

Sands China CEO: 'Unmatched' IR supply key to diversification

Rui Pastorin

Macau's "unmatched" supply of world-class integrated resorts (IRs) is one of the key factors in the city's economic diversification drive, Sands China Chief Executive Officer and Executive Director Grant Chum Kwan Lock stressed in his opening keynote address during yesterday's G2E Asia at The Venetian Macao yesterday.

Themed "Evolving Together: Advancing Macao's Diversification Through Integration, Innovation, and Inclusion", Chum spoke about the vision behind The Venetian Macao and the foundation it provided in Cotai. He also highlighted Sands China's key events and initiatives over the years from hosting performances to large-scale events, among others.

Touching on economic diversification, Chum suggested that there are three key factors in Macau's success that will also continue to support the city in the years to come, those being political stability, demand potential, and the city's supply of IRs.

Particularly on the supply side, Chum pointed out that Macau has an "unparalleled, unmatched critical mass of first class integrated resorts in every sense".

Chum pointed out: "For



Sands China Chief Executive Officer and Executive Director Grant Chum Kwan Lock delivers his opening keynote speech prior to the launch of G2E Asia + Asian IR Expo 2026 at The Venetian Macao. - Photo: Rui Pastorin

jurisdictions looking to liberalise, cities are looking to add one, two, hopefully, of these amazing integrated resorts with all of the diversity within the same building. But Macau, in Cotai, depending on how you count it, there are 10 to 11 world-class integrated resorts right

here, we're in the middle of this. It is almost impossible to imagine that over the next one decade, two decades, three decades, there could be another city in the region that could rival this critical mass of premium integrated resorts.

"The cost of entry is going higher

and higher. The cost to build is forever escalating. When you think about Cotai collectively, what's been invested here, US\$40, 50 billion, that's at the cost that the operators built at the time. So what's the actual replacement cost of these 11 resorts today, or next year, or in five years?

time? We built this building, a 10 million square feet (929,030 square metre) building, one of the largest buildings in the world at the time, for US\$2.4 billion. It would probably cost US\$11-12 billion to recreate now. So Macau has an impregnable advantage on the supply side", according to Chum.

Chum also went on to highlight in his concluding remarks that no other city in the world, particularly in Asia, can match the "critical mass of premium integrated resources all in one place so easily accessible in a wonderfully stable environment that is fun but also very safe for visitors".

Meanwhile, the other points that Chum highlighted included political stability, noting that he believes that the "One Country, Two Systems" policy framework provides a "a very strong environment for investors and operators to develop".

Chum added that for the demand potential, the Chinese mainland has grown to become the second largest economy in the world, after the US and ahead of Germany, with a GDP close to US\$20 trillion in 2025.

"The story of Macau's [economic] diversification is still unfolding", Chum said, adding that while much has been achieved, more would be accomplished in the years to come. ■ (More on p.5)

US Senate confirms Trump-nominee Warsh to Federal Reserve board

Asad Hashim

WASHINGTON, DC - The US Senate yesterday confirmed Kevin Warsh as a governor on the board of the Federal Reserve, clearing the way for him to take the reins of the central bank later this week as the world's largest economy faces inflation at a three-year-high.

The Senate voted 51-45 to confirm Warsh's appointment to the board for a 14-year term, with the results largely along party lines.

The Senate will hold a separate vote to confirm Warsh as the

central bank's chair, taking over from incumbent Jerome Powell, whose term finishes at the end of this week.

US President Donald Trump has frequently insulted and criticised Powell, demanding the central bank lower interest rates faster, despite significant economic headwinds.

US consumer inflation came in at its highest year-on-year level since 2023 yesterday, registering at 3.8 percent in April, with significant increases in both energy and food prices.

Warsh has backed lower interest rates, despite price increases having outpaced the Fed's long-term two-percent target for years.

The US labour market has also shown signs of weakness, with unemployment steady but job growth see-sawing between contraction and expansion for months.

The Fed typically uses interest rates as its main policy tool, increasing them to tame inflation or lowering them to spur economic growth.

Last month, a meeting of the

Fed's rate-setting committee saw an outpouring of dissent, with three policymakers voting for a change in forward guidance language to indicate a rate hike could be as likely as a cut.

Decisions on the 12-member Federal Open Market Committee (FOMC) - which consists of the seven Fed governors and five regional Fed presidents - are made by a majority vote.

"It is a very hard moment for someone to take over at the helm of the Fed," said Diane Swonk,

chief economist at KPMG.

"There are no easy options: hold rates steady or cut and risk a more persistent, corrosive bout of inflation, or raise rates and add insult to injury to a labour market that looks better on paper than it feels to most workers."

Gregory Daco, chief economist at EY-Parthenon, said the April inflation figures would strengthen the hand of policymakers seeking to indicate a rate hike could be the Fed's next rate move. (More on p.11) - AFP

Xi holds talks with Tajik president

President Xi Jinping held talks with Tajikistan's President Emomali Rahmon in Beijing yesterday.

- Story on p. 7

Starmer resists calls to quit as Labour divided

UK Prime Minister Keir Starmer was battling to remain in his job yesterday, as four junior ministers resigned their posts and dozens of lawmakers called for him to step down.

- Story on p. 11

Dengue outpaces virus-blocking mosquitoes in Brazil

Brazilian scientist Luciano Moreira tenderly handles a glass box of swarming mosquitoes infected with a bacterium that blocks the transmission of dengue.

- Story on p. 12

Man, 83, becomes this year's 6th Legionnaires' disease patient

Tony Wong

An 83-year-old local man inflicted with various chronic diseases is in a serious condition after being infected with Legionnaires' disease, the Health Bureau (SSM) announced in a statement last night.

Last night's statement did not mention how many cases of Legionnaires' disease Macau has so far recorded this year.

Before the case announced yesterday, the Health Bureau had previously announced five cases of Legionnaires' disease this year. This means that Macau has so far recorded six cases this year.

In 2025, Macau recorded a total of six cases of Legionnaires' disease.

According to last night's statement, the latest patient came down with a cough and a runny nose on May 1, but did not seek medical treatment at that time.

He sought treatment at the private Kiang Wu Hospital on Friday last week after coming down with a low-grade fever, where a chest X-ray indicated pneumonia and he was hospitalised.

The patient developed a high fever and shortness of breath on Sunday, and was transferred to the intensive care unit (ICU) on Monday after his symptoms worsened.

He was diagnosed with Legionnaires' disease yesterday after testing positive for Legionella pneumophila. Afterwards, he was transferred to the ICU of the public Conde de São Januário Hospital Centre.

The patient was in a serious condition and still on a ventilator at the time of last night's statement.

According to the statement, the patient lives in a residential care home for senior citizens in Coloane's Seac Pai Van public housing estate. None of his roommates have come down with similar symptoms.

Before the onset of the illness, he visited the home of his relatives in the Inner Harbour district.

The statement said that the Health Bureau will dispatch personnel to collect environmental samples from the patient's residence and nearby areas to identify the source of infection.

The statement noted that people can be infected with Legionnaires' disease after inhaling mist contaminated with Legionella bacteria released by artificial water systems such as central air-conditioning systems' cooling towers, jacuzzis, fountains, and household respiratory medical devices.

The statement underlined that people normally will not be infected with the disease after drinking water

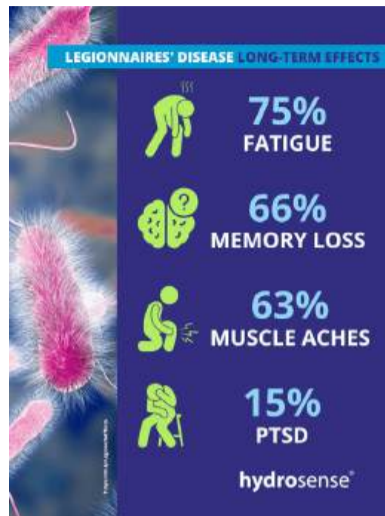


Image courtesy of Hydrosense

contaminated with the bacteria.

The statement noted that while anyone may develop Legionnaires' disease, certain groups of individuals are more susceptible to the disease, including males, senior citizens, smokers, alcoholics, and those with weakened immune systems, particularly those with chronic illnesses, such as cancer, diabetes, chronic lung or kidney diseases, and those taking steroids or drugs that suppress body immunity.

The statement noted that antibiotics are effective in treating Legionnaires' disease provided that they are taken early after the onset of the illness. ■

Legislature to host Open Day this Sunday

Tony Wong

The Legislative Assembly (AL) has scheduled its annual Open Day for the coming Sunday, May 17.

The legislature announced details of this year's Open Day in a statement yesterday.

In both 2024 and 2025, the legislature held its Open Day in January.

Located near Macau Tower, the Legislative Assembly building will be open to members of the public between 10 a.m. and 6 p.m. on the coming Sunday.

During the upcoming Open Day event, the statement said, the public can visit the building's atrium, the hemicycle used for plenary sessions, the multi-purpose hall, and the meeting rooms used for committee meetings, where information panels will be set up for presentations, while legislators and Legislative Assembly staff members will be there to provide explanations.

During the Open Day event, the statement said, the School of Music and the School of Dance of the Macao Conservatory operated under the Cultural Affairs Bureau (IC), as well as Pui Ching Middle School,

will arrange for their students to perform at various locations in the Legislative Assembly building.

In addition, the Public Administration and Civil Service Bureau (SAFP) and the Legal Affairs Bureau (DSAJ) will set up information booths and self-service kiosks used for voter registration, with the aim of promoting voter registration and disseminating information on the nation's Constitution, the Macau Basic Law, and the local Law on Safeguarding National Security.

According to the statement, free shuttle buses will be provided on the Open Day between Hotel Sintra and the Legislative Assembly. The first shuttle bus will depart from Hotel Sintra at 10 a.m., while the last bus will depart from the Legislative Assembly at 6:30 p.m.

In addition, the statement said, a temporary carpark will be set up on an undeveloped plot, namely Plot C17, next to the nearby Services Platform Complex for Commercial and Trade Cooperation between China and Portuguese-speaking Countries (aka Forum Macao Complex) for those driving to the Open Day. ■



This undated file photo released by the Legislative Assembly (AL) yesterday shows its building next to Nam Van Lake.

Police nab HK 'entrepreneur' for scamming local investor

Armindo Neves

The Judiciary Police (PJ) arrested on Sunday a Hong Kong "entrepreneur" for scamming a local investor, PJ spokesman Ho Wai Lok said during a regular press conference yesterday.

Ho identified the suspect as a 54-year-old businessman surnamed To.

According to Ho, the Judiciary Police received a report from the local victim on November 7, saying he suspected that he had been defrauded by To when investing in two restaurants, losing around HK\$2.4 million (2.47 million patacas).

In February 2024, Ho said, To persuaded the victim to invest in two restaurants that were about to open in a hotel in the city's central district, claiming that an investment of HK\$1.2 million would secure a 10 percent stake and generate substantial returns. Subsequently, To requested

an additional investment of HK\$1.4 million from the victim, under the pretext that the two restaurants required renovation work, Ho said.

The victim visited the restaurants and confirmed that renovation was indeed underway, and thus trusted To, Ho said, adding that between February and November 2024, the victim made multiple transfers totalling HK\$2.4 million to bank accounts provided by To.

According to Ho, the two restaurants began operations on May 1 last year, but the victim never received any notification from To or the restaurants about his investments. Upon enquiring directly to the restaurants, Ho said, the victim learnt that To was not a shareholder in the two eateries. Only then did the victim suspect that he had been deceived, so he reported the case to the police on November 7, according to Ho.

The investigation revealed that both restaurants in question had never asked To to seek investors, nor had the restaurants ever received any investment funds, Ho said.

On Sunday, PJ officers intercepted To at the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge (HZMB) upon arrival at the Macau checkpoint and seized HK\$3,000 and a smartphone, Ho said, adding that To claimed that he had used the proceeds from the scam to repay debts and for gambling.

To was transferred to the Public Prosecutions Office (MP) on Monday, facing a fraud charge. ■



The undated handout photo provided by the Judiciary Police yesterday shows evidence seized from the restaurant investment fraud suspect surnamed To upon arrival in Macau from Hong Kong on Sunday.

Elderly woman arrested for 'theft by finding' after taking kick scooter from park

Staff Reporter

A local woman in her seventies was arrested last week for taking a kick scooter that had been left in a Fai Chi Kei park in March, a Public Security Police (PSP) spokesperson revealed during a regular press conference yesterday.

The suspect, an unemployed woman surnamed Tam, was apprehended following an investigation into the missing property.

The incident occurred on 14 March, when a resident took their grandchild and two kick scooters to the children's playground. Upon leaving, the resident accidentally left both scooters near the slide. By the time they realised and returned to the playground, both scooters had vanished, prompting a report to the police. The owner valued the scooters at 180 patacas each.

After reviewing the citywide CCTV network, PSP officers identified Tam as the person who took one of the scooters.

The investigation also clarified the fate of the second scooter. Police confirmed it had been mistaken for abandoned waste and removed by a worker from the city's cleaning and waste collection concessionaire. After the police

spoke to the cleaning company, the cleaning company contacted the owner to explain the situation. The owner reportedly accepted the explanation and declined to hold the company liable.

On Friday, the Public Security Police (PSP) summoned Tam for questioning. She admitted to taking the kick scooter home with the intention of keeping it.

Tam has been transferred to the Public Prosecutions Office (MP) and faces a charge of theft by finding. ■



This undated handout photo released by the Public Security Police (PSP) yesterday shows two police officers escorting the elderly theft-by-finding suspect to a police station near Toi San district in the north of the peninsula.

Published since Aug 2004

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- Chatbots: DeepSeek, Gemini, Poe
- Wire services – AFP, Xinhua

Macau Weather

CLOUDY APART FROM SUNNY PERIODS. ONE OR TWO SHOWERS LATER. FORCE 3 TO 4 SOUTH TO SOUTHWESTERLY WINDS. RELATIVE HUMIDITY WILL RANGE BETWEEN 65% AND 95%.



25°C~30°C

Source: SMG

G2E Asia + Asian IR Expo kicks off 3-day run

Rui Pastorin

The G2E Asia + Asian IR Expo kicked off its three-day run yesterday with an opening ceremony at The Venetian Macao's Cotai Expo, altogether featuring over 150 brands this year, expecting over 8,000 industry professionals from more than 90 countries and regions.

G2E Asia describes itself as a leading gaming and entertainment marketplace in Asia, while the Asian IR Expo and Summit brings together stakeholders across the integrated resorts, hospitality, and travel industries throughout the region.

The brands are showcasing next generation technology, solutions and digital infrastructure, while a raft of activities are scheduled to take place through tomorrow ranging from networking opportunities to the concurrent "Asian IR Summit" and "G2E Asia Conference" to forums and keynotes.

In his opening remarks, American Gaming Association (AGA) President and CEO Bill Miller highlighted that thousands of industry leaders from around the world are gathered for the three-day event to "exchange ideas, showcase emerging products, and help shape the future of industry".

Miller noted that the event expects strong attendance in spite of the challenges impacting the exhibition landscape, such as travel restrictions, with the gaming industry continuing to perform and evolve. Highlighting the developments and opportunities in Asia,



Fairgoers explore G2E Asia + Asian IR expo's products and services at The Venetian Macao's Cotai Expo. – Photo: Rui Pastorin

Miller said: "Here in Asia, resilience has created fresh opportunities with renewed focus on non-gaming investments and broader tourism offerings, reshaping what integrated resorts can become. And the opportunities for growth continue to accelerate".

