent in military and security areas," Lin added. — Xinhua

Indonesia eyes e-commerce ban for under-16s: minister to AFP

Marchio Gorbiano

JAKARTA – Indonesia's government is mulling an e-commerce ban for under-16s, the communications minister told AFP yesterday, hot on the heels of Jakarta imposing a sweeping social media prohibition for teens.

"E-commerce (platforms) are next, because we found children who became scam victims through e-commerce," Communications and Digital Minister Meutya Hafid said in an interview in Jakarta, without providing further details.

In March, app-addicted Indonesia started enforcing a social media ban for under-16s in a bid to shield some 70 million children from the threats of online pornography, cyberbullying and internet addiction.

The policy followed Australia's landmark move in December to stop teenagers holding accounts on many popular platforms.

The Indonesian regulation

initially targeted eight "high risk" platforms: YouTube, TikTok, Facebook, Instagram, Threads, X, streaming service Bigo Live and gaming platform Roblox.

But it will eventually apply to "all digital platforms", Meutya said yesterday, including online shopping sites.

The Southeast Asian archipelago of more than 284 million people boasts among the highest concentration of social media users in the world.

Meutya said the government's aim was to help parents take on the "big platforms" to protect their children.

"Letting them face off against (the platforms) alone, without rules, is like letting parents play chess against a grandmaster. They won't win, or it will be very hard to win," Meutya told AFP.

Global reckoning

Roblox became the latest platform to comply with the

new regulations, introducing age verification technology and restricting content based on users' age, the government said last week.

More than half of Roblox's 45 million Indonesian users are children under 16, the government said.

Social media giants are facing a global reckoning as governments increasingly worry about their impact on users' wellbeing.

The Turkish parliament last month approved a law to prevent children under 15 accessing social media platforms.

Some European countries, including Norway, Greece, France, Spain and Denmark, have said they will introduce similar restrictions.

Like in Australia, the Indonesian rules place the onus on platforms to regulate teen access.

Non-compliance with the ban, which will be phased in over time, will put defaulters at risk of a fine or even suspension of their services in the country. –AFP

Thailand vows strict tourist oversight after public sex incidents

BANGKOK – Thailand vowed yesterday to tighten oversight of tourists' behaviour after a series of incidents involving foreigners caught having sex in public, warning they damaged the country's image.

Tourism is vital to the Southeast Asian nation's economy but foreign arrivals are yet to return to their pre-COVID highs.

Visitors displaying "inappropriate behaviour", including illicit drug use, would face prosecution as it "contradicts the beautiful culture of Thailand", the prime minister's office said in a statement.

The pledge followed an incident on Monday evening on the southern island of Phuket where a couple was found performing a sexual act in a tuk-tuk in a popular tourist area.

Authorities said they were working to revoke the visas of a

41-year-old Spanish man and a 43-year-old Peruvian woman, and then deport and blacklist them.

The pair admitted to the act and were charged under public indecency laws, the government statement said.

Public nudity and sexual acts in public are punishable by a fine up to 5,000 baht (US\$155).

The clampdown was "intended to safeguard Thailand's beautiful cultural values", according to the prime minister's office.

Checks by authorities of entertainment venues would also be stricter, it added.

Despite its reputation as a sex tourism destination, Thailand is a mostly socially conservative society where public displays of affection are frowned upon.

But the country also decriminalised cannabis in 2022

and is popular among backpackers and young tourists for its rowdy beach raves.

Last month, a French couple was arrested and deported after footage of them having sex on a Phuket beach spread widely online, according to local media.

Another couple from France was blacklisted and had their visa revoked after a video of the pair having sex in a tuk-tuk in Phuket earlier this year triggered outrage online.

Thailand expects about 33.5 million foreign tourists this year, up from nearly 33 million visitors in 2025, the government has said.

Total tourist arrivals dropped seven percent in April compared to the same month last year, with visitors from Europe declining nearly 16 percent that month, according to tourism ministry figures. –AFP

Vietnam takes aim at piracy after fresh US tariff threat

HANOI - Vietnam has ordered a fresh crackdown on intellectual property violations, taking aim at online piracy and counterfeiting after the United States added the Southeast Asian nation to a "priority" list over its IP record.

Prime Minister Le Minh Hung directed authorities to "launch nationwide operations, mobilise resources and immediately implement necessary measures to combat, prevent and handle" IP infringements, according to an order posted Tuesday on the government's website.

He said ministries should boost the number of IP infringement cases handled by 20 percent this

month, compared to May last year.

The United States listed Vietnam last week as a "priority foreign country" on an annual intellectual property rights report, a status reserved for countries with "the most egregious IP-related acts, policies, and practices with the greatest adverse impact on relevant US products," according to the office of the U.S. Trade Representative.

Washington will decide whether to launch a new tariff investigation within 30 days of the report's publication.

Vietnam ordered a similar crackdown last year, after US President Donald Trump shocked

the key trading partner with 46 percent duties.

When Trump announced those "Liberation Day" tariffs in April 2025, Vietnam had the third-largest trade surplus with Washington of any country after China and Mexico, and was targeted with one of the highest rates in Trump's tariff blitz.

But in July, Hanoi secured a minimum 20 percent tariff with Washington in return for opening its market to US products including cars.

Trump signed off on a global 10-percent tariff on all countries in February, hours after the Supreme Court ruled many of his levies on imports were illegal. –AFP



Children waiting their turn to receive the measles-rubella vaccine as part of the government's health programme to combat childhood diseases in Surabaya, Indonesia yesterday.

–AFP

Bus-tanker crash kills 16 in Indonesia: disaster official

JAKARTA – A road accident involving a passenger bus and a fuel tanker killed 16 people and injured four others on Indonesia's Sumatra island yesterday, a disaster agency official told AFP.

"Fourteen passengers of the bus and two people from the oil tanker died" in the crash in North Musi Rawas Regency, official Hasbi Hasidqi said by telephone as local TV broadcast images of wreckage in flames.

Four people were hospitalised, three of them with serious burns, according to another emergency official.

Initial information suggested one of the bus tyres had burst, Hasbi said.

The driver "lost control and crashed", causing "a massive fire" that engulfed both vehicles, he added. The tanker was transporting diesel.

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

Last month, 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.

Days later, a train hit a car in Central Java, killing four people including two children. –AFP

S Korean judge who hiked ex-first lady's jail sentence found dead

SEOUL – A South Korean judge who more than doubled the former first lady's prison sentence last month was found dead yesterday, police said.

Shin Jong-o was "found unconscious around 1 a.m. [local time] ... at the Seoul High Court building", an investigator at Seocho district police station told AFP.

Shin was taken to hospital and pronounced dead, he said, adding: "There is no sign of foul play in the death."

Local media reported that Shin had left a suicide note, but the investigator said there was none.

Last month, Shin presided over 53-year-old Kim Keon Hee's appeal trial, finding her guilty of stock manipulation and bribery, and increasing her sentence to four years from 20 months.

The heavier sentence came after her acquittal by a lower court on the stock manipulation charge was overturned.

Shin said at the time that Kim had "failed to acknowledge her culpability and has instead consistently resorted to excuses".

The police investigator said yesterday that the judge's "bereaved family is stricken by the incident" and requests privacy. –AFP



Wind turbines are pictured along the shore as seen from Bangui in the northern Philippines province of Ilocos Norte yesterday.

–AFP

Afghan maternal death rate hits 521 per 100,000 live births

KABUL – Afghanistan continues to face one of the world's highest maternal mortality rates, with 521 women dying for every 100,000 live births due to preventable complications, the World Health Organisation (WHO) has reported.

According to the report on Tuesday, obstetric fistula, a severe maternal morbidity caused primarily by prolonged obstructed labor, results in continuous urinary or faecal incontinence, chronic health problems and profound social stigmatization.

Many affected women face

isolation from their families and communities, are unable to engage in gainful activities, and endure deep psychological distress, the report stated.

Despite its devastating impact on women's health and well-being, fistula remains a hidden and under-addressed condition. Women living with the injury often suffer in silence due to shame, limited access to specialized surgical care, and a pervasive lack of awareness that effective treatment is available, the report added. – Xinhua

Behind-the-scenes diplomacy on Middle East tensions more promising than publicly known: source

ISLAMABAD – Developments taking place behind closed doors regarding ongoing peace efforts in the Middle East and talks between the United States and Iran are “far more promising” than publicly known, an official source told Xinhua yesterday.

According to the source, diplomatic engagements involving regional and international stakeholders have continued quietly despite visible tensions on the surface.

