

2026 National Security Education Exhibition logs record visits

Tony Wong

This year's annual National Security Education Exhibition, which ended on Friday, drew a total of 70,496 visits, a record high since its launch in 2018, the Macau Government Information Bureau (GCS) said in a statement on that day.

The one-month 2026 National Security Education Exhibition ran between April 16 and May 15. The exhibition, which opened from 10 a.m. to 8 p.m. daily, was held at the Services Platform Complex for Commercial and Trade Cooperation between China and Portuguese-speaking Countries (aka Forum Macao Complex), located near Macau Tower.

After its launch ceremony in the evening of April 15, this year's exhibition opened to members of the general public the following day.

This year's number of visits to the exhibition increased by 5,486, or 8.4 percent, from the 65,010 visits recorded in last year's exhibition.

GCS issued a statement on Friday night summarising this year's exhibition.

The statement also said that the dedicated website for this year's exhibition recorded 210,740 visits until 8 p.m. on Friday when the exhibition ended, also setting a new record since the exhibition's launch in 2018.

The dedicated website started operating on April 15 when the exhibition was launched.

April 15 marks the country's annual National Security Education Day, which started in 2016.

April 15 this year was the country's 11th edition of its National Security Education Day.

Macau's National Security Education Exhibition, aiming to mark the country's National Security Education Day, has been jointly held by the Macau Special Administrative Region (MSAR) government and the Liaison Office of the Central People's Government in the MSAR annually since 2018.

This year's exhibition, which ended on



Secretary for Security Chan Tsz King (front, left) and Yang Weiqun (front, centre), a deputy director of the Liaison Office of the Central People's Government in Macau, watch a show by two robots on the last day of the 2026 National Security Education Exhibition at the Forum Macao Complex on Friday. – Photo: GCS

Friday, was its ninth edition since its inception.

The statement also noted that the dedicated website for this year's exhibition (<https://eesn.gov.mo>) will remain operational so that online users can continue to view the information laid out by the exhibition.

The website also provides hyperlinks to the dedicated websites for all previous editions of the exhibition.

The websites are in Chinese only.

The statement also said that shortly before its end on Friday night, Secretary for Security Chan Tsz King and Yang Weiqun, a deputy director of the Liaison Office, visited the exhibition at the Forum Macao Complex where they spoke to the exhibition's staff members.

The statement also quoted Chan as expressing his gratitude to the Liaison Office

for its professional guidance and strong support for the exhibition's organisation.

According to the statement, Chan said that this year's record-breaking visits to the exhibition has not only represented a quantitative breakthrough but has also indicated that the awareness that "safeguarding national security is everyone's responsibility" has become a solid consensus in Macau's civil society.

The statement also quoted Yang as expressing the Liaison Office's gratitude to all the respective public entities of the MSAR government for their full cooperation and support for the exhibition's organisation.

Yang said that this year's exhibition not only introduced various innovations in both content and presentation but also featured an excellent opening ceremony. All segments

of Macau's civil society highly praised the exhibition this year, Yang said.

According to the statement, Yang also said he believed that with everybody's joint efforts, the organisation of Macau's annual National Security Education Exhibition will certainly become "better and better", while Macau's work on safeguarding national security and social stability will certainly continue to achieve new and greater results.

This time, the statement noted, guided tours by robots were available in the exhibition for the first time. Moreover, this year's exhibition also newly introduced guided tours with sign language interpretation.

The guided tours by robots were available in four languages: Putonghua, Cantonese, Portuguese, and English. ■

Nation's word-of-mouth hit 'Dear You' extends box office dominance as forecasts rise

BEIJING – The Chinese mainland's word-of-mouth hit "Dear You" continued its daily box office dominance for an eighth day yesterday, as revenue forecasts continued to rise.

A low-budget, Chaoshan (Teochew)-dialect film directed by Lan Hongchun and headlined by first-time actors, "Dear You" had grossed 470 million yuan 4 p.m. Beijing time yesterday, according to film data platform Maoyan.

Opening on April 30, it has outperformed all other May Day holiday releases, including twist-filled crime thriller "Vanishing Point" and Hong Kong-set franchise entry "Cold War 1994," with their cumulative box office earnings currently standing at 410 million yuan and 273 million yuan, respectively.