Miller also touched on the potential of non-gaming offerings and investments, noting: "What makes places like Las Vegas and Macau such dynamic and diverse destinations are the broader investments in non-gaming offerings and entertainment. Macau's non-gaming investments in sectors like technology,

health and wellness, conferences like G2E, and sports, with the upcoming UFC fight and NBA games later this fall, are all strong examples of how diversified investment can strengthen the broader gaming economy".

Meanwhile, (RX) Reed Exhibitions Project Director Vera Ng told English-language media on the sidelines of yesterday's event that among this year's over 121 exhibiting companies, more than 30 of them are new, while this year's highlights are mainly technology, AI, robotics and digital innovations and their applications in areas

including gaming, hospitality and including one that showcases a live band and mixology that utilises robots.

Ng also told the *Post*: "Innovation in technology is everywhere", being important in areas including gaming and integrated resorts, with the event being able to allow participants to explore how these new solutions and technology can enhance their operation efficiency, along with customer experience. "That's why this will be a highlight and also be important content for our event as well", also noting industry demand. ■

'Ink as Void' explores calligraphy, spatial art at Creative Macau



Macau-based artist Xi Di addresses his "Ink as Void" exhibition at the CREATIVE MACAU gallery in Nape yesterday. – Photo: Khalel Vallo

Khalel Vallo

"Ink as Void" opened at CREATIVE MACAU (CCI) in Nape yesterday, aiming to present a contemporary dialogue between calligraphy, literature and spatial art through the works of Macau-based artist Xi Di.

Blending ink, installation, video and mixed media, the exhibition reinterprets traditional calligraphy as an immersive and interactive visual experience. According to the event booklet, the exhibition positions ink as a bridge connecting text, poetry and spatial installation. Rather than treating calligraphy solely as written language, Xi transforms brushstrokes into structural and environmental elements, allowing audiences to "feel" the works as spaces to inhabit instead of merely reading them.

Addressing the opening ceremony, Xi said he had recently spent days reflecting on how artistic creation could be expressed through "different materials, different concepts and different spaces". Elaborating on one of his installations, he said the work used ink as an adhesive element, adding that words and

poems were attached to materials before being torn away, creating what he described as a "double-layered work".

He also noted that several works were created or modified directly within the exhibition space, allowing room for spontaneity and unexpected developments during the installation process.

Xi added that some of his poems were intentionally concealed within the exhibition as interactive elements for visitors to discover. "It becomes like a game space", he said, adding that "the poems can even become a platform or a red carpet for people to walk on".

Moreover, Xi thanked visitors and organisers for their support during the opening ceremony, expressing appreciation to friends and guests who attended the event.

Running through May 30, the exhibits are on display at the CREATIVE MACAU gallery on the ground floor of the Macau Cultural Centre (CCM) in Nape with free admission between Monday and Saturday, between 2 p.m. and 7 p.m.

Stay tuned for an upcoming Page 4.

Forum to explore ways to cultivate students' all-round abilities

Armindo Neves

Ma Io Fong, chairman of the Youth Association of the Chinese Educators' Association of Macau, announced yesterday that a forum will be held this Saturday at the Macau Science Centre (MSC) in Nape to explore ways of cultivating students' all-round abilities.

The association is a branch of the Chinese Educators' Association of Macau (EDUM). Ma made the announcement during a press conference held at the EDUM headquarters on Rua do Campo (水坑尾街) about the forum.

According to Ma, Macau is charging ahead with its "1+4" strategy for its appropriate economic diversification. Noting that education serves as the cornerstone of development while talent is the key to breakthroughs, Ma emphasised that basic education must align more precisely with the needs of social development to build a reservoir of diverse talent for the future.

Ma said that Saturday's forum will be committed to offering practical experience and innovative approaches, exploring how to foster students' all-round abilities to provide robust support for Macau's diversified economic growth.

According to previous reports in the *Post*, the "1+4" strategy aims to consolidate Macau's position as a (1) "World Centre of Tourism and Leisure" while prioritising the growth of four emerging industries (+4): Big Health (including traditional Chinese medicine/TCM); modern financial services, such as the development of a bond market and FinTech; High tech and innovation, specifically scientific research and the digital economy; and strengthening Macau's position as a hub for international conventions, culture, and sport.

A statement released during the press conference noted that the forum will be divided into two parts: thematic

presentations and a roundtable discussion.

The thematic presentations will feature Ma Dongying, an instructor from Guangdong Polytechnic Normal University (GPNU), and Samuel Tong Kai Chung, president of the Macau Institute of Management (MIM).

The roundtable discussion will focus on six themes: translating patriotism into a driving force for building Macau; empowering Macau's platform positioning with an international perspective; aligning soft power with the needs of new industries; fostering well-being as the foundation for sustainable talent development; driving industrial innovation through science and technology education; and promoting the professional ethics of educators in the age of AI. ■



The Youth Association of the Chinese Educators' Association of Macau Chairman Ma Io Fong delivers a speech during yesterday's press conference at the Chinese Educators' Association of Macau headquarters on Rua do Campo. – Photo: Armindo Neves



Wu presents his keynote speech at the University of Macau on Monday.



UM Centre for Macau Studies Director Agnes Lam Lok Fong (left), UM historian Paul A. Van Dyke (centre) and UM librarian Xu Hong (right) pose during Monday's on-campus event. – Photos: William Chan

UM historian donates 500 Canton & Macau photos to library

Review by William Chan

Paul A. Van Dyke, an adjunct professor at the Centre for Macau Studies (CMS), donated some 500 old photos and postcards from Canton and Macau to the University of Macau (UM) library. The donation ceremony took place on Monday morning at the university, showcasing multiple photos and postcards from Van Dyke's collection.

Canton is the old Western name of Guangzhou, the capital city of Guangdong Province.

Last May, Van Dyke also donated a set of Greater Bay Area (GBA) tourist and promotional literature. He has been a collector of GBA-related items for over 20 years, primarily through online sources, when they were still affordable and accessible before people began purchasing these books in bulk and driving up the prices.

In his keynote speech, Van Dyke noted that the photos and postcards he donated represent aspects of daily life that official documents do not show—particularly the Thirteen Hongs*, as well as the daily lives of Canton people, ships, and the rivers that served as sewage systems. Van Dyke underlined that most of the pictures were taken by foreign journalists staying in Canton.

Some photos were displayed at the ceremony, held at E34 of the university, and

will remain there for an indefinite period. Representatives at the ceremony hinted at a full exhibition in the future.

Wu Yixiong on Qing Court's clash with Canton officials over Macau

Another keynote speaker, Wu Yixiong, a history professor at Sun Yat-Sen University in Guangzhou, delivered a fascinating speech on the convergences and divergences in decision-making between the Qing Court and Canton authorities regarding Macau in the early 19th century.

He noted that the late 18th and early 19th centuries saw a major expansion in Sino-Western trade, with Guangzhou and Macau functioning as an integrated commercial system. Britain, a primary beneficiary, harboured long-standing ambitions to replace Portuguese influence and occupy Macau, driven by naval competition with France during the Napoleonic Wars, rampant piracy in the Pearl River Estuary, and broader security concerns.

Wu highlighted a key divergence in governance: Canton authorities typically handled Sino-British disputes through a "local path," resolving issues locally to protect lucrative trade revenue while bypassing Qing

laws and central government oversight. This approach conflicted with the Qing court's emphasis on imperial dignity and security.

Wu pointed to two incidents that illustrated this tension. In 1802, Britain attempted to occupy Macau; the Governor-General of Canton resolved the matter locally without reporting it to the emperor. When Macau authorities secretly informed Emperor Jiaqing, the emperor was shocked, but Guangdong officials fabricated an inquiry and pressured Macau to alter its reports.

Secondly, in 1808, Britain occupied Macau for three months. The Governor-General of Canton tried suspending British trade – the strongest measure within the "local path" – but it failed. Emperor Jiaqing severely reprimanded the Governor-General, criticising him for his focus on trade revenue over imperial dignity and demanding military action, thereby invalidating the local approach. This episode revealed a fundamental discrepancy: Canton officials prioritised customs revenue, while the emperor prioritised the Celestial Empire's** dignity and security, even at the cost of trade.

Wu's speech revealed that the Qing Court and Canton authorities never resolved their fundamental disagreement over how to handle foreign threats. Local officials prioritised trade and revenue; the

emperor demanded dignity and military force. This unresolved tension weakened China's response to Western expansion and persisted until the dynasty's collapse in 1912.

**The Thirteen Hongs (also known as the Thirteen Factories or Canton Factories) were a critical neighbourhood along the Pearl River in Guangzhou. From 1757 to 1842, they served as the sole legal site for Western trade with China, operating as a controlled monopoly under the Qing emperors. It was burned in 1856 and the site was never rebuilt as a trading quarter. The English word "hong" comes from the Cantonese pronunciation of the Chinese character 行 (Mandarin: hang), which literally means "row of shops". In English, it means Chinese trading house. – DeepSeek*

*** "Celestial Empire" is an archaic, poetic, and literary term for China or the Chinese Empire. It is derived from a translation of phrases referring to the country, reflecting the traditional status of the Chinese Emperor as the "Son of Heaven" (Tianzi) within the Sinosphere. It is often associated with the concept of the Middle Kingdom (中國 - Zhōngguó), representing the idea of China as the cultural centre of the world. – Gemini*



Photos and postcards from Canton and Macau are displayed at University of Macau E34.

GEG signs talent development deal with UTM

Khalel Vallo

Integrated resort operator Galaxy Entertainment Group (GEG) said in a statement yesterday that it has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the public Macao University of Tourism (UTM) to launch a new integrated resort talent development programme.

According to the statement, the agreement was signed during the "IR Talent Empowerment Showcase and MOU Signing Ceremony" held at The Ritz-Carlton Macau in Cotai on Monday.

The collaboration introduces the "Integrated Resort Innovative Service Experts Programme" (IRISE Programme) and continues the "Experience Macao with GEG" initiative first launched in 2024, the statement said.

The statement noted that the programmes aim to strengthen industry-academia cooperation and cultivate integrated resort professionals with international perspectives and operational expertise, adding that the event was attended by representatives from the Labour Affairs Bureau (DSAL), UTM and GEG. UTM Rector Fanny Vong Chuk Kwan and GEG Group Director of Human Resources and Administration Eileen Lui Wai signed the agreement on behalf of their respective organisations.

Speaking at the ceremony, Vong said the partnership reflects a shared goal of integrating academic resources with

industry needs to cultivate professionals with technical ability, local understanding and global perspectives, the statement said, while GEG Director Philip Cheng Yee Sing said GEG's collaboration with UTM and DSAL would help align professional education with practical industry demands while supporting Macau's economic diversification and industrial upgrading.

According to the statement, the showcase also included certificate presentations for participants of the "IR Youth Development Programme", jointly organised with DSAL, as well as internal management and leadership training programmes such as the "Managers to Leaders Programme", "Senior Manager Programme" and "GEG Elite Trainer Programme".

The statement noted that these initiatives have provided training and career development opportunities for more than 500 local talents, also adding that the "Experience Macao with GEG" programme recently organised a seminar on local intangible cultural heritage in collaboration with UTM, attracting over 100 frontline team members.

The statement said that GEG will continue supporting the government's "Building Macau with Talent Training" policy through professional training initiatives and long-term talent development programmes for the integrated resort sector. ■



This handout photo provided by Galaxy Entertainment Group (GEG) yesterday shows Macao University of Tourism (UTM) Rector Fanny Vong Chuk Kwan (left) and GEG Group Director of Human Resources and Administration Eileen Lui Wai signing a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) during Monday's "IR Talent Empowerment Showcase and MOU Signing Ceremony" at The Ritz-Carlton Macau in Cotai.

HK pins focus on life sciences, embodied intelligence in AI push

HONG KONG – Hong Kong will establish a committee on AI+ and industry development strategy to formulate strategies for driving industrial transformation through AI, with initial focus on life and health technology and embodied intelligence, John Lee Ka-chiu, chief executive of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR), said yesterday.

Addressing the first Hong Kong embodied AI* industry summit, Lee highlighted the role of embodied AI in promoting industrial upgrading and fostering new quality productive forces, adding that Hong Kong welcomes enterprises to set up operations here to leverage the city's strengths and accelerate technological upgrading.

Lee said that the Hong Kong Artificial Intelligence Research and Development Institute is set to commence operations in the second half of the year, with the aim of boosting AI research and development, facilitating the commercialization of research outcomes, and expanding real-world application scenarios.

The institute will launch an AI technology matching platform, providing industry demand with solutions to speed up

commercialization and empower industrial development, Lee added.

Also speaking at the summit, Frederick Ma Si-hang, chairman of the Hong Kong Trade Development Council, stressed that Hong Kong boasts unique strengths of internal integration and external connectivity as well as openness and inclusiveness, making it an optimal platform for mainland innovation and tech enterprises to expand into global markets.

The summit, co-hosted by the Hong Kong China Friendship Association and robotics firm AGIBOT, aims to forge a platform for exchanges and cooperation for Hong Kong's embodied AI sector, as well as build the city into a global hub for embodied AI. – Xinhua

*The term "embodied AI" refers to artificial intelligence that has a physical body – or a virtual representation of one – enabling it to interact directly with its environment. Unlike "disembodied" AI (like chatbots or large language models that exist only as code and process text/images), embodied AI learns through physical experience and sensory feedback. Common examples of embodied AI are robotics, autonomous vehicles and simulated agents. – Gemini

MGTO targets 3 million foreign visitors

Rui Pastorin

The Macau Government Tourism Office (MGTO) is hoping for international visitor arrivals to breach the three million benchmark this year, which would be a year-on-year growth of at least 8.9 percent, aiming for an average annual growth rate of 5.0 percent or more in the years following, MGTO Deputy Director Cheng Wai Tong told reporters on the sidelines of the G2E Asia + Asian IR Expo 2026 opening ceremony at The Venetian Macao yesterday.

In the decade preceding the COVID-19 crisis, which severely affected the local tourism industry between 2020 and 2022, around three million international visitor arrivals was the norm.

Customarily, Macau's biggest visitor segment combined originates from the Chinese mainland, the Hong Kong SAR and China's Taiwan region.

In February, MGTO Director Maria Helena de Senna Fernandes said that the government this year expects the number of visitors to reach 41 million, which would be a year-on-year increase of 2.3 percent. Regarding the number of foreign visitors last year, Cheng pointed out that they exceeded 2.7 million.

In terms of efforts towards diversifying visitor sources, Cheng said that MGTO has always pursued the diversification of visitor sources, having invested more on international promotion while adding that there has been an upwards trend in international visitors compared to last year.

While previous efforts had mainly focused on Southeast and Northeast Asia, Cheng said that promotional efforts have this year



MGTO Deputy Director Cheng Wai Tong speaks with reporters on the sidelines of yesterday's opening ceremony of the G2E + Asian IR Expo at The Venetian Macao in Cotai. – Photo: Rui Pastorin

gradually expanded to Europe, having recently completed a roadshow in Spain. He noted while there were plans to develop the Middle Eastern source market, given the current situation, it still needed to be monitored. He added that MGTO will also explore other markets such as Central Asia and India.