“Developments unfolding behind closed doors appear far more promising than what is publicly known, even as tensions remain visible on the surface,” said the source, adding that Pakistani leadership is making consistent efforts for a

permanent peace deal in the region.

The source added that ongoing negotiations and mediation efforts could soon begin producing tangible big outcomes late this week.

Earlier in the day, Pakistani Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif said that US President Donald Trump's response to the request made by Pakistan and other countries to pause Project Freedom will go a long way towards advancing regional peace, stability and reconciliation.

Addressing a conference in Islamabad, Sharif said that dialogue channels have remained open, and expressed confidence that the engagements between the United States and Iran would soon transform into lasting peace. – Xinhua



A farmer harvests peaches in an orchard in Nangarhar province, Afghanistan, on Sunday. Despite heavy rains and destructive floods across Afghanistan this year, the abundant precipitation has brought a silver lining for farmers as the harvest season shows stronger yields. In the fertile orchards of Surkh Rod district, eastern Nangarhar province, peach farmers were celebrating a bountiful season. – Xinhua

NZ to introduce citizenship test from late 2027

WELLINGTON – New Zealand announced yesterday that it will introduce a citizenship test from late 2027 to strengthen requirements for applicants seeking citizenship by grant.

The new measure would require applicants to demonstrate “sufficient knowledge of the responsibilities and privileges of being a citizen” through an in-person, multiple-choice test, according to a government statement.

Applicants will need to achieve a score of at least 75 percent to pass. Currently, applicants meet the

requirement by signing a declaration confirming their understanding of citizenship obligations.

Citizenship by grant is one of three New Zealand citizenship pathways, alongside by birth and descent. Individuals who were born outside of New Zealand and have met the presence requirements can obtain New Zealand citizenship by grant.

The Department of Internal Affairs will develop study materials and guidance ahead of implementation, the statement said. – Xinhua

India's cows offer biogas alternative to Mideast energy crunch

Uzmi Athar

BULANDSHAHR, India – Across much of India, an energy crunch caused by the Iran war has prompted long queues for cooking gas cylinders. That's not a problem for Gauri Devi.

On a stove with blue flames, she flips a chapati flatbread, burning biogas produced from cow dung – an alternative fuel helping ease pressure on supplies.

“It cooks everything,” the 25-year-old said in her courtyard kitchen in Nekpur, a village in Uttar Pradesh, about 90 kilometres from New Delhi. “If the pressure goes down, we let it rest for half an hour and it works again.”

India consumes more than 30 million tonnes of liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) annually, importing over half its needs.

The government insists there is no shortage of cooking gas, but supply delays, panic buying and black marketeers have created long queues for cylinders.

However, since the 1980s India has also promoted biogas as a low-cost rural energy source, subsidising more than five million “digester” units that convert farm waste into methane for cooking, and nitrogen-rich slurry for fertiliser.

For Gauri, it requires mixing a couple of buckets of dung with water, then pouring the mixture into a car-sized underground tank topped with a storage balloon.

It provides a piped methane supply so regular that she only uses an LPG cylinder for emergencies or large gatherings.

The biogas works for everything – “vegetables, tea, lentils”, she said.

‘Black gold’

The residual slurry is later spread on fields as fertiliser. It has better nitrogen availability for plants compared with raw dung, farmers say.

“The manure is so good,” said farmer Pramod Singh, who installed a larger unit in 2025, enough for six people, fuelled by 30–45 kilograms of dung daily from four cows.



This photograph taken on April 24 shows Pritam Singh, a local farmer leader standing alongside his cattle, at a village in Uttar Pradesh's Bulandshahr district, India. – AFP

And he said the slurry fertiliser is particularly valuable at a time when global supplies of artificial fertilisers have been hit by trade disruptions due to the war.

“The real benefit is not just the gas – that is like a bonus,” local farmer leader Pritam Singh said. “The slurry is ‘black gold’.”

More than 45 percent of India's 1.4 billion people rely on farming, and the country has one of the largest cattle populations.

India – the world's most populous nation and third-largest fossil fuel polluter – has pushed large-scale biogas production to achieve a goal of carbon neutrality by 2070.

The government last year required that biogas account for at least one percent of liquid gas fuelling both vehicles and for domestic use – rising to five percent by 2028.

Dozens of multi-million dollar production plants are now in the pipeline.

But small-scale rural producers are also being rolled out – units cost around 25,000–30,000 rupees (US\$265–US\$318), often heavily subsidised by the government.

In a Hindu-majority nation where cows are revered and dung and urine are used in everything from floor plastering and fuel to ritual practices, it is easy to win supporters, said Pritam Singh.

He installed his first plant in 2007, and has helped put in 15 more in his village in the past year alone.

He said interest had shot up after the LPG shortages.

“People who earlier were not interested now ask how to get it,” he said.

“Once they see food being cooked and crops benefiting, they are convinced.”

‘Mini factories’

But biogas is still a small fraction of household cooking fuel – with LPG considered more convenient because companies manage the supply chain.

“Biogas plants are not just equipment; they are mini factories,” said A.R. Shukla, president of the Indian Biogas Association.

“They need organised installation, regular operation and maintenance,” he added.

“So, unless installation and upkeep are handled through community-based or cooperative enterprises, households will continue to treat biogas as secondary fuel.”

And even with government support, there are barriers to uptake, including cost and space.

“We work on other people's farms the whole day. We don't have land for it,” said labourer Ramesh Kumar Singh, standing in a line of around 100 queueing for LPG cylinders in the nearby village of Madalpur.

“I am standing in scorching heat, hungry and thirsty,” said Mahendri, 77, who had failed to secure a cylinder for three days in a row. – AFP

4 killed in post-poll unrest in India's West Bengal

KOLKATA – Four people have been killed in political unrest after Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Hindu-nationalist party celebrated victory in state polls in West Bengal, police and party officials said yesterday.

Modi's Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) swept polls in the key eastern state of more than 100 million people, winning 206 of the 294 assembly seats, according to results announced Monday, for its first-ever victory in West Bengal.

West Bengal had been ruled by Modi's fierce critic and adversary Mamata Banerjee as chief minister since 2011.

Banerjee, leader of the regional

All India Trinamool Congress (TMC), also lost her seat in the polls and has rejected the results.

Police said clashes between rival party supporters erupted in the state capital Kolkata after results were announced on Monday.

Analysts say the BJP's victory in the largely Bengali-speaking state is one of its most significant since Modi was first elected prime minister in 2014, expanding its dominance beyond the Hindi-speaking heartland of north and central India.

The BJP said two party workers were killed, while the TMC said two of their workers were beaten to death.

“Two of our workers were killed after results of the elections were announced on Monday,” BJP state leader Samik Bharracharya told AFP, insisting that the party is “for peace”.

TMC, in a statement on social media, reported the “brutal murder” of two party workers.

“Our party offices were attacked in several areas of the state,” TMC spokesman Narendranath Chakraborty told AFP.

“Two of the victims were grassroots political workers.”

A senior police officer, who was not authorised to speak to reporters, confirmed four deaths in clashes and said one officer had been shot in the leg. – AFP

Trump issues ultimatum for Iran to accept deal or face more bombing

WASHINGTON, DC – President Donald Trump issued an ultimatum yesterday for Iran to accept a deal to end the war or face intense renewed US bombing, the latest in a series of abrupt policy shifts.

“Assuming Iran agrees to give what has been agreed to, which is perhaps a big assumption, the already legendary Epic Fury will be at an end,” Trump posted on his Truth Social platform, using the US name for its military campaign against Iran.

“If they don’t agree, the bombing starts, and it will be, sadly, at a much higher level and intensity than it was before.”

He later said in an interview with PBS he was optimistic about reaching an agreement with Iran before his scheduled trip to China next week.

“I think it’s got a very good chance of ending, and if it doesn’t end, we have to go back to bombing the hell out of them,” Trump told the broadcaster.

He was also asked about reports that under a proposed deal, Tehran would “export” its highly enriched

uranium, possibly to the United States.

“No, not perhaps. It goes to the United States,” Trump said without explaining how this key point of contention would be resolved.

Iran has steadfastly refused to give up its enriched uranium, which it insists is not for making a nuclear bomb.

Trump’s social media post came after US news outlet Axios reported that Washington and Tehran were close to agreeing on a one-page memorandum of understanding to end the war and set a framework for more detailed nuclear negotiations.

A short time later, however, the president told the *New York Post* it was “too far” and “too much” to think about face-to-face talks with Iran in Pakistan, which has been mediating a peace deal between the two sides.