Film data platforms Beacon and Maoyan have further raised their final box office projections for the film to around 1.2 billion

yuan and 1.3 billion yuan, respectively, marking another significant increase from earlier forecasts of just over 1 billion yuan.

Reportedly produced on a budget of just over 10 million yuan, the film has emerged as one of China's biggest cinematic surprises of 2026. It is widely hailed for its emotional authenticity, grounded storytelling and unusually convincing performances from first-time actors.

The story draws on the history of "qiaopi,"

the letters and remittances sent home by earlier generations of overseas Chinese. UNESCO added the "qiaopi" archives to its Memory of the World Register in 2013.

On China's review platform Douban, the drama currently holds a score of 9.1 out of 10, making it one of the highest-rated Chinese films in recent years and among the best-reviewed domestic releases of the past decade. – Xinhua

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Youngsters nurture bonds through sustained Sino-US exchanges

At a Shanghai stadium, Chinese and American students squared off across ping-pong tables for a friendly match, where the rhythmic bounces of the ball alternated with shared laughter.

– Story on p. 8

White House mass prayer event seeks to reclaim US Christian roots

Thousands of people gathered yesterday in downtown Washington for a mass prayer festival featuring speeches by top Trump administration officials.

– Story on p. 11

Fujimori, Sánchez advance to Peru runoff: official results

Right-wing candidate Keiko Fujimori and leftist Roberto Sánchez will face off in Peru's presidential runoff on June 7, according to the final vote count released yesterday.

– Story on p. 12

Xi-Trump summit – a fine example of China’s head-of-state diplomacy



Last week’s three-day Xi-Trump summit was a fine example of China’s head-of-state diplomacy (元首外交) – the “anchor” of its foreign policy meant as a stabilising force to provide certainty and stability to a turbulent global landscape.

The visit included a formal nearly three-hour meeting between the two heads of state and their delegations at the Great Hall of the People and a welcome banquet addressed by both and a Chinese philosophy-laden visit to the Temple of Heaven.

Moreover, the presidents of the world’s two most powerful countries “walked and talked” while touring the Zhongnanhai (“Central and Southern Lakes”) leadership compound, a rare occasion for visiting heads of state or government such as Vladimir Putin and Barack Obama.

For the Chinese leadership, an invitation to Zhongnanhai is used to signal strategic intimacy, a kind of “gold standard” reserved for top-tier strategic partners or high-stakes diplomatic resets.

Well, that’s what happened on Friday, the last day of Trump’s state visit.

I had the honour and pleasure to enter Zhongnanhai twice as a member of a Macau media delegation, first with Macau’s last Portuguese governor, Gen. Vasco Rocha Vieira, in the early 1990s and later with the Macau Special Administrative Region’s first chief executive, Edmund Ho Hau Wah, at the beginning of this century.

The two-lake compound is both serene and bucolic – the right place for the nation’s leaders to work and rest.

Xinhua pointed out that Xi and Trump held a “private” meeting at Zhongnanhai where the two heads of states “walked and talked”. * The national newswire’s choice of words reminded me of the idiom “talking the talk and walking the walk” used to describe a person who not only says the right things but also follows through with consistent actions. By adhering to this adage, Trump could certainly boost his image.

According to Xinhua, during the stroll around the park-like

compound, Xi classified Trump’s visit as a historic and landmark one. He also said that the two sides had set the new vision of a constructive China-US relationship of strategic stability.

The concept of a “constructive relationship of strategic stability” is a relatively new framework in Chinese diplomacy. It has gained significant traction during this year’s high-level summits. It represents an evolution from the Cold War definition of “strategic stability” which was focused on nuclear deterrence.

Xinhua quoted Xi as telling Trump during the stroll that “we have reached important common understandings on maintaining stable economic and trade ties, expanding practical cooperation in various fields, and properly addressing each other’s concerns”.

Xi, who has led China for over 13 years, also said that Trump’s visit, his second as US president, “has been conducive to enhancing mutual understanding, deepening mutual trust and improving the well-being of the two peoples”.

No doubt, US-China ties are the world’s most important bilateral relationship as they impact virtually everything else, directly or implicitly, that’s happening on our planet on the political, economic, cultural and scientific front. Both are the world’s top two economies and, something that I find extremely important for their own and the whole world’s future, they are the undisputed leaders in artificial intelligence (AI).