Cheng also said that the government was exploring more ways to attract international visitors arriving at or visiting Hong Kong or other destinations in the Greater Bay Area (GBA), as well as major aviation hubs in the Chinese mainland like Beijing and Shanghai.

Moreover, with rising international fuel prices and the cancellation or reduction of flights worldwide, Cheng said that the government was closely monitoring the situation and would evaluate what it could do to support the aviation industry, all still being under evaluation. ■

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Head-of-state diplomacy opportunity to stabilize and refine China-US relations

China Daily Editorial

The upcoming visit to China by United States President Donald Trump presents a cherished opportunity to help stabilize and refine China-US relations at a time of growing global uncertainty.

During his talks with President Trump over phone in February, President Xi Jinping stressed that the two sides should make this year one of mutual respect, peaceful coexistence and win-win cooperation, while steering the giant ship of China-US relations steadily forward through winds and storms and accomplishing more big things and good things.

President Trump's prospective visit comes at a time when the world economy faces sluggish growth, supply chains remain under pressure, geopolitical tensions persist and financial uncertainty lingers. Against this backdrop, closer China-US coordination would help stabilize global expectations, support international markets and reinforce confidence in the global economic recovery.

Under such conditions, it is important for the two leaders to have candid and in-depth face-to-face talks to explore how the two countries can work together to properly address key international and regional issues, and advance practical cooperation, which is not only in line with the

common interests of China and the US, but also beneficial to the peace, stability and development of the wider world.

The world's two largest economies remain deeply embedded in global value chains despite the tariff war, sanctions and "de-risking" moves on the part of the US. US companies continue to rely on the Chinese market; Chinese enterprises continue to value stable trade and investment relations with the US. Even amid fierce rivalry over semiconductors and advanced technologies, neither side can escape the costs of economic estrangement. This creates space for pragmatic negotiation and cooperation.

President Xi has emphasized in his phone talks with the US leader that the two sides should adhere to the common understandings reached, enhance dialogue and communication, properly manage their differences and expand practical cooperation. China always means what it says and matches its words with actions and results. As long as both sides move in the same direction on the basis of equality, mutual respect and mutual benefit, they can find ways to address each other's concerns.

Climate governance, anti-narcotics coordination, artificial intelligence regulation, macroeconomic stabilization and crisis management all remain

areas where the two sides have shared incentives to work together.

But any sustainable stabilization requires confronting what is the political foundation of the relationship: the Taiwan question.

The Taiwan question is not simply one issue among many, but the core of China's core interests and the most sensitive red line in bilateral relations. Respect for the one-China principle and the three China-US joint communiqués is not a negotiable diplomatic preference. It is the indispensable precondition for stable ties.

US policymakers should not underestimate how fundamental the Taiwan question is to stable ties. Managing differences prudently and avoiding miscalculation on the Taiwan question is essential not only for bilateral stability, but also for peace and security in the Asia-Pacific region.

In a world facing growing uncertainty and fragmentation, maintaining stable China-US relations remains a shared responsibility of the two major countries. Strengthening communication, managing differences prudently and expanding mutually beneficial cooperation would not only serve the interests of both peoples, but also contribute positively to the world. A descent into unchecked rivalry between the world's two largest economies would benefit no one.

'Gray rhino' of Japan's remilitarization is wildly charging over regional order

China Daily Editorial

There is something revealing about the debate now convulsing Japan's ruling establishment over whether China should formally be called a "threat" in the drafting of the country's new security documents that are scheduled to be deliberated next month.

Tokyo's political class already behaves as though China is a "threat". The unresolved question is whether Japan is ready to say aloud what its policies already presume.

Officially, the Sanae Takaichi government still speaks the language of a "strategic relationship of mutual benefit" with Beijing. Japanese diplomats continue to invoke the old formula of pursuing a "constructive and stable relationship" with China. Takaichi herself insists she is trying to keep the channels of dialogue "open".

Yet governments are judged by budgets, deployments, doctrines and alliances. And on that score, Japan's trajectory does not accord with its words.

Worse, Tokyo even attempts to hold Beijing accountable for tensions in bilateral relations that are, in fact, of its own making.

Against that backdrop, the current dispute inside the Liberal Democratic Party over whether China should be labeled a "threat" resembles less a substantive policy disagreement than an exercise in political cosmetics. In 2022, Japan's National Security Strategy already described China as "the greatest strategic challenge" Japan has ever faced. In its Diplomatic Bluebook released in April, the Japanese government effectively downgraded China-Japan relations.

But the more important reality is that Tokyo's conduct has long since outrun its rhetoric.

That is why the supposedly "moderate" voices inside the Japanese establishment deserve closer scrutiny. Those warning against provocative wording targeting China might not be voicing rationality. Their concern may be with avoiding a backlash that could complicate Japan's advancing of its neo-militarism.

In other words, they object not to the destination, but to the visibility of the journey. This matters because Japan has traveled this road before.

The parallels with the ideological evolution of Japanese militarism in history are difficult to ignore. Japan's descent into catastrophe did not begin with Pearl Harbor. It started much earlier – with the gradual fusion of nationalism, historical mythmaking, elite insecurity and militarized politics. Today's rhetoric is simply old wine in a new bottle.

After all, the Takaichi government has already expanded offensive military capabilities,

promoted missile cooperation abroad, relaxed arms-export rules and openly discussed preparedness for a prolonged "emergency", including setting up a centralized, prime-minister-led command hub for intelligence gathering and analysis. Japanese officials are now pushing for restoring wartime-style military ranks inside the Self-Defense Forces.

Viewed collectively, these moves reveal something larger: the erosion of Japan's postwar system that emerged from the ashes of Japanese imperialism. That is precisely why the 80th anniversary of the opening of the Tokyo Trials – which fell on May 3 this year – matters.

The tribunal's significance was never confined to punishing individual war criminals such as Hideki Tojo. Its deeper purpose was to delegitimize the ideological machinery that had enabled militarism itself: emperor absolutism, historical revisionism, expansionist nationalism and the mythology of victimhood.

The pattern of the Takaichi government's fomenting of neo-militarism is historically familiar: cultivate fear, centralize authority, glorify sacrifice, exaggerate external threats and redefine expansion as self-defense.

In history, Japan's invasion of its neighbors obstructed the region's development; today the right-wing forces in Japan again threaten the very order on which the Asia-Pacific has prospered after the war. As Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Guo Jiakun warned yesterday, the "gray rhino" of Japan's remilitarization is charging straight toward the region.

The right-wing forces in Japan shamelessly portray the nation not as a historical aggressor requiring vigilance, but as a perpetually endangered "democracy" forced into reluctant militarization by "hostile neighbors". That narrative inversion – aggressor recast as victim – is central to their obfuscation of intent. The danger for Japan is therefore not primarily external but from within: the erosion of historical memory, the normalization of ideological nationalism and the steady abandonment of postwar restraint in favor of the romanticism of assertive "self-defense".

History rarely repeats itself precisely. But nations that convince themselves they have transcended history and therefore no longer need to reflect on it are often the ones most vulnerable to reenacting it.

– Courtesy of China Daily
*A "Grey Rhino" is a metaphor for a highly probable, high-impact threat that is clearly visible but often ignored until it is too late. – Gemini



Students learn to use a fire extinguisher in Dingxi City, Gansu Province, yesterday. A variety of activities were held across the country marking the National Disaster Prevention and Reduction Day yesterday. – Xinhua

Rural tap water coverage reaches 96 pct by end-2025

BEIJING – China's rural tap water coverage reached 96 percent by the end of 2025, the Ministry of Water Resources said yesterday.

By the end of last year, large-scale water supply projects covered 71 percent of the rural population, while 72 percent of counties had adopted unified county-level management for rural water supply, the ministry told a press conference.

China had nearly 3.82 million rural water supply projects by the end of 2025, forming a supply network covering 850 million rural residents.

The number of people relying mainly on water cellars and water storage tanks for water supply had dropped by 79 percent by the end of last year from the level at the end of the 13th Five-Year Plan period (2016-2020).

During the 14th Five-Year Plan period (2021-2025), areas lifted out of poverty completed 914.9 billion yuan in water conservancy investment, including 145.5 billion yuan in key counties receiving national rural revitalization assistance.

During the same period,

localities secured 590.28 billion yuan for rural water supply construction, with local government bonds, bank loans, social capital and other sources accounting for 80 percent of the total.

The central authorities aim to raise rural tap water coverage to 97 percent by the end of 2026, with large-scale water supply projects covering 73 percent of the rural population, according to the ministry.

By 2030, the authorities aim to lift rural tap water coverage to 98 percent. – Xinhua, MPD

Xi meets Brunei's crown prince, calling for deepening practical cooperation

BEIJING – President Xi Jinping met with Haji Al-Muhtadee Billah, the Crown Prince and Senior Minister at the Prime Minister's Office of Brunei Darussalam, in Beijing yesterday, calling for strengthening strategic communication and deepening practical cooperation.

China and Brunei are close and friendly neighbors, with the Maritime Silk Road binding the two countries together, Xi said, adding that the cooperation between the two countries has not only delivered tangible benefits to the two peoples, but also set a good example of equal treatment and win-win cooperation between countries of different sizes.

The important consensus to build a China-Brunei community with a shared future, reached with Sultan of Brunei Haji Hassanal Bolkhiah Mu'izzaddin Waddaulah

last year, has opened a new chapter in bilateral relations, Xi said.

This year marks the 35th anniversary of bilateral ties, Xi said, adding that faced with a turbulent and changing international landscape, the two sides should take the building of a China-Brunei community with a shared future as the guideline, to strengthen strategic communication, deepen practical cooperation, and inject more positive energy into regional peace and stability.

This year marks the beginning of China's 15th Five-Year Plan period (2026-2030), while Brunei is forging ahead toward its Wawasan 2035, Xi pointed out. He called on both sides to take this as a point of convergence to push China-Brunei cooperation to a new height.

China and Brunei should be

strategic partners with a high-level mutual trust, and continue to firmly support each other, Xi said, stressing that both sides should be development partners pursuing mutual benefit and win-win outcomes, advance major flagship cooperation projects, and expand cooperation in emerging fields such as artificial intelligence (AI) and the digital economy.

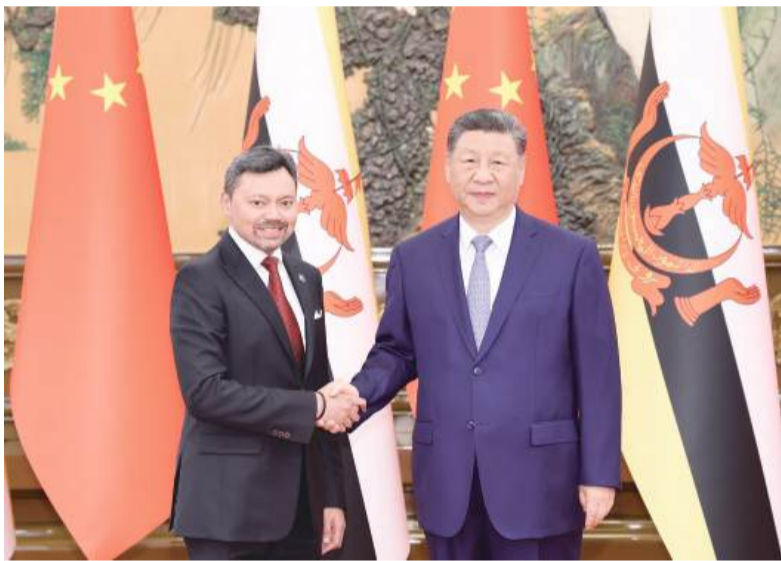
China and Brunei should be partners bonded by civilization, jointly implement the Global Civilization Initiative, and foster closer people-to-people and cultural exchanges, Xi said.

Xi also called on both sides to be partners in global governance and work with ASEAN countries to build a closer China-ASEAN community with a shared future, turning the region into a benchmark of peace, stability, development, and prosperity amidst profound changes unseen in a century.

Billah conveyed the sincere greetings from the Brunei's Sultan to President Xi. He said Brunei firmly abides by the one-China policy.

China has played a key role in promoting world peace and stability, upholding multilateralism and the international order, the crown prince said, adding that Brunei highly appreciates the vision of building a community with a shared future for humanity and the Global Governance Initiative, both proposed by Xi.

Brunei looks forward to working closely with China to deepen ASEAN-China cooperation and safeguard regional prosperity and stability, Billah said. – Xinhua



President Xi Jinping (right) shakes hands with Haji Al-Muhtadee Billah, the Crown Prince and Senior Minister at the Prime Minister's Office of Brunei Darussalam, at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing yesterday. Haji Al-Muhtadee Billah is on an official visit to China. – Xinhua

Xi meets UNESCO chief

BEIJING – President Xi Jinping met with Khaled El-Enany, director-general of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), in Beijing yesterday.

Xi emphasized that UNESCO has made important contributions to greater understanding and trust among peoples and exchanges and mutual learning among civilizations, and played a proactive role in reforming and improving global governance on education, science and culture.

China actively supports the work of UNESCO, and the two sides have done many things for safeguarding world peace and promoting global development, Xi said, expressing China's readiness to deepen strategic cooperation with UNESCO to better benefit people of all countries.

Xi said global governance has come to a new fork in the road, underlining that China is committed to practicing true multilateralism, supports and upholds the authority of the United Nations, and supports UNESCO in playing an important role in global governance.

China is ready to work with UNESCO to implement the four global initiatives, enable people of all countries to share in the progress

in education, science and culture, better respond to the common challenges facing human society, and jointly build a community with a shared future for humanity, Xi said.

Xi called on the two sides to deepen cooperation in areas such as artificial intelligence (AI), open science and digital education, advocate respect for the diversity of civilizations, promote mutual respect and harmonious coexistence among different civilizations, strengthen cooperation with the Global South countries, and promote cultural heritage preservation and cultural exchanges and mutual learning.

El-Enany said he hopes to bring all member states together, promote dialogue, cooperation, mutual understanding and mutual learning among cultures.

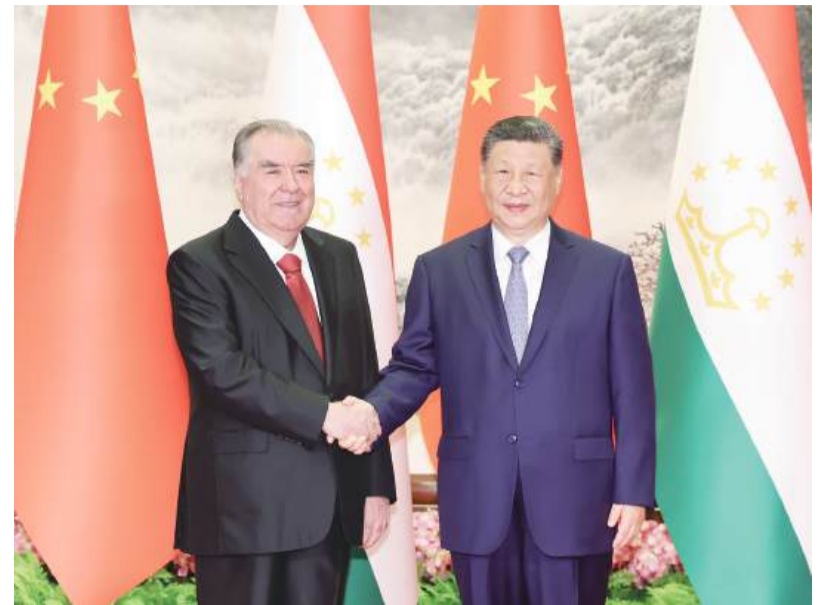
Expressing his thanks to China for the long-term, strong support to UNESCO, El-Enany said UNESCO looks forward to strengthening coordination with China to improve global educational and cultural development, promote exchanges in science and technology, deepen cooperation on AI, jointly implement the four global initiatives, and bring greater benefits to humanity.