It remained difficult to discern Trump’s stance on how to end the war.

The 79-year-old Republican has repeatedly asserted he has “all the time in the world” for the high-stakes conflict, but also recently signalled to Congress that the war, launched on February 28, was already over.

Trump and his administration are seeking an exit from the conflict, which is deeply unpopular with the US public and has driven up the price of gasoline, among other costs.

Trump on Tuesday announced a pause in a US military operation to guide stranded commercial ships through the Strait of Hormuz – after only a day – citing a chance to seal a deal to end the war.

The US leader said Washington’s blockade of Iranian ports would remain in place as Tehran kept up its own closure of the vital trade route, which has rocked markets and spiked fuel prices.

Trump wrote on social media that the surprise decision to halt his so-called “Project Freedom” came after requests from “mediator Pakistan and other countries”, saying “Great Progress has been made toward a Complete and Final Agreement” with Tehran.

“We have mutually agreed that, while the Blockade will remain in full force and effect, Project Freedom... will be paused for a short period of time to see whether or not the Agreement can be finalised and signed,” Trump wrote on Tuesday. – AFP

Iran’s top negotiator says US aiming to force Tehran’s ‘surrender’

TEHRAN – Iran’s top negotiator Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf said yesterday that Washington was seeking Tehran’s surrender through various means, including a naval blockade.

“The enemy, in its new design, is seeking, through a naval blockade, economic pressure and media manipulation, to destroy the country’s cohesion in order to force us to surrender,” Ghalibaf said in a voice message published on his official Telegram channel.

The influential speaker of the Iranian parliament did not

elaborate on the prospects for a peace plan with the United States, as Tehran continues to review elements of a US proposal.

Foreign ministry spokesman Esmail Baqaei said yesterday that Tehran would convey its position to key mediator Pakistan after “finalising its views”.

Earlier in the day, US President Donald Trump had said he wanted the war to be “at an end”, while vowing more intense attacks on Iran if it did not agree to conditions set by Washington.

– AFP

African nations must address instability causing migration: Pretoria

JOHANNESBURG – South Africa hit back yesterday against charges of xenophobia after protests against undocumented migrants and said African nations should address issues like instability and bad governance causing their people to leave.

A series of anti-migrant protests in recent weeks across Africa’s most industrialised country, along with claims of attacks against foreigners, have prompted Nigeria and Ghana to voice concern.

“South Africans are not xenophobic,” presidential spokesman Vincent Magwenya told reporters. “What you have is pockets of protest, which is permissible within our constitutional framework.”

In fresh demonstrations yesterday, hundreds of people marched in the eastern city of Durban and other centres to demand that the government take action against undocumented migrants operating businesses such as small shops.

Demonstrations in previous months have also sought to deny undocumented foreigners access to South African clinics and hospitals.

In talks on Tuesday, Mozambique’s President Daniel

Chapo and South Africa’s President Cyril Ramaphosa had agreed “the continent needs to work together to address the issues that are behind these levels of migration”, the spokesman said.

These included “conflicts, issues of instability, and in some areas... the misgovernment that causes people to migrate in large numbers and seek refuge in different parts of the continent, including South Africa”.

There should “be willingness to constructively engage on what are these issues and factors behind peoples seeking to leave their countries of birth and seeking refugee elsewhere”, Magwenya said.

Nigeria has announced emergency repatriation flights for its citizens living in South Africa and warned Pretoria on Monday that it was not doing enough to tamp down on anti-immigrant threats and harassment.

Ghana summoned South Africa’s envoy in late April over several “xenophobic incidents”.

Magwenya said the label of xenophobia was a “lazy” analysis that risked “unfairly maligning” South Africa in the same way as false US claims of a “genocide” against its white minority. – AFP

Israeli strikes on Lebanon kill 4 despite ceasefire



This photograph taken during a media tour organised by the Hezbollah’s media office shows a journalist documenting the destruction near Sayyid al-Shuhada complex in Beirut’s southern suburbs yesterday. Israel and Hezbollah have been trading accusations of violating the ceasefire agreement in force since April 17. Hezbollah has claimed responsibility for several operations targeting Israeli forces in southern Lebanon, as well as attacks on northern Israel. – AFP

BEIRUT – An Israeli strike in Lebanon’s eastern Bekaa valley killed four people yesterday, while the Israeli army said it struck Hezbollah targets in the south, after warning residents of a dozen towns to evacuate.

Israel and Hezbollah have been trading accusations of violating the ceasefire agreement in force since April 17. Hezbollah has claimed responsibility for several operations targeting Israeli forces in southern Lebanon, as well as attacks on northern Israel.

An Israeli airstrike on the town of Zellaya, in the West Bekaa region, left at least four people dead, including two women and an elderly man, the Lebanese health ministry said.

Lebanese state media said the attack struck the house of the town’s mayor, killing him and three members of his family.

The town was hit shortly before the Israeli army issued an evacuation warning that included Zellaya, along with 11 towns and villages in southern Lebanon, most of them north of the Litani River and outside the area occupied by Israeli soldiers.

The Israeli army later announced in a brief statement that it had “begun striking Hezbollah terror infrastructure sites in several areas in Lebanon” and renewed its evacuation warning.

Israel carried out airstrikes and artillery bombardment on a number of towns, including several whose residents had been warned to evacuate.

One of the strikes hit the town of Yohmor al-Shaqeef in the Nabatieh district.

AFP photos showed a cloud of smoke rising behind the town’s historic Beaufort Castle, which Israeli forces used as a base during

their two-decade occupation of southern Lebanon ending in 2000.

State media reported a series of airstrikes in the south, including a targeted strike on a car and “significant damage” to homes and infrastructure.

Hezbollah, for its part, announced in a series of statements that it had targeted Israeli forces and vehicles in a number of border towns in southern Lebanon.

It said the attacks were in response to “the Israeli enemy’s violation of the ceasefire”.

Israeli strikes in Lebanon have killed more than 2,700 people since March 2, including dozens since the April 17 ceasefire brokered by Washington between Israeli and Lebanese representatives.

The Israeli military says it has also lost 17 soldiers and a civilian contractor in the fighting. – AFP



A demonstrators dressed in traditional garb gestures during a protest march against undocumented migrants in Durban, South Africa, yesterday. – AFP

Paypal, Visa, Mastercard hit by UK competition probe

LONDON—Britain's financial market regulator said yesterday it has opened an investigation into US payments giants PayPal, Visa and Mastercard over suspected anti-competitive behaviour related to the funding and use of PayPal's digital wallet.

The Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) said the probe focuses on whether the companies breached the UK's Competition Act, which prohibits firms from agreeing to conduct that may harm competition.

It is also investigating whether Visa and Mastercard abused their dominant position in the market.

The FCA said "it has reached no conclusions nor made any findings with regard to competition law having been broken."

All three companies confirmed they are cooperating with the regulator.

PayPal's digital wallet lets users pay online or in stores using a linked bank card or bank account, without sharing their financial details directly with the seller.

Mastercard said it had received requests from the regulator regarding its "contractual relationship with PayPal."

Visa said it was aware of the opening of the investigation, which concerns "certain contractual provisions regarding the PayPal digital wallet."

—AFP

CNN founder Ted Turner dies, 87

NEW YORK — Ted Turner, the flamboyant US entrepreneur who transformed television news with the creation of CNN in 1980, has died at the age of 87, the network said yesterday.

The mustachioed southerner, yachting enthusiast and philanthropist, whose empire also included sports clubs, had been suffering from the degenerative disease Lewy Body Dementia.

Cable News Network upended established broadcasting with its dedication to around-the-clock breaking news and shot to global recognition with its coverage of the Gulf War in 1990-91.