AI is, I am convinced, human intelligence’s most important invention ever. It is the most impactful industrial revolution that we humans have been able to pull off – and we are just at the very beginning of it.

Countries at the forefront of AI will determine our future in basically anything that I can think of – and that’s why it is my firm belief that China and the US will continue to lead the world for a long time to come. AI is the greatest tool ever invented by humans, and I am optimistic that it will help us tackle lots of issues – on the medical and pharmaceutical development front in particular. As any tool invented by humanity, we have to ensure that it is used without hurting those that it is supposed to benefit – *Primum*

non nocere (First, do no harm). I hope that China, the US and other AI-savvy players on the world stage will coordinate their efforts to ensure that AI will remain a safe tool (but let’s be realistic, any tool, even a simple one such as a hammer, can be misused by bunglers or miscreants).

Xi also underlined during their “walk the talk” in Zhongnanhai that China-US relations are not a zero-sum game: “While President Trump hopes to make America great again, I am dedicated to leading the Chinese people towards national rejuvenation”, stressing that the two countries can advance their respective development and revitalisation by strengthening cooperation.

According to what I gleaned from TV coverage of the Zhongnanhai stroll, Trump visibly enjoyed the rare chance of visiting the compound. He praised Xi as his “old, respected friend”. He warmly welcomed Xi to visit him in Washington, DC, in the autumn.

The visit also included a strong philosophical aspect when Xi personally gave Trump a guided tour of the 606-year-old Temple of Heaven in Beijing (the US, incidentally, will mark the 250th anniversary of its establishment on July 4 this year).

According to Xinhua, Xi explained to Trump that in ancient times, state rituals were held in the temple, where the country’s rulers prayed for national prosperity, social harmony, and favourable weather for good harvests.**

Xi also told Trump that the temple symbolises the traditional Chinese philosophy of “hé”*** (和) – meaning peace, harmony, and coexistence.

Xinhua emphasised that Xi once said that “peace, concord and harmony are ideas the Chinese nation has pursued and carried forward for more than 5,000 years; the Chinese nation does not carry aggressive or hegemonic traits in its genes”.

Opening his talks with Trump at the Great Hall of the People on Thursday, Xi raised the question of whether China and the United States can overcome the so-called Thucydides Trap and create a new paradigm of major-country relations. Thucydides (c.460 – c.400 BCE) was an Athenian historian and general.

The Thucydides Trap is a concept describing the structural stress that supposedly occurs when a rising power threatens to displace a ruling power.

The relatively new term, which was created by US novelist Herman Wouk (1915-2019) in a lecture in 1980, was popularised by US political scientist Graham Allison (born 1940) of Harvard University decades later. Over the past decade it has been increasingly (mis)used by scholars and journalists to analyse China-US relations.**** It suggests that when these two forces collide, the result is an extreme predisposition towards war, even if

both leaders desire peace.

Concluding the visit, veteran Foreign Minister Wang Yi bid farewell to Trump at the airport prior to his departure on Air Force One from Beijing on Friday afternoon.

Wang – one of the world’s most qualified and experienced foreign ministers, briefed the press on Friday about the China-US summit and the common understanding reached by the two sides.***** He answered seven questions raised by the press corps, among them, as one would expect, whether the Taiwan question came up during the summit.

Wang’s three-point answer was plain as day: “The Taiwan question was an important topic taken up at the summit”.

His three points regarding the island are:

“First, the Taiwan question is China’s internal affair. Realising complete reunification is an aspiration shared by all sons and daughters of the Chinese nation. It is also the unwavering, historic mission of the Communist Party of China (CPC)... We hope that the US side will strictly abide by the one-China principle and the three China-US joint communiqués, and honour its international obligations”.

Second, the Taiwan question is the most important issue between China and the US, one that affects the entire relationship. If it is handled properly, the overall relationship will be stable... Otherwise, the two countries would have clashes and even conflicts, and the entire relationship would be in great jeopardy...”.

Third, China and the US both agree on the vital importance of safeguarding cross-Straits peace and stability. To ensure this is the case, one must never indulge or support “Taiwan independence”, because “Taiwan independence” and cross-Straits peace are as irreconcilable as fire and water. Our impression coming out of this summit is that the US side understands China’s position, takes China’s concerns seriously, and, like the rest of the international community, does not agree with or accept Taiwan moving towards independence.”