– Xinhua



President Xi Jinping (right) meets with Khaled El-Enany, director-general of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing yesterday. – Xinhua

Xi holds talks with Tajik president



President Xi Jinping shakes hands with Tajikistan's President Emomali Rahmon, who is on a state visit to China, at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing yesterday. – Xinhua

BEIJING – President Xi Jinping held talks with Tajikistan's President Emomali Rahmon in Beijing yesterday.

Regardless of how the external environment may change, China and Tajikistan will always be good neighbors that help each other, good friends who trust each other, and good partners who work together for development, Xi said.

By signing the China-Tajikistan treaty of permanent good-neighborliness and friendly cooperation, the two sides will fully showcase their strong political mutual trust and provide a solid guarantee for the enduring friendship between the two nations, Xi said.

He called on both sides to focus on high-quality Belt and Road (B&R) cooperation, thoroughly align their development strategies, and work together to advance their respective development goals.

Xi said the two sides should enhance the scale and quality of trade and investment, and also ensure the implementation of key projects, expand cooperation in green energy, digital economy, smart cities, artificial intelligence (AI) and other areas, and boost scientific and technological innovation.

Both sides need to enhance cooperation on law enforcement and security, take firm action against the "three evil forces" of terrorism, extremism and separatism, and work together to maintain regional stability, he said.

China welcomes Tajikistan to join the International Organization for Mediation (IOM), and stands ready to strengthen cooperation in the United Nations, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), the China-Central Asia mechanism and other frameworks, Xi said. – Xinhua

German state minister calls for more cooperation with Chinese automakers

BERLIN – A senior German state official has called for a more pragmatic approach in cooperation with Chinese automakers, suggesting joint ventures and other forms of partnership to help safeguard industrial capacity and jobs in Germany's struggling auto sector.

Dirk Panter, economy minister of the German state of Saxony, said Chinese manufacturers can help utilize underused production lines at car plants in the state, at a time when Germany's automotive industry faces mounting pressure from a slowing electric vehicle (EV) transition.

"China is an opportunity," Panter said in a statement published by Saxony's economy ministry on Monday.

Panter said a joint venture between Volkswagen (VW) and Chinese automakers is one possible model, under which Chinese partners can produce vehicles using currently underutilized facilities in Saxony. He stressed he is not proposing a sale of any plant, but cooperation within existing or new joint ventures in which Volkswagen already holds a stake.

Located in eastern Germany, Saxony has been one of the country's key automotive manufacturing hubs, hosting production sites for auto giants such as Volkswagen, BMW and Porsche.

Volkswagen's plant in Zwickau, the group's first factory fully converted to EV production, has faced capacity pressures amid weaker-than-expected EV demand in Europe. Under current plans, output on one production line is set to halt entirely from 2027.

Rather than allowing Germany's auto industry to lose industrial capabilities during the current transition, Panter said policymakers should adapt to changing market realities and preserve existing manufacturing capacity and production systems.

He noted that such cooperation with Chinese partners is not a novel concept, pointing out that German automakers including Volkswagen have long operated through joint ventures in China.

Panter also said the global automotive landscape is undergoing profound change and that China has emerged as an innovation driver and industry leader in EVs and battery technologies, with Chinese automakers and their joint venture partners already producing vehicles in some European countries.

"Anyone who wants to secure the future of the automotive industry in Saxony and Germany cannot ignore this reality," he said. – Xinhua

'Seeds of instability': Health disinfo targets Marcos

Ara Eugenio

MANILA – Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos last month jogged out of his office and broke into impromptu jumping jacks in an attempt to dispel rumours he was paralysed, dying of late-stage cancer, or dead.

While largely played for laughs, the government lodged complaints against several Facebook accounts and warned tech giant Meta it faced legal action should it fail to curb disinformation it labelled an “escalating” threat to national security.

Since the 68-year-old leader’s January hospitalisation for diverticulitis – an inflammation in the colon – social media has been awash with speculation he was more ill than publicised.

The posts have circulated widely among supporters of Marcos’ archival and 2028 presidential candidate, Vice President Sara Duterte, whose Monday impeachment has thrown her run into doubt.

AFP’s fact-checkers have tracked hundreds of posts on

Facebook, TikTok and X – some racking up tens of thousands of shares – of old or edited visuals as proof of the president’s ailing health.

The narrative has sown “seeds of instability” in his presidency and largely benefited Duterte, Jean Franco, a political science professor at the University of the Philippines, told AFP.

It also leans heavily into the Marcos family’s history of medical secrecy.

The president’s father and namesake, sick with kidney disease during the final years of his dictatorship, once lifted his shirt on national television to show he bore no transplant scars.

“Just like his father”, one Facebook user wrote in a post speculating Marcos had died in April.

'Who died?'

The president’s assurances that his diagnosis was non-life-threatening have done little to allay the rumours.

When he skipped an event in early April, speculation that he was ill or dead – including a years-old photo of a Philippine flag flying at half mast – flooded social media.

The flag photo was shared by former broadcaster-turned-social media presence Jay Sonza, who campaigned for the Marcos-Duterte ticket during the pair’s brief 2022 alliance but has since posted exclusively for the vice president.

“Who died?” one curious commenter asked under Sonza’s flag post, with others claiming it was Marcos. “Hope VP Sara steps in to govern this country,” said another.

Sonza was arrested by the National Bureau of Investigation (NBI) about two weeks later on charges of cyberlibel and “unlawful publication”, alleging he fabricated medical records about the president.

With his client now free on bail, Sonza’s lawyer has labelled the detention “intimidation”.

Marcos’ communications office, meanwhile, lauded the arrest, having earlier announced it had filed

complaints against three Facebook accounts with the country’s justice department.

'Panic-inducing' content

Numerous posts have also accused the media of colluding with the administration to keep details of his health secret.

One altered image – shared in a page with 80,000 followers called “President Duterte News” – alleged that major broadcaster GMA News was part of a cover-up.

That framing, repeated across multiple Facebook pages, is intended to “further erode trust in legitimate media”, said Yvonne Chua, who teaches journalism at the University of the Philippines.

“They reinforce the broader narrative that mainstream media cannot be trusted and is aligned with those in power,” Chua told AFP.

Marcos’ government has since demanded that Facebook owner Meta take down “panic-inducing” content on the platform, where Filipinos rank among the world’s heaviest users.

The content poses “a direct and escalating threat to public order, economic confidence, and national security”, the government said, without spelling out what legal action it might take.

Meta, one of the companies that pays AFP to fact-check posts with potentially false information, has not responded to multiple requests for comment.

More than a dozen “fake news” bills, meanwhile, have been floated in the Philippine Congress, including one sponsored by Marcos’s son Sandro, a high-ranking House member.

For Franco, government lawsuits and pressure tactics risked a “chilling effect” on people who want to criticise the government.

Constitutional law professor Paolo Tamase agreed, saying that instead of invoking “national security”, the government might best be served by a “pro-transparency reading of the public’s right to information”.

“Disclosures take the oxygen out of any baseless rumour,” he said. –AFP

Duterte’s drug war enforcer urges Marcos to block ICC arrest

MANILA – Former Philippine leader Rodrigo Duterte’s top drug war enforcer said yesterday he would never surrender to an international court, while pleading for current President Ferdinand Marcos to intervene on his behalf.

Ronald Dela Rosa, a sitting senator and former police chief, has taken refuge in the Senate since narrowly escaping government agents attempting to serve him an International Criminal Court (ICC) warrant tied to his role in the bloody drug crackdown during Duterte’s presidency.

In a copy of the warrant issued in November but made public only late Monday, Dela Rosa, better known by his nickname “Bato”, is accused of the crime against humanity of murder along with Duterte and other co-perpetrators.

“I wish (Marcos) would not send me to The Hague” but to “any court in the Philippines”, Dela Rosa told reporters yesterday as more than 100 riot police stood guard outside the Senate building.

“If I have committed something, I will answer for it here, not in a foreign country. That’s my appeal to him.”

Dela Rosa’s former boss, who was president from 2016 to 2022, was arrested in Manila in March last year and flown to the Netherlands that same night. Duterte has been held at the ICC’s detention unit at Scheveningen Prison awaiting trial.

Since then, Dela Rosa has frequently condemned the arrest and rendition while stating he believed he was next.

Duterte faces three counts of crimes against humanity, with prosecutors alleging his involvement in at least 76 murders between 2013 and 2018.

The true number of killings during his campaign in the Philippines is



Riot police (front) block supporters of former president Rodrigo Duterte and Senator Ronald dela Rosa in front of the Senate gate in Manila yesterday, after the International Criminal Court (ICC) issued an arrest warrant for dela Rosa. Philippine authorities said they would not arrest for now a lawmaker wanted by the International Criminal Court for his alleged role in ex-president Rodrigo Duterte’s drug war, capping a lengthy Senate standoff. –AFP

thought to be in the thousands, and lawyers for the victims have argued that a full trial could encourage more families to come forward.

In a statement yesterday, a Marcos spokeswoman said the president would “not interfere in the decisions of the Senate”, while declining to discuss the details of the warrant against Dela Rosa.

“Everything that happens in the Senate is within their power,” Claire Castro said.

Dela Rosa’s defence team, meanwhile, has filed an injunction with the country’s Supreme Court, seeking judicial protection from what they called a “coordinated” enforcement strategy against him.

'Avoiding arrest'

The senator had not been seen publicly since November before emerging on Monday to take part in an unexpected vote that helped Duterte loyalists capture control of the Senate.

Video released by the legislative body showed Dela Rosa being

chased through the halls of the upper chamber by National Bureau of Investigation (NBI) officers.

Yesterday, NBI director Melvin Matibag told reporters Dela Rosa had travelled to the Senate in the car of a fellow lawmaker, then bolted when approached by two agents attempting to serve a warrant.

He also denied that Dela Rosa had been “tackled and wrestled”, saying the senator had tripped on the stairs while being pursued.

“He was literally avoiding arrest,” Matibag said. “I was asked why there was a chase. I said he ran, that’s why we chased him.”

Newly elected Senate President Alan Peter Cayetano told reporters on Monday that Dela Rosa was under the Senate’s protection.

“We will allow an arrest under the condition that it is a Philippine court,” Cayetano said.

Asked yesterday if he would submit to an arrest warrant by a local court, Dela Rosa said: “We will cross the bridge when we get there.” –AFP

Emperor penguins in focus as Antarctic talks start in Japan

TOKYO – Greater protections for endangered emperor penguins and how to manage growing tourism will top the agenda at talks on Antarctica that opened in Japan yesterday.

The annual meeting comprises the original 12 nations that signed the Antarctic Treaty – which now has 58 parties – as well as 17 others that conduct substantial research activity there.

The continent and its abundant wildlife are protected under the 1959 treaty, which designates it as a land of science and peace, while freezing territorial claims.

“The discussions taking place here in Hiroshima are especially important at a time when Antarctica is increasingly affected by global challenges such as climate change,” Francisco Berguno, executive secretary of the Antarctic Treaty Secretariat, told a news conference.

Berguno warned the continent “plays a critical role in regulating the Earth’s climate and oceans,” and urged “long-term thinking, careful management, and international trust”.

“Decisions taken here help ensure that human activity in Antarctica remains carefully managed, environmentally responsible and scientifically driven,” he added.

Around 400 government officials and researchers from some 50 countries, including the United States, China, Russia and Ukraine, will take part in the meeting, according to Jiji Press.

Among the most closely watched issues this year will be the status of emperor penguins, which last month the International Union

for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) declared endangered.

Conservation group WWF is urging the animal be designated a specially protected species at the Hiroshima meeting, which could put restrictions on shipping and tourism that are adding pressure to the penguins.

Their numbers have plummeted primarily due to climate change that causes the sea ice where they live, hunt and breed to break up earlier in the year.

“The emperor penguin represents Antarctica, like the polar bear represents the Arctic,” Heidi Weiskel, head of the IUCN delegation, told AFP.

“It’s one of the first species IUCN has assessed under the Red List criteria where all the data gathered point to climate change as the main driver.”

But it was unclear if the meeting can reach consensus on upgrading protections, with some sources saying a decision was unlikely in Hiroshima.

Also high on the agenda will be a sharp rise in tourists – almost 120,000 visited Antarctica in 2024-25 – and delegates will mull potential restrictions on areas or activities, as well as possible quotas.

Experts warn existing frameworks do not take into account the increasing diversity of touristic activity in the region, from kayaking and hot air ballooning, to motorbiking.

“How to regulate and manage tourism in Antarctica has become a key issue,” said Hideki Uyama of Japan’s foreign affairs ministry, who will chair the meeting.

–AFP

14 missing, 23 rescued after migrant boat sinks off Malaysia

KUALA LUMPUR – A boat carrying 37 undocumented migrants believed to be from Indonesia sank off Pangkor island on Malaysia's west coast, leaving 14 people still missing, maritime authorities said.

The Malaysian Maritime Enforcement Agency (MMEA) in Perak said it was alerted early Monday by a local fisherman who found the survivors floating at sea.

"Initial investigations... found that the total number of migrants on the boat was 37. So far, 23 victims have been rescued while efforts are ongoing to locate the remaining individuals," Mohamad Shukri Khotob, Perak MMEA director, said in a statement issued late Monday night.

"Preliminary investigations also found that they (the migrants) departed from Kisaran, Indonesia, on May 9 and... headed for several

destinations in Malaysia, including Penang, Terengganu, Selangor and Kuala Lumpur," Mohamad Shukri added.

He said the agency has deployed boats, a helicopter and surveillance aircraft to search for the missing.

Those who were rescued have been handed over to the police for further investigation.

Relatively affluent Malaysia is home to millions of migrants from poorer parts of Asia, many of them undocumented, working in industries including construction and agriculture.

But the crossings, facilitated by human trafficking syndicates, are often hazardous leading to boats capsizing.

In one of the deadliest recent incidents, 36 migrants died in November 2025 after their boat capsized near the Thai-Malaysian coast.

– AFP



This handout picture taken and released by the Malaysian Maritime Enforcement Agency (MMEA) yesterday shows survivors sitting after being rescued during a search and rescue operation off the coast of Pangkor Island in Perak, after a boat carrying migrants capsized.

– AFP

Afghanistan detains 2 TV journalists

KABUL – Afghan authorities said yesterday they had arrested two Afghan journalists from leading private channel TOLONews, with media rights groups calling for their release.

TOLONews said in a post on X on Sunday that two of their journalists, Imran Danish and Mansoor Niazi, had been detained in Kabul.

"Security officials, in talks with TOLONews, have said that details on this matter will be shared after the relevant legal procedures," the media outlet said.