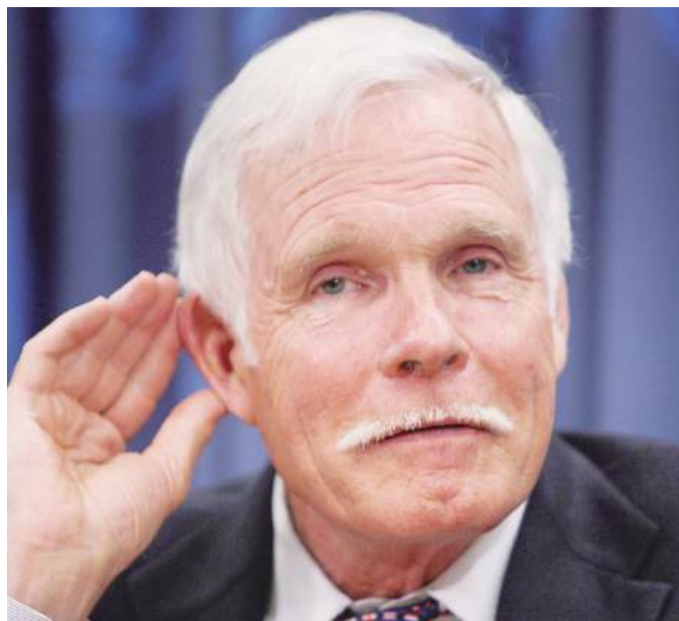
The 24-hour network was the first in the United States to run non-stop news and quickly built a worldwide footprint.

Correspondents brought live coverage from major events such as the collapse of the Soviet Union. CNN's decision to keep reporters in Baghdad amid US bombing on the Iraqi capital cemented the network's reputation as an indispensable source of breaking news.

"Ted is the giant on whose shoulders we stand, and we will all take a moment today to recognise him and his impact on our lives and the world," Mark Thompson, chairman and CEO of CNN Worldwide, said in a statement.

"He was and always will be the presiding spirit of CNN."

Trump praises Turner as 'one of the Greats of Broadcast History'



Ted Turner, chairman of Turner Enterprises and the UN Foundation, listens to a question during a news conference on April 1, 2008 at the United Nations in New York. Turner, who transformed television news with the creation of CNN in 1980, has died at the age of 87, the network said yesterday. Cable News Network upended established broadcasting with its dedication to around-the-clock breaking news and shot to global recognition with its coverage of the Gulf War in 1990-91. —Xinhua

Meanwhile, US President Donald Trump paid tribute yesterday to cable news titan Ted Turner, calling the CNN founder "one of the Greats of Broadcast History."

"Ted Turner, one of the Greats of All Time, just died," Trump said on his Truth Social platform. "One of the Greats of Broadcast History, and a friend of mine. Whenever I needed him, he was there, always willing to fight for a good cause!"

Trump, who built his political career in part by disparaging negative reporting as "fake news" —often specifically targeting CNN—also said yesterday he looked forward to the network coming under new ownership.

CNN's parent company Warner Bros. Discovery is the target of a hostile takeover by Paramount Skydance, which is headed by the son of Trump's billionaire ally Larry Ellison. The deal is pending regulatory approval.

"Maybe the new buyers, wonderful people, will be able to bring it back to its former credibility and glory," Trump said in his post.

The merged entity will include CNN, CBS, HBO and Nickelodeon as well as some of Hollywood's most valuable franchises, including Harry Potter, Game of Thrones and the DC Universe. —AFP

CNN founder Ted Turner: 20th century media giant

WASHINGTON, DC — Ted Turner created CNN in 1980, revolutionising the way the US, and the world, got their news, and then went on to become one of the most prominent business leaders and philanthropists of his era.

A brash risk taker, Turner — whose death aged 87 was announced yesterday — helped reshape the television industry in the late 20th century.

He also made a name for himself with spectacular business deals, his ownership of professional sports clubs, a marriage to actress Jane Fonda, his leadership of a competitive yachting team and then a devotion to charitable and environmental causes.

Born in Cincinnati, Ohio in November 1938, Robert Edward "Ted" Turner III went to a military boarding school in Tennessee, and then attended Brown University, but was expelled before graduating.

Turner took over a faltering family advertising business after his father, despondent over financial problems, committed suicide.

After buying a number of radio stations, Turner's purchase of a struggling Atlanta station in 1970 was his first move into television.

Ten years later, that became the flagship of his nationwide Turner Broadcasting System, the profits from which he parlayed into the launch of CNN.

CNN launched in 1980 as the first 24-hour cable news network, gaining traction in the United States and later internationally.

The launch came as viewers were shifting from broadcast to cable and CNN became a key source of news during the 1990-1991 Gulf War, delivering extensive live coverage using satellite technology.

CNN's success inspired the creation of other 24-hour news channels including Fox News by longtime Turner rival Rupert Murdoch, MSNBC and countless stations worldwide.

Turner's television empire expanded beyond CNN and included TBS and TNT channels for sports and entertainment, Turner Classic Movies and Cartoon Network, among others.



US actress Jane Fonda (right) arrives on September 30, 1992 with husband Ted Turner at the first Annual Environmental Awards in Hollywood. —AFP

As his television empire expanded, Turner made a failed bid to acquire CBS in the 1980s and then briefly acquired MGM/UA Entertainment Co. studios.

Turner sold the Hollywood group back months later, while keeping the rights to large portions of its catalogue including films from MGM.

Blockbuster deals

His deals got bigger in the 1990s when Turner Broadcasting merged with Time Warner in 1996, making him vice chairman of the media-entertainment powerhouse.

In 2001, AOL (previously America Online) completed its purchase of Time Warner for US\$165 billion in the biggest merger in corporate history.

But the deal had to be unwound within a decade with the falling fortunes of AOL, which used an inflated share price for the deal. Turner, the biggest shareholder of Time Warner, lost billions from the deal.

Sports figure

Turner bought the Atlanta Braves baseball team in 1976 and the team made several World Series appearances, winning in 1995. He sold his interest as part of the Time Warner deal, but the team continued to play on Turner Field until 2016.

He also owned the Atlanta Hawks NBA team and Atlanta Thrashers NHL team, both of which were transferred to Time Warner as part of the 1996 megadeal.

In other sports endeavours, Turner successfully skipped the US yacht Courageous to win the 1977 America's Cup.

A yachting incident intensified the rivalry between Turner and Murdoch in 1983 when a Murdoch-sponsored yacht collided with Turner's in the Sydney-Hobart race, sinking Turner's schooner.

Afterwards, Turner challenged Murdoch to a fistfight and the two media icons continued to play out their rivalry in the business world.

Turner created the Goodwill Games in the 1980s as part of an effort to ease international tensions during the Cold War, amid Olympic boycotts led by the United States and Soviet Union. The last events were held in 2001.

Attention getter

Aside from his business and sports deals, Turner gained attention for his personal life and his later ventures focused on philanthropy and the environment.

In 1996, he complained to *The New York Times* that "all the money is in the hands of these few rich people, and none of them give any away."

He was *Time* magazine's man of the year in 1991, the same year he married, actress Jane Fonda, his third wife. They divorced a decade later, and he blamed their marital woes on her conversion to Christianity.

Her version: "He needs somebody there for him 100 percent of the time ... That's not love, it's babysitting."

In 1998, he donated a billion US dollars to the United Nations to create the UN Foundation, which has focused on climate change, sustainable development, technology and health initiatives.

Turner announced his departure from his post at Time Warner in 2003 to devote his energy to his other interests.

These included the Turner Foundation, founded in 1990, which supports efforts to fight climate change and improve air and water quality and has given away some US\$380 million.

His Turner Endangered Species Fund, launched in June 1997, has worked to save gopher tortoises, monarch butterflies and leopard frogs, working mainly with private landowners.

In 2015, he launched the eco-tourism venture Ted Turner Reserves, which enables tourists to visit his four properties in New Mexico and learn about conservation efforts.

—AFP

Chinese agricultural mission boosts rice yields, incomes for women farmers in Guinea-Bissau

BISSAU – In the rice fields of CAMPOSSA, a women’s producers’ association in eastern Guinea-Bissau, the gains from better irrigation and improved farming methods are showing up in both harvests and household incomes.

The association, based in Bafatá about 150 km east of the capital Bissau, now produces around 220 tonnes of rice a year after receiving technical training and material support from the Chinese agricultural mission working in the country, according to its president, Djato Sanhá Cande.

“We are the first association in Guinea-Bissau to achieve better irrigation in rice production thanks to cooperation with the Chinese mission,” Cande told Xinhua.

For many members of the cooperative, higher output means more than fuller granaries. Part of the rice is consumed at home, while the rest helps families cover basic expenses, including their children’s school fees, she said.

The progress reflects the work of the 12th Chinese Agricultural Technical Assistance Mission to Guinea-Bissau, a team of nine specialists operating in several parts of the West African country, including Bafatá in the east, Bissorã in the north and Buba in the south.

According to Zheng Junjie, head of the mission, Chinese experts have helped raise rice yields from 4.7 tonnes to 7.5 tonnes per hectare in relevant areas through improved varieties and better cultivation practices.