I decided to quote at length Wang’s remarks on the island – which Japan returned to China in 1945 after five decades of colonial occupation – because of the Taiwan question’s vital importance not only to China-US ties but also to world peace.

Wang’s remarks came after Xi’s warning during his formal meeting with Trump that any missteps on the sensitive issue of Taiwan could push their two countries into “conflict”.

Well, Trump seems to have got the message. Speaking to US media while returning home on Friday he cautioned Taiwan’s pro-independence administration against declaring independence, suggesting they should not assume automatic US military support.

He stated: “We’re not looking to have somebody say, ‘Let’s go independent because the United States is backing us’”.

When asked if the US would defend Taiwan if it were attacked, he told reporters in typical Trumpian style: “I don’t talk about that... There’s only one person that knows that, you know who it is? Me”.

Regarding Washington’s pending multi-billion-US-dollar weapons packages for Taiwan, Trump was non-committal, viewing them as deal-making leverage: “I haven’t approved it yet... I may do it, I may not do it” and referred to them as a “very good negotiating chip”.

Well, that’s vintage Trump.

During his press briefing, Wang underlined that the China-US relationship is one of the most important and complex bilateral relationships in the world, and he stressed that “it is anchored by presidential [head-of-state] engagements”.

Wang also underlined that China has been working to promote Middle East peace talks, “and will continue to play its role for an early end to the conflict and restoration of peace in the Middle East”.

Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi visited Beijing on May 6, roughly one week before Donald Trump’s state visit to China. The timing of the visit was widely seen as strategically significant. Reportedly, the discussions focused on the reopening of the Strait of Hormuz for international shipping and briefings on Iran’s negotiations with the US.

On the Ukraine crisis, Wang said that both China and the US want to see an early end to the conflict, “and both have done a great deal to promote peace talks in their own ways”.

President Vladimir Putin is set to begin a two-day visit to China tomorrow. The timing of the trip is certainly noteworthy.

Asked by the media about his overall assessment of the China-US summit, Wang said that China-US relations have reached a new starting point and the two presidents’ in-depth discussions have produced fruitful outcomes. He noted that the two heads of state spent nearly nine hours together, during which they demonstrated “mutual respect, a commitment to peace, and a shared interest in pursuing cooperation”.

“The most important political understanding they reached was the agreement to build a constructive China-US relationship of strategic stability”, Wang said.

Meanwhile, the Ministry of Commerce (MOC)***** said in a statement that the two countries achieved positive outcomes in last week’s economic and trade negotiations, such as their decision to set up trade and investment councils to address their respective concerns in trade and investment cooperation.

Continued on p.4

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Sands China continues to keep memories of Macau's firecracker industry alive

As Macau continues to change amid rapid development, it can be hard to believe just how different it used to be, going from a small, quiet fishing village to being the city with the most five-star hotels in the world. One of the past key pillar industries that supported the livelihoods of many young and old, meanwhile, might also come as a surprise: the firecracker manufacturing industry.

From its start in the late 19th century to its peak during the 1950s and its eventual decline, this industry was a part of Macau and, in turn, the lives and memories of many of its inhabitants. Many brands bore the mark of "Made in Macau" as they made their way to different parts of the world, accounting for a large percentage of global output in the 1950s and 1960s. Factories were mainly in Taipa Village, including the Iec Long Firecracker Factory, which ran the longest – from 1925 to its eventual closure in 1984. Today, it stands as the most well-preserved firecracker factory in Macau, with a visit revealing remnants of once was.

However, a visit to Iec Long isn't the only way to learn more about Macau's bygone industry. Sands China took on the erstwhile factory's revitalisation in 2023 and has continued to make efforts to keep the collective memory of the bygone industry alive, including creating a large-scale exhibition celebrating the Iec Long Firecracker Factory's centenary and the history of Macau's firecracker industry, along with a variety of extension activities.



Hosting a dedicated large-scale exhibition

With the support of ICM and MGTO, "A Century of Iec Long Firecracker Factory in Radiance – An Exhibition on the Resonant History and Aesthetic Memory of Macao Firecrackers" features 400 exhibits dedicated to Macau's firecracker manufacturing past.

The exhibition is on display now until August 31 at Sands Gallery, on the sixth floor of the Four Seasons Hotel Macao. It is being held in collaboration with the Library and Faculty of Humanities and Arts of the Macau University of Science and Technology (MUST), the Macao Museum, and the Archives of Macao. By systematically organising academic research and rare archival resources, it is built on a solid historical and scholarly foundation.