The information and culture ministry said that "a few days ago, two TOLONews journalists were arrested by security agencies".

"Their case is under investigation. The court has not ruled yet," ministry spokesman Khobaib Ghofran said in a statement, without specifying the reasons for their arrest.

Advocacy group the Committee to Protect Journalists, in an X post yesterday, called on Afghanistan's Taliban authorities to "immediately and unconditionally release the detained journalists and ensure

the press can operate without interference".

Afghanistan Media Support Organisation, a local watchdog, expressed "deep concerns" over the arrests in a statement issued on Sunday, deploring the lack of "precise information... regarding the reasons for their arrests or their whereabouts".

"The arrest of Mr Danish and Mr Niazi demonstrates that there are no guarantees for the safety of journalists and media outlets," the group said.

"Even media organisations that attempt to adapt their activities to the current environment are still not safe from arbitrary arrests and pressure."

According to the Afghan watchdog, six other journalists are currently detained by the Taliban authorities.

"In the absence of... clearly defined charges, the detention of Mansoor Niazi, Imran Danish and the other six imprisoned journalists must end immediately," it said.

Afghanistan ranks 175 on 180 on the Reporters Without Borders World Press Freedom Index. – AFP

Sri Lanka's ex-president grilled over Airbus bribery claims

COLOMBO – Anti-corruption investigators questioned Sri Lanka's former president Mahinda Rajapaksa yesterday over allegations that he received kickbacks linked to an Airbus plane deal.

Rajapaksa, 80, faced questions for more than two hours from the Bribery Commission in Colombo, where thousands of supporters gathered outside the premises.

The probe centres on claims that funds from a multi-million-dollar deal involving European aircraft manufacturer Airbus were channelled to senior Sri Lankan officials.

A spokesman for Rajapaksa denied the allegations and the former leader has repeatedly dismissed corruption claims against him as politically motivated.

The former chief executive of SriLankan Airlines, Kapila Chandrasena, told investigators in March that he handed nearly half a million dollars in kickbacks to Rajapaksa, according to officials.

He was found dead at a relative's home on Friday, shortly before he was due to be rearrested. The cause of his death has not yet been established.

Chandrasena, 61, was arrested



Sri Lanka's former president Mahinda Rajapaksa leaves after appearing before the Commission to Investigate Allegations of Bribery or Corruption (CIABOC) in Colombo yesterday in connection with the investigation into the controversial 2013 Airbus procurement deal involving SriLankan Airlines.

– AFP

in March and had been released on bail last week.

His wife, who is also a co-accused in the case, has reportedly fled the country.

A joint investigation by US, British and French authorities previously found Airbus had agreed to pay about US\$16 million in bribes in Sri Lanka, with US\$1.7 million routed to Chandrasena before the scandal was uncovered.

The payments were linked to a US\$2.3 billion deal for SriLankan Airlines to purchase 10 Airbus

aircraft that required cabinet approval during Rajapaksa's presidency from 2005 to 2015.

According to submissions made in court, Chandrasena initially told investigators he had paid Rajapaksa 60 million rupees (US\$461,000 at the time) in three instalments in 2013. He later retracted the statement, claiming it had been made under pressure.

SriLankan Airlines, once a flagship state carrier, has accumulated losses estimated at 596 billion rupees, and repeated attempts to privatise the debt-laden airline have failed. – AFP

Vitamins over vaccines: misinformation entrenched amid Indonesia measles surge

Dessy Sagita

JAKARTA – A surge in measles cases in Indonesia has made stay-at-home mother Fitri Fransiskha uneasy – but not enough to vaccinate her four children against the highly contagious and deadly virus.

The 40-year-old is one of a growing number of parents in the world's fourth most populous country to spurn infant inoculations, even as the government rushes to quell a public health crisis.

Fitri's fears – sparked when her first-born contracted a fever after receiving the tuberculosis jab as a baby – were fuelled by misinformation circulating on social media about vaccines causing paralysis, behavioural problems, or worse.

"Posts like that worried me, and it made me think my decision not to vaccinate my children was probably the right one," she told AFP by phone from Java island's westernmost province of Banten.

The phenomenon has become an issue as the number of measles cases in Indonesia has soared, becoming the second-highest in the world behind only war-torn Yemen, according to the Indonesian Paediatrics Association.

More than 8,000 suspected cases and 10 deaths were recorded in the first three months of 2026, according to official data.

Cases more than doubled from 2024 to over 63,000 last year, resulting in 69 deaths.

Once nearing elimination globally, measles "has returned as a significant public health threat" in the country, according to a paper published in the *Indonesian Journal of Internal Medicine* in January.

"As a mother, of course I'm nervous. But I try to keep (my children) healthy by giving them nutritious food and vitamins," Fitri said.

'Outspoken' anti-vaxxers

"A lot of anti-vaccine sentiment... emerged in urban areas" due to disinformation, legislator Putih Sari warned last month, cautioning parliament to be "mindful".

Anti-vaccine rhetoric was found on almost all of the country's main social media platforms according to a study last month by Indonesian data firm Drone Emprit, with the number of people exposed "quite large", the firm's founder Ismail Fahmi said.

"Anti-vaxxers, though smaller in number, are usually... more outspoken than those who are pro-vaccine," he said, adding many influencers used their platforms to sell unproven herbal remedies as alternatives.

AFP's fact-checking team in March debunked harmful claims spreading online in Indonesia that getting sick with measles confers better protection than vaccines.

The result of the misinformation has been that "our herd immunity has been compromised", said Riris Andono Ahmad, an epidemiologist from Gadjah Mada University in Yogyakarta.

Herd immunity is achieved when enough people in a given population have been vaccinated against an infectious disease to prevent its easy spread.

For many in the Muslim-majority nation – where pigs are "haram" or forbidden – the hesitancy is religious, as certain vaccines contain porcine-derived components.

Entrepreneur Yusran, 46, has not vaccinated any of his five children due to his concern that the ingredients are not "halal" or permissible in Islam.

"Even without the vaccine, my children are just fine, thank God; they are healthy," Yusran, who requested to be identified by one name, told AFP in Makassar, South Sulawesi.

The Indonesian Ulema Council, the country's most authoritative Islamic body, issued a fatwa in 2018 declaring vaccines permissible for the sake of population health even if they contain porcine gelatine.

'Dropped a lot'

With a target to eradicate measles and rubella this year, the Indonesian government in March launched an emergency mass vaccination campaign in around 100 of the country's more than 500 regencies and cities.

This includes measles and rubella (MR) booster shots for more than 220,000 health workers.

The government is working with religious organisations to encourage people to inoculate their offspring, director of immunisation Indri Yogyaswari told reporters.

Measles spread "has dropped a lot" as a result of the campaign, she said.

But last year, Indonesia saw a 10 percentage point drop in the number of infants receiving a first dose of the MR vaccine from 2024, according to the health ministry.

But the goal of eradication appears out of reach with just over three-quarters of children receiving both doses of the MR vaccine, according to Riris – a far cry from the 95 percent required to achieve herd immunity. – AFP

US cost of Iran war nearing US\$29 billion: Pentagon

Frankie Taggart

WASHINGTON, DC – The Pentagon said yesterday that the cost of the war with Iran had climbed to nearly US\$29 billion, as President Donald Trump faced mounting scrutiny over the conflict and its impact on military readiness.

The new figure, revealed by the Defence Department during a budget hearing on Capitol Hill, is about US\$4 billion higher than the estimate offered by Defence Secretary Pete Hegseth two weeks ago.

Hegseth and General Dan Caine, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, were testifying on a US\$1.5 trillion budget request for 2027 alongside Pentagon finance chief Jules Hurst III when they were asked for an update on the war's price tag.

"At the time of testimony... it was US\$25 billion," Hurst told lawmakers, referring to Hegseth's April 29 estimate.

"But the joint staff team and the comptroller team are constantly looking at that estimate, and so now we think it's closer to 29 [billion]," he said – citing updated

"repair and replacement of equipment costs" and broader operational expenses.

Pressed on when Congress would receive a fuller accounting of the war's costs, Hegseth said the administration would request "whatever we think we need" separately from the main Pentagon budget, but did not say when that supplemental request would arrive.

The testimony came as a fragile US-Iran ceasefire appeared increasingly shaky, with Trump warning on Monday that the truce was on "life support" after rejecting Tehran's latest peace proposal.

Democrats used the hearing to hammer the administration over both the ballooning cost of the war and what they described as a lack of transparency about US objectives.

"The question must be answered at the end: what have we accomplished and at what cost?" asked Rosa DeLauro, the top Democrat on the House Appropriations Committee.

'Lack of transparency'

Fellow Democrat Betty McCollum accused the Pentagon of a "consistent lack

of transparency" and demanded more clarity about the administration's long-term strategy before Congress approves additional funding.

The war has intensified concerns over rapidly depleting US weapons stockpiles after months of heavy missile and air-defence operations in the Middle East.

Hegseth dismissed warnings that the conflict had dangerously drained US munitions reserves.

"The munitions issue has been foolishly and unhelpfully overstated," he said. "We know exactly what we have. We have plenty of what we need."

Democratic Senator Mark Kelly warned over the weekend that inventories of Tomahawk missiles, Patriot interceptors and other advanced systems had been severely drawn down and could take years to replenish, potentially weakening US readiness in any future confrontation with China.

The hearings marked Hegseth's first appearance on Capitol Hill since the White House formally notified Congress that hostilities launched by the United States and Israel against

Iran on February 28 had "terminated."

Democrats have repeatedly been blocked by the Republicans as they have introduced measures to rein in Trump's Iran war powers, accusing the president of waging war without proper congressional authorisation.

Hegseth and Caine faced a second round of questioning before a Senate panel after their House appearance, and there were protesters at both hearings.

In the Senate, an Iranian-American activist interrupted Hegseth's opening statement to call out: "If you approve this budget, you will be complicit in the war crimes of this administration."

Senators raised questions about the Trump administration's plan to withdraw 5,000 troops from Germany, which has faced bipartisan pushback.

Hegseth did not comment directly on Washington's relations with Berlin, but said: "It's not the troops. It's the capitals of those militaries that limit what they're able to do, where they're able to go, who they're able to fight, that create limits on our own." – AFP



Beachgoers relax in the southern Lebanese city of Tyre yesterday as across the bay in the hills southwards smoke rises following Israeli bombardment on the village of Qlaileh. Israel has intensified its attacks in south Lebanon as it trades fire with Iran-backed Hezbollah despite an April 17 ceasefire between Israel and Lebanon that aimed to halt the fighting. – AFP

Israel passes law establishing military tribunal for Oct 7 perpetrators

JERUSALEM – Israel's parliament has passed a law establishing a special military tribunal to try Palestinian militants accused of taking part in Hamas's October 7, 2023 attacks, with the authority to hand down the death penalty.

The bill received support from coalition and opposition lawmakers, with 93 voting in favour late on Monday and none of the parliament's 120 members voting against.

The special court will try attackers captured during or after the Hamas-led onslaught. It will also try those suspected of holding or abusing hostages in Gaza.

According to Israeli media, around 400 suspects are expected to stand trial before the court.

Hamas's attack resulted in the deaths of 1,221 people on the Israeli side, the majority of them civilians, according to an AFP tally based on official data, making it the deadliest day in Israel's history.

Militants also took 251 people hostage, including 44 who were already dead.

Israel's retaliatory military campaign has devastated the Gaza Strip and killed more than 72,000 people, according to the territory's health ministry, which operates under Hamas authority and whose figures are considered reliable by the UN.

The special military court, which will sit in Jerusalem, will have the jurisdiction to try the accused under any law, including offences under the Prevention of Genocide Law, the Penal Code, and the Counter-Terrorism Law, according to the legislation.

The public will have access to the hearings, with some portions also to be broadcast.

Under the tribunal, the accused could be convicted of crimes for which the death penalty exists in Israel.

The last person to be executed in Israel was the Nazi Holocaust perpetrator Adolf Eichmann in 1962.

The new legislation is separate from a law passed in March that would make the death penalty the default punishment for

Palestinians in the Israeli-occupied West Bank who are found guilty of carrying out deadly attacks deemed "acts of terrorism" by an Israeli military court.

'Show trials'

Monday's legislation specifies that no person suspected, accused or convicted of offences committed during the October 7 attacks would be included in prisoner exchange deals.

Rights groups have raised concerns about the law.

"Survivors of the October 7 attacks and victims' families deserve justice, not vengeance in the form of show trials and mass executions based on confessions extracted through torture," Sari Bashi, executive director of the Public Committee Against Torture, said in a statement.

Lawmaker Simcha Rothman, who co-sponsored the bill and whose far-right party is part of the governing coalition, called it a "historic framework designed to do justice and bring to trial the terrorists who carried out the worst massacre in the country's history".

Yulia Malinovsky, an opposition politician who also sponsored the bill, said in a statement there would be "an orderly legal process, recorded and broadcast".

"These will be the trials of the modern Nazis, and this will enter the history books. I dedicate this law to all the murdered, the abducted, and their families," she said in a statement.

Hamas political bureau member Bassem Naim slammed the legislation.

"This law represents a dangerous escalation and a new crime added to the occupation's record of war crimes and systematic violations against our Palestinian people," he told AFP, warning of "serious repercussions of this racist law".

Three Palestinian prisoner organisations also condemned the legislation, and called in a statement to "dismantle the Israeli military court system, which is used as a tool of oppression and colonial control." – AFP

Israeli sex abuse of Palestinian inmates 'widespread': NYT

WASHINGTON, DC – A *New York Times* report has said that sexual violence by Israeli prison guards, soldiers, settlers and interrogators against Palestinian detainees is "widespread".

The investigation published on Monday is based on testimonies gathered in the occupied West Bank from 14 men and women who said that they had been sexually assaulted by Israeli settlers or members of the security forces.

Israel's foreign ministry strongly rejected the *NYT* report, describing it as being part of "a false and well-orchestrated anti-Israel campaign".

Israeli forces have detained thousands of Palestinians in the West Bank since Hamas's October 7, 2023 attack, which triggered Israel's offensive in Gaza.

The report by Nicholas Kristof, a columnist at the *NYT*, described "a pattern of widespread Israeli sexual violence against men, women and even children – by soldiers, settlers, interrogators in the Shin Bet internal security agency and, above all, prison guards".

According to the report, "there is no evidence that Israeli leaders order rapes."

However, it cited a United Nations report released in March last year that describes sexual violence as one of Israel's "standard operating procedures".

One of the cited victims spoke of how he was sexually assaulted with a rubber baton and

another on how he was left screaming in pain after a woman guard squeezed his genitals.

Israeli authorities ordered prisoners to remain silent about their treatment upon their release, it added.

"Conservative social norms also inhibit discussion," it said, citing two victims who said that admitting to having been raped would hinder his sisters' and daughters' chances of finding a husband.

Israel's foreign ministry called the report "one of the worst blood libels ever to appear in the modern press".

"In an unfathomable inversion of reality, and through an endless stream of baseless lies, propagandist Nicholas Kristof turns the victim into the accused," it said in a statement on X.

A report released yesterday by an independent Israeli investigative commission concluded that Hamas and its allies committed "systematic, widespread" sexual violence during the October 7 attack and against hostages they took back to Gaza.

Hamas has repeatedly denied the accusations since 2023.