The rice varieties promoted by the mission, and approved by Guinea-Bissau’s National Institute for Agricultural Research, now account for about 43 percent of the country’s total rice production, Zheng said.

Beyond seed promotion, the team has also worked on repairing and maintaining agricultural machinery, training local technicians, and introducing production techniques suited to local conditions.

“Our work is not limited to varieties,” Zheng said. “It also includes machinery repair, technical training and support for local farmers in production.”

The mission has also donated seeds to communities in Bafatá



Chinese agricultural experts and local staff members check rice growth at Carantaba Farm in northeastern Guinea-Bissau, on February 11. – AFP

following a fire in the region, and has supported rice husking as well as the supply of fertilizers, machines and seeds.

Rice is a staple food in Guinea-Bissau, where agriculture remains the main source of livelihood for much of the population. In Bafatá, with its broad stretches of arable land, many farmers still rely on small-scale production and continue to face shortages of machinery, agricultural inputs and irrigation equipment.

Cande said those constraints remain a major challenge despite recent progress.

“We still need more support in working materials, especially motor pumps, power tillers and rice-husking machines,” she said, adding that rising fuel prices on the international market have further increased production costs.

Braima Djamanca, a member of the association, said the lack of machinery remains one of the main bottlenecks.

“The difficulties with machines are enormous. We have only one rice-cutting machine for the association,” he said. “Tractors are the priority – at least three – and we also need motor pumps.”

The Chinese mission says it has so far trained 15,000 farmers, while demonstration activities under its field-school program have reached another 20,000.

Its support has extended beyond agronomy. In February, technicians from the mission repaired a damaged irrigation system at

Carantaba Farm in northeastern Guinea-Bissau, an important site for improved seed production. With no original spare parts available locally, they restored the generator, transmission and pipeline on site, allowing irrigation water to return to the rice paddies at a critical stage of growth.

According to Zheng, that kind of hands-on work reflects the mission’s broader approach in Guinea-Bissau: combining immediate technical assistance with longer-term capacity building.

“The goal is not only to help increase production, but also to pass on methods and skills,” he said.

China has sent agricultural technical teams to Guinea-Bissau since 1998, when the first mission arrived in Bafatá. The current team is the 12th to serve in the country.

Zheng said the mission’s work has received recognition from the Guinea-Bissau government, though the team continues to operate under difficult conditions, including shortages of electricity and safe drinking water in some areas.

Still, for farmers in Bafata, the impact is already visible in the fields.

In a region where producers continue to struggle with limited machinery, rising fuel costs and weak infrastructure, local growers say the Chinese mission has become a sustained source of technical and material support, helping turn higher yields into more stable livelihoods. – Xinhua

3 evacuated from hantavirus-hit cruise ship

Sandro Fonseca, Lucie Peytermann and Nina Larson

PRAIA, Cape Verde – Emergency crews yesterday evacuated three people from a cruise ship hit with a deadly outbreak of hantavirus, the UN’s health agency said, as experts confirmed it to be a rare strain that can be transmitted between humans.

Two sick crew members and one other person who had been in contact with one of the confirmed cases were evacuated from the MV Hondius off Cape Verde, the World Health Organisation (WHO) said. They later boarded flights at the airport in the country’s capital Praia.

Health officials played down any fears of a wider global outbreak, with WHO chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus telling AFP it was not like the COVID-19 pandemic, adding: “The risk to the rest of the world is low.”

The vessel has been at the centre of an international health scare since Saturday, when the UN’s health agency was informed that three passengers had died and the suspected cause was hantavirus. The rare disease is usually spread from infected rodents, typically through urine, droppings and saliva.

Passengers began falling ill a month ago. A Dutch woman died in South Africa on April 26 after having left the cruise following the death of her husband. Two other people are still being treated – one in Johannesburg and one in the Swiss city of Zurich.

Spain’s Health Minister Mónica García Gómez meanwhile said the vessel would dock within the next three days in Tenerife in Spain’s Canary Islands, and all foreign passengers would be flown back to their home countries from there if their health allowed.

Two infectious disease experts from the Netherlands were expected to join the passengers for the onward trip, according to Dutch officials.

The Hondius set sail from Ushuaia in Argentina on April 1 and has been anchored off Cape Verde since Sunday while emergency teams try to deal with the situation.

‘Very rare’

Health experts warned of the risk of a wider outbreak after it emerged that the Dutch woman who died had flown on a commercial

plane from the island of Saint Helena to Johannesburg while she was showing symptoms.

Officials are now trying to trace people on that flight, which South African-based carrier Airlink said was carrying 82 passengers and six crew.

Officials around the world, meanwhile, echoed Tedros’s comments that the danger was low.

“Such transmission is very rare and only happens due to very close contact between people,” South Africa’s Health Minister Aaron Motsoaledi told a parliamentary committee yesterday.

He confirmed that tests had found the Andes virus, the only form of hantavirus that can be passed between humans.

Similarly, the Swiss health ministry confirmed that a passenger from the ship was being treated in hospital in Zurich and had tested positive for the Andes strain.

“There is currently no risk to the Swiss public,” the ministry said.

Canaries-bound

The WHO’s representative in Cape Verde, Ann Lindstrand, told AFP the three people taken from the ship were “stable”, adding: “One of the three is asymptomatic.”

AFP footage showed a small red ambulance boat crewed by staff in hazmat suits and masks arriving next to the ship and three people stepping on board from a side door, while a group of other passengers gathered on the front deck.

Two flights later took off from the airport in Praia, at least one of them bound for Amsterdam in the Netherlands.

The cruise ship originally counted 88 passengers and 59 crew members, with 23 nationalities on board.

The Zurich patient brings the number of confirmed hantavirus cases to three, with the WHO already confirming one of the fatalities and a British passenger currently in intensive care in Johannesburg had tested positive.

There are a total of five further suspected cases including the other two deaths, the WHO said earlier.

The WHO was trying to work out how the hantavirus had appeared on the ship, the first person who died having developed symptoms on April 6. – AFP

Lula to meet Trump today: White House

WASHINGTON, DC – Brazilian President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva will meet US President Donald Trump today, a White House official said, in only the second encounter between the two leaders with a history of rocky relations.

“President Trump will host President Lula for a working visit this Thursday. They will discuss economic and security matters of shared importance,” the official told AFP on condition of anonymity on Tuesday.

A source in the Brazilian presidency had told AFP earlier that a meeting was likely.

Trump and Lula have met only once before, in Malaysia last year. A second meeting planned in Washington earlier this year did not take place.

Lula, 80, and Trump, 79, stand on polar opposite sides on issues such as multilateralism, international trade and the fight against climate change.

Relations had thawed after their Malaysia meeting, which led to the lifting of punitive tariffs imposed by Washington on Brazil.

But Lula has been outspoken against Trump’s government, from its ouster of former president Nicolás Maduro in Venezuela to the war in Iran.

Trump is a key ally of imprisoned former far-right president Jair Bolsonaro, whose eldest son Flávio is seen as Lula’s main rival in an October presidential election. – AFP



Cape Verde’s National Director of Health Angela Gomes (centre), briefs the press on arrangements for the medical evacuation of patients from the cruise ship MV Hondius during a press conference in Praia, the capital of Cape Verde, on Tuesday. Cape Verde will airlift three patients from the cruise ship, which remains anchored off the Port of Praia, Gomes said, following a deadly hantavirus outbreak on board. – AFP

Infantino defends World Cup ticket prices

FIFA BEVERLY HILLS — FIFA president Gianni Infantino on Tuesday defended World Cup ticket prices, insisting that football's global governing body was obliged to take advantage of US laws that allow tickets to be resold for thousands of dollars above face value.

FIFA has faced searing criticism over the cost of World Cup tickets, with fan organisation Football Supporters Europe (FSE) branding the pricing structure "extortionate" and a "monumental betrayal".

FSE filed a lawsuit with the European Commission in March targeting FIFA over "excessive ticket prices" for the tournament.

FIFA's own World Cup resale website, FIFA Marketplace, last week advertised four tickets to the July 19 final in New York at a cost of more than US\$2 million each.

Speaking at the Milken Institute Global Conference in Beverly Hills, Infantino said the eye-watering prices reflected demand to watch the World Cup.

"If some people put on the resale market, some tickets for the final at US\$2 million, number one it doesn't mean that the tickets cost US\$2 million," Infantino said.

"And number two it doesn't mean that somebody will buy these tickets," Infantino said. "And if somebody buys a ticket for the final for US\$2 million, I will personally bring him a hot dog and a Coke to make sure that he has a great experience."