In February, the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) condemned what it described as "systematic abuse", including sexual violence, against Palestinian journalists in Israeli prisons between October 2023 and January 2026.

An Israeli military spokesperson at the time said that detainees were treated "in accordance with international law". – AFP

US consumer inflation hits 3-year high fuelled by Iran war

Asad Hashim

WASHINGTON, DC – Consumer inflation in the United States hit a three-year high in April, with the economic fallout of US President Donald Trump's Iran war rippling through the world's largest economy.

The consumer price index (CPI) rose 3.8 percent year-on-year, up from March's 3.3 percent figure, the US Bureau of Labour Statistics (BLS) said yesterday.

Affordability has been a key political concern for Trump, and the stubbornly high prices – fuelled by energy costs and roiled supply chains due to the war as well as new US tariffs – will pile pressure on his Republican Party ahead of November's mid-term elections.

The US-Israel war on Iran has engulfed the Middle East in violence since late February, with Iranian retaliatory action targeting Washington's regional allies and virtually blocking the Strait of Hormuz.

Roughly a fifth of the world's oil and natural gas passes through the waterway under normal circumstances, and the blockade has sent worldwide energy prices surging.

In April, the US price index for energy rose 17.9 percent compared to a year ago, BLS data showed, by far the largest price jump for any category.

Food prices were up 3.2 percent in April over last year, the data showed, with groceries also rising at their highest rate since 2023.

Core consumer price index (CPI) inflation, which excludes volatile food and energy prices, came in at 2.8 percent year-on-year in April, up from 2.6 percent the month before.

'Shock at the pump'

US consumers have been battered by years of higher-than-expected inflation, with policymakers struggling to achieve price stability more than five years after the pandemic began.

Trump made bringing inflation down a key promise since taking office, but has made little progress in doing so.

High fuel prices will be a core concern for voters. The average price of a gallon (3.79 litre) of regular gasoline has risen 51 percent since the start of the war, according to the AAA motor club.

Bernard Yaros, lead US economist at Oxford Economics, warned that high wholesale gasoline prices suggested that pump prices would again lift headline inflation next month.

"Consumers aren't only facing sticker shock at the pump, but also with their utility bills, as electricity prices rose sharply last month," he said.

Democratic Senator Elizabeth Warren yesterday slammed Trump over the latest inflation figures.

"Donald Trump promised to lower costs 'on day one.' Instead, he keeps raising them. First, his chaotic tariffs drove prices higher. Now, his war with Iran is pushing them up even more," she said in a statement.

'Worse before it gets better'

The US Federal Reserve has a long-term two-percent target for inflation and several policymakers at the central bank have indicated the possible need for interest rate hikes to address rising prices.

"Given that inflation is heading in the wrong direction and the labor market is holding up, it's very unlikely that the Fed will be able to lower interest rates any time soon," said Chris Zaccarelli of Northlight Asset Management.

He added that investors may begin to price in rate hikes for next year.

Kathy Bostjancic, chief economist at Nationwide, said April's inflation figures were in line with expectations, but will likely "embolden" more Federal Reserve Open Market Committee (FOMC) policymakers to push for rate hikes.

"This would increase the hurdle for the Fed to cut rates later this year, despite Kevin Warsh coming on to lead the FOMC and being more inclined to argue for rate reductions," she said.

Trump nominee Warsh was due to be confirmed as a member of the Federal Reserve board by the US Senate yesterday, with his confirmation as its chief due later this week.

Diane Swonk, chief economist at KPMG Economics, warned that the Iran war's impact on the US economy was likely to get "worse before it gets better."

"The closure of the Strait of Hormuz is more than an energy shock; it is roiling supply chains around the world in ways that echo the disruptions we saw during the pandemic," she said.

"That suggests we could continue to feel its effects well into 2027, even if the strait were to reopen tomorrow." – AFP

Starmer resists calls to quit as Labour divided

Peter Hutchison

LONDON – UK Prime Minister Keir Starmer was battling to remain in his job yesterday, as four junior ministers resigned their posts and dozens of lawmakers called for him to step down.

But more than 100 Labour members of parliament signed a statement throwing their support behind their leader, highlighting the deep divisions within the beleaguered ruling Labour party.

Starmer, in power only 22 months, told his top team in a crunch meeting that he was getting on with governing the country and dared any leadership hopefuls to challenge him.

As of 4 p.m. (local time), no senior cabinet minister had gone public to demand that the premier quit, although some have reportedly suggested to him privately that he should consider his future.

"The Labour Party has a process for challenging a leader and that has not been triggered," Starmer told ministers, as no one has yet stepped forward.

"The country expects us to get on with governing. That is what I am doing and what we must do as a cabinet," he added.

'Do the right thing'

More than 80 of Labour's 403 members of parliament have now called for Starmer to quit immediately or to set out a timetable for his departure.

Miatta Fahnbulleh yesterday became the first junior minister to resign, calling on Starmer "to do the right thing for the country and the party and set a timetable for an orderly transition".

Jess Phillips then quit as

safeguarding minister, telling Starmer in a letter that she was not seeing the change "I, and the country expect". Junior ministers Alex Davies-Jones and Zubir Ahmed followed.

Interior minister Shabana Mahmood late Monday became the most senior government figure to advise Starmer to consider his position, according to UK media.

Newspapers reported that deputy prime minister David Lammy and Yvette Cooper also had spoken to Starmer about his position.

None of them commented publicly right after the cabinet meeting.

Several cabinet ministers backed Starmer after the talks, including Defence Secretary John Healey, who warned that "more instability is not in Britain's interest".

Technology Secretary Liz Kendall said the prime minister had her "full support" while Business and Trade Secretary Peter Kyle said Starmer was "showing really steadfast leadership".

More than 100 Labour MPs signed a statement arguing that "this is no time for a leadership contest", adding that the job of winning back the trust of the electorate "needs to start today – with all of us working together to deliver the change the country needs".

Under party rules, any challenger would need the support of 81 Labour MPs – 20 percent of the party in parliament – to trigger a leadership contest.

Starmer, whose government is due to lay out more detailed legislative plans today, has vowed to contest any challenge.

A contest would likely spark damaging infighting, with MPs from

the left and right of the party battling to position their preferred candidate or shore up Starmer.

Who could succeed?

It has long been rumoured that Health Secretary Wes Streeting and former deputy prime minister Angela Rayner could try to oust Starmer.

But neither is universally popular within Labour.

Another much-touted contender, Andy Burnham, the mayor of Greater Manchester, is unable to stand as he does not have a seat in parliament.

Some of his supporters want Starmer to set a date for his departure that could allow Burnham time to become an MP first.

Pressure on Starmer has been soaring since Labour lost hundreds of councillors to the right-wing Reform UK party and left-wing Greens in last Thursday's polls.

Labour also lost its century-old dominance in Wales and took a hammering from the Scottish National Party in the devolved parliament in Edinburgh.

The results added to a miserable few months for Starmer, who has been engulfed in scandal over his decision to appoint – and then sack – Peter Mandelson, a former friend of US sex offender Jeffrey Epstein, as ambassador to Washington.

Starmer has also failed to spur promised economic growth to help British citizens suffering with the cost of living.

On Monday, he pledged that Labour would be "better" and bolder to assuage disgruntled voters impatient for change. – AFP

Russia tests long-range missile after US nuclear treaty expires

Moscow, Russia

MOSCOW – Russia yesterday tested a new long-range missile capable of carrying nuclear warheads, months after the last treaty with the United States limiting their atomic arsenals lapsed.

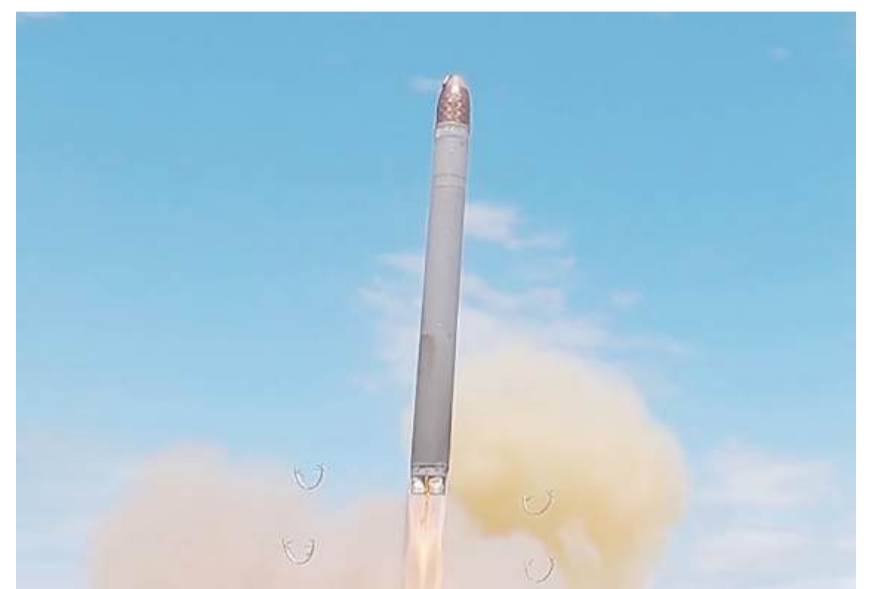
The ending of the New START agreement in February formally released the world's two largest nuclear powers from a raft of restrictions.

"This is the most powerful missile system in the world," said Russian President Vladimir Putin after receiving a report of a successful launch of Sarmat, an intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM).

He said the missile could carry a warhead more than four times more powerful than anything Western militaries possessed, adding that Sarmat would be on "combat duty" by the end of this year.

Even though Moscow and Washington agreed to re-establish high-level military dialogue shortly after New START expired, there were no immediate signs of renewing or prolonging it.

US President Donald Trump has repeatedly pressed for a new treaty to include China, whose arsenal is growing



This video grab taken from handout footage released by the Russian Defence Ministry shows the test launch of the Sarmat heavy liquid-fuelled intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) yesterday. – AFP

but still significantly smaller than those of Russia or the US, but Beijing has publicly rejected the pressure.

Trump had been mostly silent on Russian calls to extend New START, which was signed in 2010 and imposed the last restrictions on Moscow and Washington after decades of agreements dating from the Cold War.

Both countries have repeatedly accused each other of failing to adhere to the agreement.

Sarmat, referred to as "Satan II" in NATO designation, is the first intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) produced in post-Soviet Russia to be classed as "super heavy".

Put said it was capable of travelling 35,000 kilometres. – AFP

Dengue outpaces virus-blocking mosquitoes in Brazil

Facundo Fernández Barrio

CURITIBA – Brazilian scientist Luciano Moreira tenderly handles a glass box of swarming mosquitoes infected with a bacterium that blocks the transmission of dengue.

These mosquitoes have protected millions in Brazil, but the debilitating disease is spreading faster than the insects can be bred and shipped around the immense country.

Climate change “accelerates the spread of the virus. In the south of the country, which used to be much colder, there was no dengue before, but now there is,” Moreira, 59, told AFP recently.

The world’s largest breeding factory for the mosquitoes – nicknamed “wolbitos” after the Wolbachia bacterium they were injected with – is located in the southern city of Curitiba.

Employees drip with sweat in the breeding room, set to an ideal temperature for the *Aedes aegypti* mosquitoes, which are confined in large, brightly lit cages made of translucent fabric.

The “wolbitos” are fed a pungent combination of warm horse blood and sugar water.

The bio-factory, inaugurated in 2025, can produce up to 100 million eggs per week that are stored in capsules and shipped to their final destinations in urban areas where they will hatch.

Over the next months these “wolbitos” – which also have a



A researcher examines *Aedes aegypti* mosquitoes kept in cages to collect their eggs, at a laboratory of biotech company Wolbito do Brasil, in Curitiba, Paraná state, southern Brazil, on March 19.

reproductive advantage over normal mosquitoes – slowly displace those that transmit dengue, as well as Zika and chikungunya, other mosquito-borne viral diseases.

‘A decisive moment’

The method of infecting the mosquitoes was first developed in Australia in 2008 by a team which included the entomologist Moreira.

He was recognised in 2025 by *Nature* magazine as one of the world’s top 10 scientists, and this year was named one of *Time* magazine’s 100 most influential people.

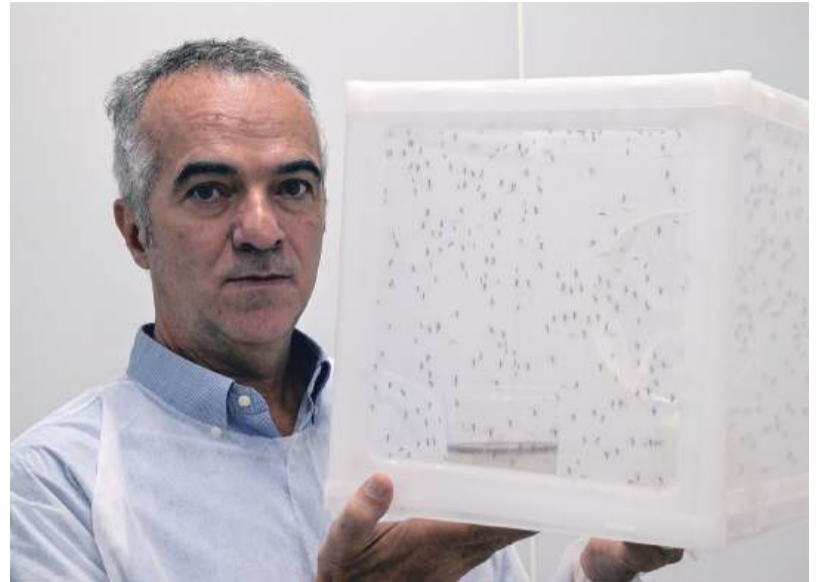
To protect the secrets of the method, no photographs can be taken of equipment in the bio-factory.

The anti-dengue mosquitoes have been introduced to 15 countries, but nowhere have they protected as many people as in Brazil – an estimated six million people since 2011, when Moreira first began testing the method.

However, more than 200 million are still at risk in the vast nation, where more than 6,000 people died during a 2024 outbreak of dengue, which causes joint and bone pain, earning it the nickname “breakbone fever.”

The virus can provoke haemorrhagic fever in severe cases, and even death.

“We are at a decisive moment to expand in Brazil,” said Moreira.



Brazilian researcher Luciano Moreira, from the World Mosquito Programme Brazil, poses with a cage with *Aedes aegypti* mosquitoes after an interview with AFP in Curitiba, Paraná state, southern Brazil, on March 19. – AFP

In two cities where the method was scientifically tested – Niteroi, near Rio de Janeiro, and Campo Grande in central-western Brazil – dengue cases fell by 89 percent and 63 percent, respectively.

The leftist government of Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva has recognised the “wolbitos” as a public health measure, but state bureaucracy has failed to match the pace of breeding.

“The factory had to scale back production because demand [from the health ministry] wasn’t that high,” said Moreira.

No ‘magic bullet’

Biologist and epidemiologist Ludimila Raupp, a professor at the

Pontifical Catholic University of Rio, said there was an “urgent need” to expand the project but it “is not easy.”

She said in Rio de Janeiro, for example, implementation of the project has suffered “serious flaws” and “institutional lack of coordination.”

Local health teams hampered its effectiveness with heavy use of larvicides that are harmful to the Wolbachia-infected mosquitoes, said Raupp.

Meanwhile, violence linked to organised crime has interfered with the release of the mosquitoes in the city’s sprawling favelas (shantytowns), said Moreira.

Expanding this programme presents “technical, operational, logistical, and financial” challenges, Brazil’s Health Minister Alexandre Padilha told AFP.

Nevertheless, the Wolbachia method is set to be implemented in 54 new cities this year, bringing the total number of participating municipalities to 70.

Moreira said the method is not a “magic bullet” against dengue, but rather a strategy that is “complementary” to other measures, such as vaccines.

Brazil last year developed the world’s first single-dose vaccine against dengue, and India is in the final stages of testing another.



Aedes aegypti mosquitoes infected with Wolbachia bacteria are released by a technician from the Federal District’s Health Department in a residential area of Brasília on March 10.



A dead *Aedes aegypti* mosquito is pictured at a laboratory of biotech company Wolbito do Brasil, in Curitiba, Paraná state, southern Brazil, on March 19. – AFP

Trump announces talks with ‘failed’ Cuba

WASHINGTON, DC – US President Donald Trump yesterday announced talks with Cuba, which has been crippled by a US fuel blockade in the wake of Washington’s capture of key regional ally Nicolás Maduro.

In a post on Truth Social, Trump described the communist-ruled island as “a failed country,” adding: “Cuba is asking for help, and we are going to talk!!!” He did not provide details.

There is growing speculation in Washington that Trump is seeking to overturn the Cuban government as part of a drive to increase US dominance in the Caribbean and Latin America.

Earlier this month, Trump said the United States would be “taking over” the Caribbean island off the Florida coast “almost immediately.”

He has also said following the US military operation to depose Venezuela’s longtime leader Nicolás Maduro that Cuba will be next.

The island has been in a standoff with successive US administrations since the 1960s and Florida, only around 145 km away, hosts a large, politically influential Cuban exile community.

Venezuela was a diplomatic and economic lifeline for impoverished Cuba and the fall of Maduro has left the island even more isolated.

Oil producer Venezuela was the main source of fuel for Cuba and the shutting down of the supply route by the United States is provoking frequent power cuts.

On May 1, Trump announced new economic sanctions targeting key sections of the Cuban economy.

Cuban Foreign Minister Bruno Rodríguez called this “collective punishment” and “unilateral coercive measures.”

– AFP

Spanish hantavirus case showing symptoms

MADRID – A Spanish man who tested positive for hantavirus after being evacuated from a cruise ship struck by a deadly outbreak of the illness is showing symptoms, the health ministry said yesterday.

The man was one of more than 120 passengers and crew evacuated from the Dutch-flagged MV Hondius, whose fate has sparked international alarm after three passengers died.

A military hospital in Madrid is quarantining 14 Spaniards who were removed from the vessel on Sunday, with all but one testing negative for hantavirus.

“The patient who provisionally tested positive for hantavirus yesterday has been confirmed as positive,” the ministry said,

without providing more details on his identity.

“Yesterday the patient had a slight fever and minor respiratory symptoms, although at present he is stable and without any evident clinical deterioration.”

Among living patients, all passengers or crew from the ship, seven cases have been confirmed and an eighth is listed as “probable”, according to an AFP tally of official figures.

The rare Andes variant of the virus, which usually spreads among rodents, is transmissible between humans and has no vaccine or treatment.

Yet health officials have stressed that the risk to public health is low and rejected comparisons to the COVID-19 pandemic.

– AFP

US 'golden generation' raises World Cup hosts' expectations

Andrew Marszal



LOS ANGELES – With home advantage, a forgiving group draw, and a talented roster widely dubbed the United States' "golden generation," coach Mauricio Pochettino is daring fans to ask "Why not us?"

The global superpower may historically be a footballing minnow, but soccer has boomed since the US last hosted in 1994, and the co-hosts are no longer merely making up the numbers.

Young Americans now spearhead some of Europe's top clubs, from Christian Pulisic and Weston McKennie at Serie A giants AC Milan and Juventus, to captain Tyler Adams at the Premier League's high-flying Bournemouth.

"I am here because I believe that we can win," said Pochettino, the Argentine manager who took over the co-hosts' side in late 2024.

"Why not us? Why not us? Why not us? We need to really believe that we can be there," said the former Tottenham Hotspur, Chelsea and Paris Saint-Germain coach, this spring.

Of course, nobody is talking about the US

in the same breath as favourites like France, Spain and Argentina.

For one thing, the US - who face Paraguay, Australia and Turkey in Group D - would surely need to beat top European or South American opposition to progress deep into the tournament.

Though Pochettino's men defeated Uruguay and Paraguay last year, those statement wins were followed in March by a 5-2 thrashing against Belgium and a lop-sided 2-0 loss to Portugal, exposing long-standing frailties against the world's elite.

Worries over star forward Pulisic's form in Milan have also dampened the optimism about a deep American run. Pulisic has not scored since December, and is no longer an automatic starter.

Pochettino himself recently admitted that his roster features none of the world's top 100 players - not exactly a pick-me-up for Pulisic's ego.

Still, the US took the tournament's second-youngest squad to the last World Cup in Qatar, where they did creditably to reach the last 16, falling to the Netherlands.

The co-hosts will aim to go further on home soil, knowing the likes of Marseilles winger Timothy Weah have gone from strength to strength since 2022.

Homegrown talents

Pochettino has experimented with an ever-changing squad and fluctuating formations in recent months.

The final roster, announced later this month, will be drawn from three distinct groups.

Pulisic, McKennie and Weah are the brightest home-grown talents who have thrived at Champions League clubs.

McKennie, in particular, has become so vital running Juventus's midfield that Pochettino recently joked the Serie A club is "Weston McKennie plus 10 players."

Then there is a group of diaspora Americans, like British-raised striker Folarin Balogun, who is likely to lead the US line this summer off the back of a hot scoring streak at Ligue 1's Monaco.

Other dual-national threats include fullbacks Sergino Dest and Antonee Robinson - born in the Netherlands and England,

respectively - and German-born Bayer Leverkusen midfielder Malik Tillman.

Finally, the squad will draw on a handful of Major League Soccer stars, including Real Salt Lake's Diego Luna, in what is sure to be a telling test of the strength of the booming US domestic league.

'Dreams inspire reality'

Bigger picture, the rapid progress of American soccer is indisputable.

The USMNT did not even qualify for a World Cup for four decades until 1990, but it has only missed one since, regularly progressing beyond the group stage.

Its best achievement of the modern era came in 2002, when Bruce Arena's men eliminated Portugal in the group stage, beat Mexico in the knockouts, before falling in the quarter-finals to Germany.

Making the final eight again likely serves as the baseline for the 2026 campaign to be considered a success.

Beyond that? "We need to dream... Dreams inspire reality," said Pochettino.

- AFP



Paris Saint-Germain's French forward Ousmane Dembele receives the Ligue 1 best player award during the 34th UNFP's (France's professional players union) French football awards ceremony in Paris on Monday. -AFP

Hamburg name Krueger as Bundesliga's 1st female sporting director



BERLIN – Bundesliga club Hamburg yesterday named Kathleen Krueger as sporting director, making her the first woman to hold the position on a permanent basis in league history.

Krueger, 40, joined the 1983 European Cup winners after two decades at Bayern Munich, where she last occupied an organisational management role.

In a statement, Hamburg praised the incoming Krueger's work with former Bayern coaches Pep Guardiola, Carlo Ancelotti, Hansi Flick and Jupp Heynckes.

"I am very pleased with the trust placed in me," Krueger said in the statement.

"It is a real privilege to be able to play a decisive role in shaping the future of Hamburg, one of the biggest

names in German football."

A former player, Krueger retired in 2009 aged 24 after 33 Bundesliga appearances with Bayern, staying with the Bavarian giants after hanging up her boots.

Krueger takes over from former sporting director Stefan Kuntz, who left the club in January.

A traditional giant of German football, Hamburg returned to the Bundesliga last summer after seven seasons in the second division and have already secured top-flight status next campaign.

The appointment of women to sporting director roles is rare in men's football. Helena Costa currently serves as sporting director of Portuguese first division side Estoril, having been appointed in January 2025.

Krueger is the latest woman to be

named in management and coaching positions in the Bundesliga this season.

Union Berlin manager Marie-Louise Eta became the first coach of a men's club in a major European league when she took over in April.

RB Leipzig named former Switzerland international Tatjana Haenni as CEO in January, the first woman to hold the position in Bundesliga history.

German clubs have traditionally employed a sporting director model, which shares responsibility between coaches and administrators, and has become more popular elsewhere in recent years.

Sporting directors set a club's strategic direction and oversee player recruitment, tasks which are sometimes performed by managers in other leagues.

- AFP

Flick extends contract with Barcelona



BARCELONA – Barcelona coach Hansi Flick confirmed yesterday that he has signed a new two-year contract with an option for a third season days after securing a second consecutive La Liga title with the Catalan club.

The 61-year-old German wrapped up his second Spanish league crown with Barcelona on Sunday by overseeing a 2-0 victory over arch-rivals Real Madrid at the Camp Nou.

"I am very happy and what I have achieved gives me confidence to continue one or two more years," Flick said at the press conference ahead of today's league visit to Alaves.

"Many coaches would be happy to stay three or four years, but I think at Barca it is better to limit it.

"For now, I am under contract until 2028, and if everything goes well, we will extend it. It has been a good agreement for both parties. I have seen that I am in the right place."

Flick added that his first goal after securing the contract extension was to take Barcelona beyond the century mark of points in the league this season.

"Our goal is to reach 100 points, and to do so we have to win all three matches," he said. "We have celebrated the title a lot but now we can play well."

Flick joined Barcelona in the summer of 2024 and, in two seasons at the club, has won two La Liga titles, one Copa del Rey and two Spanish Super Cups.

The Champions League, which Flick won in 2020 with former club Bayern Munich, has eluded him since arriving in Catalonia, however.

Barcelona were edged out by Atletico Madrid in the quarter-finals this season, after last year going down 7-6 on aggregate to Inter Milan in the last four.

"(For next season,) It is a commitment on our part to reach the highest level and win new titles," Flick said.

"Everyone dreams of the Champions League. We have tried and we will keep trying. I am grateful for the trust to continue."

Prior to taking over at Barcelona, Flick was Joachim Loew's assistant when the duo led Germany to glory at the 2014 World Cup.

As head coach, the Heidelberg native enjoyed two trophy-laden seasons with Bayern Munich between 2019 and 2021.

He then enduring a difficult 25-match spell in charge of the German national team which culminated in him becoming the first coach ever to be sacked by the Mannschaft.

A year later, Flick arrived at Barcelona to replace Xavi and, despite financial restraints at the club, has managed to guide the side to success on the pitch.

During his playing career as a holding midfielder, Flick notably made 139 appearances for Bayern Munich, winning four Bundesliga titles.

The game will be played at 3:30 a.m. tomorrow morning Macau time.

- AFP/MPD

Dortmund sign Gadou as Suele replacement



BERLIN – Borussia Dortmund yesterday announced the signing of teenage centre-back Joane Gadou, who will replace the retiring Niklas Suele.

Gadou, 19, arrives from Red Bull Salzburg on a deal running until 2031 for a reported fee of 20 million euros

(US\$23.5 million) plus bonuses.

A France international at junior levels, Gadou came through the Paris Saint-Germain academy before moving to Salzburg in 2024.

The transfer is Dortmund's first under new sporting director Ole Book, who pledged to return the club's focus

to signing young talents.

Erling Haaland and Karim Adeyemi also joined Dortmund from Salzburg.

Suele, a 49-time Germany international, announced earlier in May he would retire in the summer, aged 30.

- AFP

Rana stars as Bangladesh down Pakistan in 1st Test thriller

Cricket

DHAKA – Pace bowler Nahid Rana claimed five wickets as Bangladesh trumped Pakistan by 104 runs in a rain-hit first Test yesterday after a thrilling fifth day of batting collapses.

Chasing 268 for victory in Dhaka, Pakistan were 119-3 before they fell to 163 all out in the final session with debutant Abdullah Fazal scoring a valiant 66.

Bangladesh now hold a 1-0 lead in the two-match home series.

The Test win was Bangladesh's first against Pakistan on home soil and their third overall.

The 23-year-old Fazal put on 51 runs with Salman Agha, who made 26, to raise Pakistan's hopes of victory before Rana rattled the opposition with career-best figures of 5-40.

Rana, 23, made an impact with his pace and reverse swing and his final spell of 4.5 overs got him four wickets for just 10 runs to turn the match on its head.

"Very happy - proud of all the guys, the way we played," Bangladesh captain Najmul Hossain Shanto said.

"We have been working hard the last few months and slowly we are getting better at Test cricket - that's one thing we have always wanted to do."

The victory also saw Shanto equal Mushfiqur Rahim's record of seven Test wins as Bangladesh captain, achieving the milestone in just 17 matches compared to Mushfiqur's 34.

Shanto's batting brilliance

Bangladesh came into the final day with a lead of 179 runs at 152-3 but a clutch of wickets made them falter despite Shanto's 87.

Bangladesh declared their second innings on 240-9 to hand Pakistan a competitive target and



Bangladesh's Nahid Rana acknowledges the crowd after taking a five-wicket haul after his team's win at the end of the first Test cricket match against Pakistan at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur, Bangladesh yesterday. – AFP

a chance for their bowlers to make use of the deteriorating pitch.

Taskin Ahmed took down opener Imam-ul-Haq for two and Mehidy Hasan Miraz bowled debutant and first-innings centurion Azan Awaiz for 15.

Rana removed Pakistan captain Shan Masood for two before Fazal and Agha counter-attacked in their fourth-wicket partnership, but Bangladesh bowlers proved their mettle on home turf to secure victory in the final session of the day.

Rana delivered the decisive blows. He had Saud Shakeel caught behind before producing the ball of the match - a thunderous 147 kmph in-swinging yorker that bowled Mohammad Rizwan for 15.

Rana was on a roll as he trapped Noman Ali lbw and then bounced out Shaheen Shah Afridi, with Mahmudul

Hasan Joy taking a simple catch to complete a famous victory.

Pakistan captain Masood proffered no excuses for his side's failure to seize the key moments in the match.

"In the first innings, with bat and ball, we needed to do better," he said. "When you have the game in your hands you have to push the opposition away, but we failed to do that."

Shanto stood out for his batting brilliance as he made 101 in the first innings to guide Bangladesh to 413.

Pakistan responded with 386 in their first innings but conceded a slender lead after off-spinner Mehidy returned figures of 5-102.

Rain played spoilsport on the third and fourth days of the Test with a few overs lost due to interruptions.

The second match will begin on Saturday in Sylhet. – AFP

Rahm has faith LIV will develop good survival plan

Golf

Jim Slater

NEWTON SQUARE, USA – LIV Golf's struggle to survive beyond this season after Saudi backers pulled future financing will not be a distraction for Jon Rahm when the PGA Championship begins tomorrow at Aronimink.

Rahm, the two-time reigning LIV season champion and 2026 points leader, said yesterday he has faith that LIV officials will develop a solid plan to sustain the series.

"It's something we've had to deal with," Rahm said. "But it's just some things that are out of my control."

"What I can focus on is the next shot. It's the people in charge of LIV, whose job I do not envy for a second, ... it's their job to fix it."