Fan groups have contrasted the

difference in price of tickets for this summer with the Qatar World Cup in 2022.

The most expensive ticket for the final in 2022 was around US\$1,600 at face value, while in 2026 the most expensive ticket for the final is about US\$11,000 at its original price.

Infantino was adamant that the steep increase in face-value prices was justified.

"We have to look at the market - we are in the market in which entertainment is the most developed in the world. So we have to apply market rates," Infantino said.

"In the US it is permitted to resell tickets as well. So if you were to sell tickets at the price which is too low, these tickets will be resold at a much higher price.

"And as a matter of fact, even though some people are saying that the ticket prices we have are high, they still end up on the resale market at an even higher price, more than double of our price."

Infantino said that FIFA received in excess of 500 million ticket requests for 2026, compared with fewer than 50 million combined for the 2018 and 2022 World Cups.

The FIFA leader added that 25 percent of tickets for the group phase were priced at under US\$300.

"You cannot go to watch in the US a college game, not even speaking about a top professional game of a certain level, for less than US\$300," Infantino said. "And this is the World Cup." — AFP

Asian football fans sweat on broadcast rights as World Cup nears

Peter Stebbings with Faisal Kamal in New Delhi



HONG KONG — Swathes of football-mad Asia from China to India and Thailand are yet to confirm broadcast rights for the biggest-ever World Cup with kick-off barely one month away.

Unsocial match times in the region is one reason why hundreds of millions of fans have been left sweating about whether they can watch from their sofas.

Football's showpiece is being co-hosted by the United States, Canada and Mexico and begins on June 11 when the Mexicans face South Africa.

For fans in Beijing and Shanghai the opening match will start at 3 a.m., as will the final.

In New Delhi that is 12:30 a.m., although some games will be better timing in Asia.

Sandeep Goyal, chairman at advertising agency Rediffusion, told AFP that he was "privy to some discussions" between football's governing body FIFA and Indian broadcasters.

"The first problem is of match timings," said Goyal.

"The bigger, better matches are at 12:30 a.m. or 3:30 a.m. A few at 6:30 a.m. Except die-hard soccer fans, match viewership is likely to be low in India.

"Therefore monetisation opportunities for the channels come down massively."

Goyal said that JioStar, India's largest media conglomerate, had offered US\$20 million for the rights. Sony did not make an offer, he said.

FIFA originally wanted US\$100 million for the 2026 and 2030 World Cup rights, Indian media has said.

"The final deal is likely to close at much lower than what FIFA is looking for," Goyal added.

PM gets involved

Like India, China has also not announced a deal for a tournament that has a most-ever 48 teams and 104 matches.

Neither country - which combined have a population of nearly three billion - is playing at the World Cup but interest is intense, particularly in China.

The country accounted for 49.8 percent of all hours of viewing on digital and social platforms globally during the Qatar 2022 World Cup, according to FIFA.



Japanese football fans react after the second goal by Ivory Coast against Japan as they watch TV during the group C first round match of the 2014 FIFA World Cup in Tokyo on June 15, 2014.

Swathes of football-mad Asia from China to India, Malaysia and Thailand, are yet to announce broadcast rights for the biggest-ever World Cup with kick-off barely one month away. — AFP

State media weighed in this week, with the *Global Times* citing a 2015 regulatory notice saying that national broadcasting behemoth CCTV has the exclusive right to negotiate and buy World Cup broadcasting rights in China.

"Historically, CCTV has secured World Cup rights well in advance," the *Global Times* said.

"For previous editions, agreements were typically concluded early enough to allow for extensive promotion and advertising campaigns."

Thailand have never reached the World Cup but football is wildly popular there - and there is no confirmed deal.

Thailand's National Broadcasting and Telecommunications Commission (NBTC) removed the World Cup from a "must-have" list last June, meaning the tournament no longer has to be shown on free-to-air television.

Thailand's prime minister was moved to assure fans on Tuesday that they would not miss out.

"Previous governments ensured free access to the World Cup, and my administration should not be an exception," Anutin Charnvirakul told reporters.

Thailand struggled to secure live rights for the previous tournament in 2022, before the Sports Authority of Thailand finalised a last-minute reported US\$33 million deal with FIFA, funded by the NBTC and private partners including telecom giant True Corp.

Malaysia's communications ministry announced yesterday that the national broadcaster Radio Televisyen Malaysia and Unifi TV will show the tournament there, after

reports in local media said there was haggling behind the scenes.

'Deals will be reached'

James Walton, sports business leader at Deloitte Asia Pacific, said that headlines screaming of millions of fans missing out in Asia were wide of the mark.

"This happens every cycle in some countries," he told AFP via email.

"The country broadcasters want the best deal as they have to balance this cost against potential revenues from advertising (for commercial broadcasters) or social benefit (for public/government-owned broadcasters).

"Meanwhile, the rights holders know that this is a one-off opportunity to sell a time-sensitive rights package.

"The reality is that it's almost unthinkable for most countries to not show the World Cup," he said.

"So one way or another, a deal will be reached."

"Realistically, fans in all these countries will definitely get to watch as their governments will realise the potential for unrest," Walton added.

"And FIFA will want to ensure their flagship event gets maximum coverage to fulfil sponsor commitments, raise the profile of the sport and to avoid encouraging piracy."

Asked by AFP if it was worried about the rights issue with the World Cup coming up fast, FIFA said that it had sealed agreements with broadcasters in more than 175 countries.

"Discussions in a few remaining markets regarding the sale of media rights for the FIFA World Cup 2026 are ongoing and must remain confidential at this stage," it said. — AFP



A local artist paints a street ahead of the FIFA World Cup 2026 in the Rocinha favela in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, on Tuesday. — AFP

FIFA

For the Game. For the World.

LAUSANNE - FIFA announced yesterday it had extended Gianluca Prestianni's suspension worldwide after the Benfica winger was originally banned by European football's governing body UEFA.

Argentina's Prestianni was handed a six-game ban, with three of them suspended, for discriminatory

conduct in the first leg of Champions League play-off tie against Real Madrid on February 17.

Madrid forward Vinicius Junior accused the 20-year-old Prestianni of racism as they clashed on the field, which Prestianni denies.

As the two argued, Prestianni spoke to Vinicius while covering

his mouth, with the Brazilian subsequently complaining to the referee, leading to the match being suspended for 10 minutes.

"The FIFA Disciplinary Committee has decided to extend the six-match ban imposed by UEFA on SL Benfica player Gianluca Prestianni to have worldwide

effect," FIFA told AFP.

"The sanction has been extended in accordance with article 70 of the FIFA Disciplinary Code."

Prestianni, who made his only international appearance last November, has already served one match of his suspension, missing the Champions League play-off

second leg.

Following FIFA's decision, the former Velez Sarsfield player would miss holders Argentina's two opening games of the World Cup, which takes place in the United States, Canada and Mexico between June 11 and July 19. — AFP

FIFA extends Prestianni ban worldwide

Wang leads China's comeback win over Romania at table tennis team worlds

Table tennis

LONDON – Wang Chuqin claimed two wins as China rallied to beat Romania 3-1 yesterday and reached the men's team quarterfinals at the 2026 ITTF World Team Table Tennis Championships Finals.

China fell behind early when Liang Jingkun lost 11-5, 11-7, 11-6 to Eduard Ionescu, the highest-ranked player in Romania's lineup.

"I was a bit tight at the start, and he performed better. After he had some excellent shots, my mentality was impacted and I failed to catch up with him afterwards," Liang said.

"As I don't have much advantage technically and tactically, I need to go all out against every opponent," he added.

Wang, the world No. 1, restored parity by beating Iulian Chirita in straight games. He took the first 11-5, then recovered from a 5-1 deficit in the second to level at 8-8 before edging it 12-10. He closed out the match 11-5.

"I prepared fully for this match. After trailing in the second game, I managed to turn the tables, which boosted my confidence in the third," Wang said.

Lin Shidong put China ahead with an 11-9, 11-6, 11-4 win over Ovidiu Ionescu in the third match. The 36-year-old Romanian called two TTR reviews in the second game, but both decisions went against him.

"The third match was quite crucial, but I didn't think too much about it. I was just focused on every point," Lin said.

"I felt that I didn't truly brace for high-intensity competition in the group stage. Hopefully I will be more pumped up in the upcoming matches," he added.

Wang then sealed the tie against Eduard Ionescu. He led 8-2 in the opening game before the Romanian closed to within one point, but Wang held on for an 11-8 win. Ionescu took the second 11-8, but Wang responded to win



Wang Chuqin (left) of China greets Iulian Chirita of Romania after the men's teams round of 16 match between China and Romania at the ITTF World Team Table Tennis Championships Finals in London, Britain, yesterday. – Xinhua

the next two games 11-3, 11-4.

"Eduard is a strong player, and I expected it to be a tough match. Due to Lin's win in the third match, I felt more relieved on the court," Wang said.

China will face either South Korea or Austria in the quarterfinals.

In the women's team round of 16, China dominated Sweden 3-0 without losing a game.

Sun Yingsha eased past Swedish chopper Linda Bergstrom 11-3, 11-4, 11-4 in the opening match.

"Linda has shown her characteristics with a defensive style. I hadn't expected it to be an easy match, and even prepared for losing the first game," Sun said after the win.

"As the tournament now approaches the quarterfinals, the opponents will only get stronger and stronger. The contest will not only be about the skills and tactics, but also about the mentality and the ability to read the game," she added.

Wang Manyu doubled the lead with a more comfortable win, only conceding eight

points in overwhelming Christina Kallberg 11-5, 11-0, 11-3.

"I was concentrated on the court, and the atmosphere motivated me a lot," Wang commented.

Speaking of her perfect second game, Wang said, "I hope to play my best in the knockout stage, it will be conducive to the matches ahead."

In their first head-to-head, Wang Yidi outplayed Sweden's Filippa Bergand 11-7, 11-4, 11-4 to secure the win.

"I had some unforced errors at the beginning, while taking control of the match after making adjustments after the first game," Wang noted.

Awaiting them in the quarterfinals will be South Korea, who beat Singapore 3-1.

Elsewhere, Chinese Taipei beat Denmark 3-0, Japan defeated Kazakhstan 3-1, and France sailed past Portugal 3-0 in the men's team event.

In the women's draw, Hong Kong edged Chinese Taipei 3-2, while Japan swept Luxembourg 3-0. – Xinhua

Seixas targets victory in Tour warm-up race

Cycling

Jacques Klopp

LA MOTTE-SERVOLEX, France – Budding French star Paul Seixas said yesterday he is aiming to win the main preparation race ahead of July's Tour de France.

With Tour favourites Tadej Pogacar, who will go to the Tour de Suisse instead, and Jonas Vingegaard, who is tackling the Giro d'Italia this month, skipping the Tour Auvergne-Rhone-Alpes, teenage prodigy Seixas will likely start as the favourite.

But he will face stiff competition from the likes of Mexican Isaac del Toro, who won the UAE Tour and Tirreno-Adriatico earlier this year, and Spaniard Juan Ayuso, who beat the Frenchman into second place at the Tour of the Algarve in February.

"Depending on my form and the competition, I will be aiming to go for the victory," Seixas said at a press conference for selective media at his Decathlon CMA CGM team's performance centre near the Alpine town of Chambéry in southeastern France.

"I certainly won't be in Tour de France form because that's not the aim, but I imagine that will also be the case for the other riders there," added Seixas of the June 7-14 stage race.

The 19-year-old has been in sensational form this season, finishing either first or second in all six of his races.

He won the Tour of the Basque Country last month, having also tasted success in one-day races the Ardeche Classic and Fleche Wallonne.

Other than finishing narrowly behind Ayuso in his opening race of the season, he was beaten only by world champion Pogacar at Strade Bianche in March and Liege-Bastogne-Liege 10 days ago.

Tour recon

Before taking part in his first Grand Tour in July – where the expectation around him will reach fever pitch as France pins its hopes on his young shoulders to end the 41-year wait for a home winner at the Grand Boucle – he will use his time to ride the route of Tour stages and take part in altitude training.

The Tour Auvergne-Rhone-Alpes, in which he finished an impressive eighth last year when it was still known as the Criterium du Dauphine, will be his only race before the Tour.

Today he is due to ride the route of the Tour's 16th stage time-trial between Thonon-les-Bains and Evian-les-Bains, "not far from my grandparents", he said.

He had announced on Monday his participation at the July 4-26 Tour with a social media video of him breaking the news first to his grandparents.

In Ayuso and Del Toro, as well as Briton Oscar Onley, who was fourth at last year's Tour, Seixas will face at the warm-up event some of the brightest young climbers in cycling who may be his main rivals in the years to come.

Ayuso was a teenage star himself when he finished third at his home Grand Tour, the Vuelta a Espana in 2022.

His form since then has been mixed, finishing fourth at the Vuelta the following year but failing to finish the 2024 Tour and the 2025 Giro.

Del Toro won an incredible 18 races in his breakout 2025 season when he looked all set to win the Giro until British veteran Simon Yates snatched the pink jersey from his grasp on the penultimate stage. – AFP

Sport in brief

India to allow Pakistani athletes at multilateral sports events

Sport

NEW DEHLI – India has said it would allow Pakistani athletes to attend multilateral events in the country, as New Delhi seeks to establish itself as a global sporting destination.

Bilateral sporting engagements, including cricket, with its arch-rival will continue to be off table, India's youth affairs and sports ministry said in a document seen by AFP yesterday.

India and Pakistan were engaged in a deadly conflict last year, and have not played a bilateral cricket series in more than a decade. Their athletes meet only in global or regional tournaments.

India will host the Commonwealth Games in 2030 and has also made an aggressive pitch to host the 2036 Olympic Games as well as the Asian Games in 2038, bids to burnish its credentials as a growing sporting power.

"Indian teams and individual players would continue to take part in international tournaments that include Pakistan, in line with the practices of global governing bodies and in the interest of Indian sportspersons," the ministry said.

Pakistani players and teams will be able to participate in multilateral events hosted by India, it said, adding that visa processes for athletes, officials and media workers would be "simplified".

In recent years, visa delays for Pakistani players have led to criticism by global bodies over India's host obligations. – AFP

Merckx monument in Brussels vandalised

Cycling

BRUSSELS – Vandals damaged a commemorative stone slab in Brussels made in honour of Belgian cycling great Eddy Merckx, local authorities said yesterday.

The monument depicts the face of five-time Tour de France winner Merckx, who at 80 remains one of Belgium's most respected figures.

"This Wednesday [yesterday] morning, residents were shocked to discover that the monument in tribute to Eddy Merckx, located in Bouvreuils Square, had been vandalised," Woluwe-Saint-Pierre mayor Benoit Cerexhe said in a statement, adding that he was "outraged".

"Who could want to attack an athlete, a symbol of our country? Nothing justifies such an act."

Cerexhe's chief of staff told AFP that video surveillance cameras would be analysed to try to identify the perpetrators and the monument would be repaired without delay.

Merckx's parents used to own a shop on that square in Woluwe-Saint-Pierre, a municipality in eastern Brussels.

The monument was inaugurated in March 2019 to mark the Tour de France's departure from Brussels later that year. – AFP

Ahmedabad to host IPL final after Bengaluru switch



NEW DEHLI - The Indian

Premier League final will be held in Ahmedabad on May 31 instead of Bengaluru as originally planned, the country's cricket board said yesterday.

The Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) said the venue was shifted because of "certain requirements" from local authorities and the state association.

Bengaluru was cleared to host five games this IPL season despite a stampede last year outside its main cricket stadium that killed 11 young fans.

Qualifier 1, featuring the top two teams in the standings, will be played on May 26 at Dharamsala, with a direct berth in the final at stake.

Chandigarh will host the Eliminator on May 27 between the third and fourth-placed teams. The same venue will also stage Qualifier 2 on May 29, where the loser of Qualifier 1 will face the winner of the Eliminator to determine the second finalist.

The title clash will be held at Ahmedabad's Narendra Modi Stadium, the world's largest cricket stadium with a capacity of 130,000.

The IPL, the world's richest cricket league, attracts leading international players and is broadcast globally, with several franchises backed by Bollywood stars.

It is also a top revenue earner for the BCCI and was estimated in 2020 to generate more than US\$11 billion a year for the Indian economy. – AFP

Rolling Stones announce July 10 release of new album 'Foreign Tongues'

NEW YORK – The Rolling Stones will release a new album on July 10 named “Foreign Tongues,” the legendary British rockers announced on Tuesday.

The band’s 25th studio album will come less than three years after its last release, “Hackney Diamonds,” which topped the charts in more than a dozen countries and earned

some critical acclaim.

“Hackney Diamonds” was the band’s first album in 18 years.

The Stones announced the release date of “Foreign Tongues”

online on Tuesday, while dropping a new single, “In The Stars.”