"I have faith in the work they're doing. I have faith that they're going to come up with a good plan."

"Until that plan is explained to us, not that there isn't anything to worry about, but I don't think I need to add any attention to it."

The 31-year-old Spaniard, winner of the 2021 US Open and 2023 Masters, jumped from the PGA Tour to LIV in December 2023 and has dominated this season with LIV titles at Hong Kong in March and Mexico City in April plus runner-up efforts in Riyadh, Adelaide and South Africa.

Rahm noted the irony in his success on shotmaking control on the course but little power to control business matters away from it.

"It's funny in a sport that we like to be in control so much, how little we are actually in control," Rahm said. "I'm in control of my golf game. I'm not in control of everything else."

Rahm said any lessons learnt from his decision to join LIV "is for me to know" but said his philosophy is that decisions must be made with no regrets or unhappiness. – AFP

"If the terms change afterwards, like it has happened with LIV that things changed a little bit, it's an afterthought, not a problem from the choice," he said.

Rahm said he never thought his move might help bring the still-feuding PGA Tour and LIV together.

"I was never like thinking I was going to be any sort of weight that would tip the scales to make things come together," Rahm said.

"We don't know what's going to happen tomorrow, and all we can do is learn from things that happen in the past good and bad."

'Precarious spot'

Reigning Masters champion Rory McIlroy said LIV's pullout was a risk his rivals took in leaving for US\$25 million events and rich contracts.

"I think it was always a possibility to happen," McIlroy said. "I think everyone knows with everything that's happening in the Middle East, that had a lot to do (with it), but whenever you have funding tied so much to the geopolitical landscape in the world, that's a tricky road to navigate."

"Their priorities shifted, and that puts LIV in a pretty precarious spot, but it was always a possibility."

McIlroy said he knew of the Saudi Public Investment Fund yanking support beyond this year before LIV confirmed it.

"It just feels like the rug was pulled from under their feet and everyone was sort of blindsided by it, but again, that's the risk those guys chose to take," said McIlroy.

"There's a lot of uncertainty in the air right now. From what I read they've got some sponsorship revenue for I don't know how long."

"If they do somehow get a schedule together for next year, it seems like it's going to look drastically different." – AFP

Sinner dismisses Pellegrino to reach Italian Open quarters, Zverev out

Tennis

Terry Daley

ROME – Jannik Sinner's charge towards a first Italian Open title continued yesterday after the world number one calmly dispatched countryman Andrea Pellegrino 6-2, 6-3, while Alexander Zverev suffered a shock exit at the hands of another local hero in Luciano Darderi.

Second seed Zverev fell 1-6, 7-6 (12/10), 6-0, the German collapsing to defeat in front of a passionate crowd that roared on 18th-seeded Italian Darderi.

But as expected, top seed Sinner outclassed qualifier Pellegrino on centre court in a match which was in truth never much of a contest.

The 24-year-old Sinner has now won 31 straight matches in Masters 1000 events to equal Novak Djokovic's record run.

"I'm very happy about the

outcome, but at the same time I'm very happy for him, I know he's working very hard," said Sinner of Pellegrino.

"Tomorrow [today], a day off is important for me, trying to rest, and then hopefully I'm ready for quarters."

Pellegrino's arrival in the last 16 of his home tournament is by far his best result in a Masters 1000 event.

The 29-year-old is set to move up to a career-best world ranking of 123rd after not just making the main draw of a top-ranked ATP tournament for the first time but also getting to face his country's biggest sporting star in front of over 10,000 fans.

Pellegrino received warm cheers as he put in a creditable performance against the dominant force in tennis, and he also showed some deft technique when given room to breathe by Sinner.

But Sinner was never in top gear and still comfortably dealt with Pellegrino to set up a clash with

12th seed Andrey Rublev who beat another qualifier, Georgia's Nikoloz Basilashvili, 3-6, 7-6, 6-2.

Should Sinner win a record-extending sixth straight Masters 1000 title, he will be the first Italian to win at the Foro Italico since Adriano Panatta 50 years ago.

With great rival Carlos Alcaraz out injured and Zverev now gone, Sinner is red-hot favourite for victory as he builds towards completing the career Grand Slam at Roland Garros.

Zverev, the 2024 champion in Rome, slumped in three sets as Darderi rallied to his first ever win over an opponent ranked among the world's top 10 players.

"It's my most important win, to beat Zverev at Roma is the most exciting win of my career," said Darderi.

Ruud downs injured Musetti

While Sinner and Darderi - set to rise to a career-high 17th in the

world - reached the last eight, their compatriot Lorenzo Musetti was not so fortunate as physical problems led to him being beaten 6-3, 6-1 by Casper Ruud.

Musetti was in tears at the end of his third-round win over Francisco Cerundolo and had to take a medical time-out for a problem with his left thigh during the second set against Ruud.

The Italian will drop out of the top 10 of the men's rankings ahead of the French Open next week, and he later told reporters that he is unsure of whether he will participate in Paris.

"I don't know, in the next couple of days we'll do some closer tests, something I've not been able to do given that I'm constantly playing," said Musetti.

Norwegian Ruud is on the other side of the draw from Sinner and will face Karen Khachanov in the last eight after exploiting Musetti's

struggles with fitness.

"I realised that... we try to make him run as much as possible. It's cruel and it's brutal, but that's sport," Ruud told reporters.

Khachanov, seeded 13th, ended Dino Prizmic's bid to reach his first Masters 1000 quarter-final, seeing off the spirited Croatian qualifier 6-1, 7-6 (7/2).

Prizmic had announced himself on the big stage this week by knocking out Novak Djokovic in the second round.

Veteran Sorana Cirstea, who knocked out world number one Aryna Sabalenka in the third round, reached the semi-finals of the women's tournament after beating Jelena Ostapenko 6-1, 7-6 (7/0).

Romanian Cirstea is set to retire at the end of the season and will face either Coco Gauff or Mirra Andreeva, on centre court after Sinner, for a place in Saturday's final. – AFP

Cannes Film Festival opens, grappling with AI and Hollywood

Adam Plowright

CANNES, France – Cannes Film Festival rolled out the red carpets yesterday for its annual showcase in France, grappling with the dizzying speed of AI-powered disruption and the absence of major Hollywood studios.

In its main competition, a total of 22 films are vying for the prestigious Palme d'Or prize for best film, which was won last year by the highly political Iranian movie "It Was Just an Accident" by Jafar Panahi.

But as usual in the build up to the world's biggest festival, off-screen talking points have dominated the conversation, most notably how to cope with changes wrought by artificial intelligence (AI) – and Hollywood's decision to ghost the event.

Cannes festival director Thierry Fremaux came out strongly against AI and its effect on the industry where job losses are mounting for dubbing artists and translators, while writers and actors fear for their livelihoods.

"What is certain... is that here in Cannes, we stand with the artists, we stand with the screenwriters and we stand with everyone in

these professions, with actors and voice actors alike," he told a news conference on Monday.

He suggested that in the future films could be given labels like those for organic food and wine, and "we will say 'this film has been made without artificial intelligence'".

Nonetheless, the festival announced on Monday that it had signed a multi-year sponsorship deal with social media giant and AI technology investor Meta.

Industry fears

Mark Zuckerberg-owned Meta is at the heart of a brewing controversy about the latest film from Oscar-winning "Traffic" director Steven Soderbergh, which will premiere in Cannes.

Soderbergh partnered with Meta to obtain AI-generated video of late Beatles songwriter John Lennon and his wife Yoko Ono for his documentary "John Lennon: The Last Interview".

The use of AI was central to the 2023 strikes that shut down Hollywood, as actors and writers warned that unchecked technology threatened the industry.

Thousands of French actors and filmmakers warned in an open



Workers unroll the red carpet on the stairs of the Palais des Festivals ahead of the opening ceremony of the 79th edition of the Cannes Film Festival in Cannes, southern France, yesterday. – AFP

letter in February that AI tools were "plundering" talent across the industry, comparing them to a "devouring hydra".

Soderbergh is a rare Hollywood heavyweight in Cannes this year, with others such as Steven Spielberg and Christopher Nolan – hoped for by organisers – failing to appear on the programme.

'Come back'

The world's biggest film festival typically spotlights independent, arthouse cinema while relying on

Hollywood to provide a dose of mass-market entertainment.

But no major US studio agreed to launch a blockbuster this year, or at the Berlin International Film Festival in February, raising questions about why giants such as Universal, Disney or Warner are dodging European events.

"I really hope that the studios come back," Fremaux said on Monday, attributing their absence to scheduling issues and industry turmoil.

He stressed that US cinema was well represented, with

"Paper Tiger" by James Gray starring Adam Driver and Scarlett Johansson, as well as "The Man I Love" by Ira Sachs featuring Rami Malek, in the main competition.

There will be no shortage of A-listers on the celeb-heavy red carpets.

A late addition to the programme includes a cast reunion to mark the 25th anniversary of "The Fast and the Furious", with Vin Diesel, Michelle Rodriguez and Jordana Brewster set to appear at a special screening today.

Plane-mad legend John Travolta will bring some stardust when he unveils his directorial debut, "Propeller One-Way Night Coach", about a young boy's journey in the "golden age of aviation".

The festival will open with a screening of French film "The Electric Kiss" before the main competition starts today, judged by South Korean director Park Chan-wook and Hollywood heavyweight Demi Moore, among others.

"I cannot help but feel a sense of emotion, realising that for the first time a Korean has become the head of the jury," Park told AFP on Monday in Cannes.

"The moment has finally come." – AFP

The movies vying for the Cannes Film Festival's top prize

Fiachra Gibbons

CANNES, France –Twenty-two films from some of the world's most celebrated directors are vying for the top prize at the Cannes Film Festival which opened yesterday.

The Palme d'Or will be handed out this year by a jury that includes Hollywood star Demi Moore and Korean director Park Chan-wook.

'Bitter Christmas' by Pedro Almodóvar

The legendary Spanish director – who has never won the Palme d'Or – will be hoping it is seventh time lucky with this story of a director who draws on the lives of those close to her to write her stories.

'Parallel Tales' by Asghar Farhadi

The exiled Oscar-winning Iranian filmmaker has assembled a stellar French cast including Catherine Deneuve, Isabelle Huppert and Pierre Niney to tell "several stories that intertwine in a corner of Paris".

'Paper Tiger' by James Gray

US director James Gray was a late entry with his crime drama of two brothers navigating the Russian mafia, starring Adam Driver and Scarlett Johansson from the maker of "The Yards" and "Little Odessa".

'A Woman's Life' by Charline Bourgeois-Tacquet

French actress Lea Drucker plays a stressed-out surgeon in a hospital who encounters a novelist who comes to watch her work and turns her life upside down – one of four French-made films in the line-up this year.

'The Black Ball' by Javier Calvo and Javier Ambrossi

A sprawling Spanish historical film exploring gay lives inspired by Federico García Lorca's last unfinished work, starring Glenn Close and Penélope Cruz, that turns a moment from the country's civil war in which the poet and playwright died.

'Coward' by Lukas Dhont

The highly rated young Belgian director of "Girl" and "Close" is back with a drama set in the trenches of World War I, with visuals "inspired by the colour photographs of the period".

'All of a Sudden' by Ryusuke Hamaguchi

After the worldwide success of "Drive My Car", the Japanese filmmaker returns with a film shot in France, with Virginie Efira as the head of a nursing home who befriends a dying Japanese playwright.

'The Unknown' by Arthur Harari

The screenwriter of the 2023 Palme d'Or winner "Anatomy of a Fall" adapts the graphic novel he wrote with his brother about a man who wakes up in the body of a mysterious stranger.

'Garance' by Jeanne Herry

Cannes favourite Adele Exarchopoulos plays a gifted but hard-partying actress in this French tale of a woman losing her grip.

'Sheep in the Box' by Hirokazu Kore-eda

A couple welcomes a humanoid robot into their home in the latest film by the Japanese master, who

won the 2018 Palme d'Or for "Shoplifters".

'Hope' by Na Hong-jin

Real-life couple Michael Fassbender and Alicia Vikander star in this psychological thriller about people who set out to find a beast and find themselves hunted instead by the South Korean auteur.

'Nagi Notes' by Koji Fukada

After tackling the pop industry's exploitation of young Japanese women in his last film, "Love on Trial", Fukada heads to rural Japan for a feature about an encounter between two lonely souls.

'Gentle Monster' by Marie Kreutzer

The Austrian director brings together French actors Lea Seydoux and Catherine Deneuve – who star in two films in competition – in a story about a couple in which one partner suddenly reveals a monstrous side.

'A Man of his Time' by Emmanuel Marre

The Belgian director turns his eye on the civil servants who governed occupied Vichy France in this wartime drama with Swann Arlaud of "Anatomy of a Fall" fame.

'Fjord' by Cristian Mungiu

The Romanian winner of the 2007 Palme d'Or for "4 Months, 3 Weeks and 2 Days" teams up with Norwegian actor Renate Reinsve, of "Sentimental Value" and "The Worst Person in the World" fame, for this tale of conflict between two families in a remote Norwegian village.

'The Birthday Party' by Lea Mysis

The third feature from the rising French director features Italy's Monica Bellucci alongside French stars Bastien Bouillon and Hafsia Herzi.

'Moulin' by Laszlo Nemes

The Hungarian director of the acclaimed "Son of Saul" returns to Cannes with a biopic about the life of French Resistance hero Jean Moulin.

'Fatherland' by Pawel Pawlikowski

The Polish filmmaker, who won the best foreign language film Oscar for "Ida" in 2015, is back with another black-and-white movie, this time about writer Thomas Mann's return to Germany in 1949.

'The Man I Love' by Ira Sachs

Rami Malek, who won an Oscar for his role as Freddie Mercury in "Bohemian Rhapsody", plays an artist at the start of the AIDS pandemic in New York in the 1980s.

'The Beloved' by Rodrigo Sorogoyen

There is lots of buzz around the Spanish director's drama starring Javier Bardem, about a director who rekindles his difficult relationship with his actress daughter on a film shoot.

'Minotaur' by Andrey Zvyagintsev

The exiled Russian filmmaker follows up his visually stunning "Leviathan" and "Loveless" with a film about the Russian middle classes grappling with army conscription during the Ukraine war.

'The Dreamed Adventure' by Valeska Grisebach

The German director of "Western" makes her main competition debut with the story of a woman living in the border region between Greece, Bulgaria and Turkey who agrees to a deal to help a friend. – AFP

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



Huge flamboyance

Flocks of flamingos are pictured in a pond in Navi Mumbai, India yesterday. – AFP



Why am I waiting?

Zoo keepers prepare ice treats for spider monkeys during a heat wave with temperatures between 35 and 37 degrees Celsius in Guadalajara, Jalisco, Mexico last Wednesday. – AFP



Heavy duty

An employee displays a gold necklace at a jewellery store in Amritsar, India yesterday. – AFP



I'm off!!!

A girl interacts with a white pelican at the Kuala Lumpur Bird Park in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, on Sunday. – Xinhua



Personal style

A woman wearing a floral hat poses for a selfie during the Hat Walk Warsaw event in Warsaw, Poland, on Sunday. – Xinhua



Amazing detail

A woman looks at an artwork during London Craft Week, in central London, on Monday. The event is held here from May 11 to 17. – Xinhua