A video posted on its Instagram channel showed singer Mick Jagger and fellow founding bandmate Keith Richards, who are both 82, with 78-year-old bass guitarist Ronnie Wood working in a recording studio.

At a promotional event in New York hosted by comedian Conan O’Brien, the trio discussed their latest work and previewed a few tracks from the album.

“We’re still having a lot of fun,” Jagger said.

“It’s a lot of fun, but also a lot of concentration,” he added.

O’Brien voiced praise for Jagger’s vocals, remarking: “There are people who, at a certain stage, their voice gets thin. Yours is absolutely impeccable, and there’s such force. How do you do that?”

“Well, I was taking a lot more drugs in 1968,” Jagger quipped, to laughter from the audience. He then added: “The secret is practice... it’s simple.”

“I had the time of my life.

I’m the biggest fan in the world,” Andrew Watt, one of the album’s producers, told AFP about working on the project.

The rock act did not mention a concert tour during the event, with several media outlets reporting that it was discussed by their team but ultimately dismissed due to the age of the band members and the health risks it entailed.

“Foreign Tongues” will feature appearances from former Beatles bass player Paul McCartney and The Cure frontman Robert Smith.

Speculation had been mounting that they were poised to unveil a new record after they last month mysteriously released a new limited edition single on vinyl only, under the band name The Cockroaches.

The name is an alias they have used in the past to play secret shows.

The track, “Rough And Twisted,” was sold at selected record stores only, in the UK for exactly £10.07 (US\$13.64) – prompting fans to predict the album would appear on July 10.

– AFP



British musicians and members of The Rolling Stones, Ronnie Wood (left), Mick Jagger (centre) and Keith Richards pose upon arrival for “The Rolling Stones: In Conversation with Conan O’Brien” at Weylin in Brooklyn, New York on Tuesday. – AFP

Hollywood star Malkovich gets Croatian citizenship

ZAGREB, Croatia – US actor John Malkovich, who has Croatian ancestry, was granted Croatian citizenship on Tuesday in a special ceremony.

“The world-renowned actor, who has left a mark on cinema with numerous roles, has taken on a new role and become a Croatian citizen,”

Interior Minister Davor Bozinovic said in a post on X.

The 72-year-old Hollywood star was also welcomed by Prime Minister Andrej Plenkovic.

“John’s long career and his art success is a great inspiration for younger generations and we are glad he is proudly cultivating his

Croatian roots,” Plenkovic said.

Malkovic’s great-grandmother and great-grandfather emigrated from Ozalj, in central Croatia, to the United States.

He has stayed in the Balkan country on several occasions, both privately and as a guest performing in theatre productions. – AFP

Netflix announces theatrical release for new ‘Narnia’ in 2027

LOS ANGELES – Netflix has said it will release a film globally in cinemas nearly two months before it hits the streaming service – a first for the content platform.

“Narnia: The Magician’s Nephew” will debut on the big screen on February 12, 2027 and arrive on television on April 2, the company said in a statement.

The platform had initially planned to release the production in IMAX this November – a month before it would have landed on the streaming service.

Netflix, whose business model relies on continuous at-home viewing, has previously released films on the big screen.

Last year, “K-Pop Demon

Hunters” – which won two Oscars – enjoyed a successful theatrical run in select cinemas two months after its premiere on the platform.

Amid industry concerns sparked by its interest in acquiring Warner Bros. Discovery, Netflix CEO Ted Sarandos said he was willing to honour the 45-day theatrical window that the storied studio had traditionally reserved.

In March, after Netflix withdrew from a bidding war with Paramount, Sarandos met with cinema owners in a meeting that yielded nothing concrete, but was applauded as “constructive.”

“Narnia: The Magician’s Nephew” is an adaptation of the novel “The Magician’s Nephew” by C.S. Lewis, first published in 1955.

The film is directed by Greta Gerwig, who also oversaw the smash hits “Barbie” and “Little Women,” and welcomed Netflix’s scheduling decision.

“Working with Netflix to bring this film to life has been extraordinary and IMAX continues to be an incredible partner,” she said in a statement.

“I cannot wait for people to see the film in [movie] theatres on February 12 and on Netflix on April 2,” she added.

Young actors David McKenna (“Lord of the Flies”) and Beatrice Campbell lead the cast of the film, which also features Emma Mackey, Carey Mulligan, Daniel Craig, and Meryl Streep. – AFP

Dolly Parton axes Las Vegas shows over health woes

LOS ANGELES – Country music legend Dolly Parton on Monday announced the cancellation of a string of Las Vegas concerts, citing ongoing health concerns.

Parton, 80, said in videos posted to her social media accounts that although treatment for an unspecified illness was going well, she wasn’t ready to be performing on stage.

The “9 to 5” singer had previously postponed the Las Vegas residency, which was originally scheduled to kick off last year.

“The good news is I’m responding really well to meds and treatments, and I’m improving every day now,” she said in the video on Monday.

“It’s going to take me a little while before I’m up to stage performance level,” she said, adding that medicines she’s taking were making her light-headed and woozy.

“Of course, I can’t be dizzy

carrying around banjos, guitars and such, on five-inch (12.7 cm) heels, and you know that I’m going to be wearing them. Not to mention all those heavy rhinestone outfits, the big hair, my big personality,” she joked.

Parton said her doctors were working hard on strengthening her immune and digestive systems.

“They assure me that everything I have is treatable,” she said.

Speculation over Parton’s health last year – following her sister’s public request for prayers – prompted the music legend to post a video addressing her fans titled “I ain’t dead yet!”

In her latest video, Parton – whose husband Carl died last year – thanked fans for their support and said she was still working on various projects including a museum and hotel set to open in Nashville, Tennessee later this year, and a Broadway musical.

– AFP

World Weather			
CHINA	ASIA-PACIFIC	WORLD	LUSOPHONE
☀️ Beijing 10°C~24°C	☀️ Manila 25°C~36°C	☁️ New York 10°C~19°C	☁️ Lisbon 13°C~21°C
☁️ Shanghai 16°C~30°C	☁️ Bangkok 27°C~35°C	☁️ London 8°C~16°C	☀️ Rio de Janeiro 21°C~29°C
☁️ Hong Kong 22°C~27°C	☀️ Tokyo 16°C~26°C	☁️ Frankfurt 7°C~15°C	☀️ Luanda 22°C~27°C
☁️ Taipei 22°C~31°C	☁️ Singapore 25°C~32°C	☁️ Vancouver 11°C~17°C	☀️ Maputo 15°C~29°C
☁️ Guangzhou 22°C~29°C	☁️ Kuala Lumpur 24°C~33°C	☁️ Paris 7°C~17°C	☀️ Dili 23°C~32°C
☁️ Nanjing 13°C~27°C	☁️ Jakarta 24°C~33°C	☁️ Moscow 13°C~27°C	☁️ São Tomé 26°C~31°C
☁️ Guilin 18°C~27°C	☁️ Seoul 10°C~20°C	☀️ Las Vegas 20°C~33°C	☀️ Praia 19°C~28°C
☁️ Xi’an 12°C~23°C	☀️ Sydney 8°C~18°C	☀️ Monte Carlo 13°C~19°C	☀️ Bissau 22°C~36°C



Summer ready

Dressed-up pet dogs pose for photos with blooming tulips during a tulip festival in Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ontario, Canada, on Monday. Showcasing over 100 varieties of more than three million tulips, this event is held here from April 29 to May 17 this year. — Xinhua



Looking my best

An Arabian horse is pictured inside a stable at Al-Afandi Academy that provides horse care services, training for horses and equestrian training in the southern Iraqi city of Basra on Tuesday. — AFP



Eternal life?

Gabi (centre), a humanoid robot dressed as a Buddhist monk, poses with Buddhist monks as it attends an ordination ceremony as part of celebrations for the upcoming Buddha's birthday at Jogye Temple in Seoul yesterday. — AFP

Truly beautiful bank

This photograph shows a statue of Louis XIV inside the golden hall of the Banque de France, the French central bank, at the Hotel de Toulouse building, in Paris yesterday. — AFP

City silhouette

This photo taken with a mobile phone on Monday shows the East Lake scenic area at sunset in Wuhan, Hubei Province. — Xinhua



What a clapper!

A dancer performs in the "Seaworld Venice" by Austrian artist and Choreographer Florentina Holzinger in the Austrian Pavilion during the pre-opening press view of the 61st Venice Art Biennale in Venice on Tuesday. — AFP