Visitors both young and old take a step back in time through a display of well-preserved exhibits ranging from hundreds of colourful packaging labels and related documents to manufacturing tools, all layered with rich historical information and interactive elements to craft the once thriving industry's story.



Macau University of Science and Technology (MUST) Distinguished Professor, veteran artist and exhibition curator Guilherme Ung Vai Meng poses for a photo at Sands Gallery in Cotai.

– Photos: Sands China

This is all divided into six thematic chapters ranging from a prologue to a section dedicated entirely to the aesthetics of packaging design, where many brands once synonymous with the city can be found. MUST Distinguished Professor and veteran local artist Guilherme Ung Vai Meng curated the exhibition, having dedicated three decades to studying Macau's firecracker industry.

Highlighting the collaboration, Executive Vice Chairman of Sands China Ltd. Wilfred Wong said during the exhibition's opening on March 18: "In collaborating with MUST, the Macao Museum, and the Archives of Macao to provide historical exhibits and academic support, and by inviting Professor Ung Vai Meng as curator, we have harnessed the synergy of enterprise and academia to present the firecracker history in its fullest and most authentic form."

Wong continued: "By rejuvenating this integral chapter of Macau's past, Sands Gallery offers the public free access to discover the brilliance, creativity, and craftsmanship that underpinned the city's firecracker industry, inspiring younger generations and visitors to appreciate Macau's strongest competitive edge – its profound cultural heritage. We will continue to work closely with all sectors of society to support the integration of culture and tourism, promoting Macau's diverse arts and culture on an ever-expanding stage."

Beyond the exhibition

Complementing the large-scale exhibition, Sands China has continued to keep the collective memory alive through a variety of extension activities, going even beyond Macau.

At the popular annual international art event "Art Central" in Hong Kong – where Sands China was the first integrated tourism and leisure enterprise from Macau to participate as an associate partner – the company set up a Sands Gallery booth that included a dedicated section on the Macau firecracker exhibition. Ung was invited to deliver a lecture titled "Aesthetics of a Square Inch: A Century of Visual Culture Change Through Macao's Firecracker Packaging," where he explored the century-long history of the firecracker industry through its intricate packaging design. The well-received seminar sparked discussions and connected shared memories with Hong Kong audiences, all the while giving a deeper insight into the industry to international attendees.

Discussions continued with the academic dialogue "Historical Memories of the Taipa Firecracker Factory" on March 20 at MUST, featuring Ung and firecracker historian Albert Lai Hong Kin, who has published a series of books on the subject of Taipa's historical development and the history of its firecracker industry.

Among the topics highlighted in dialogue were the local industry's evolution from its beginning to its decline, including historical materials like the 1925 registration of the Iec Long Firecracker Factory to an aerial view of its 1941 layout. Lai also shared depictions the historical firecracker production processes used at Iec Long, such as fuse winding and cone punching.

Meanwhile, continuing the collaboration with academia, two exhibitions were also held at the MUST library, namely "Historical Resonance: Firecracker Label Art from Eastern Guangdong" and "Timeless Treasures: Archival Materials of Macao's Firecracker Industry." The former was held until March 31 and showcased firecracker packaging labels from eastern Guangdong from the late 19th century to the 20th century, with exhibits mainly featuring items donated by Lai and Ung to the MUST Library, as well as those on loan by US collectors Michael McHenry, Jeff Staton, and Andrew S. Cahan. The latter exhibition, meanwhile, continues to be held through August 31 and features exhibits ranging from newspapers to photos, telegrams and maps, all organized across themed sections telling the story of historical development.

Remembering a bygone industry

While Macau has taken a different direction since the firecracker manufacturing era, its past has not been forgotten. Sands China's comprehensive efforts help ensure that this former industry and the collective memories it holds can continue to be shared.



Collaborating with academia, two extended exhibitions were also held at the MUST library.



A visitor takes a photo of firecracker packaging labels at Art Central.

Fun day aims to promote intergenerational harmony, community care



Nicole dos Santos Pedro (second from right), designer of the event's "Dim Dim" and "Tim Tim" mascots, poses with friends at the event booth.

Armando Neves

The second Intergenerational Fun Day was held in Luís de Camões Garden yesterday, aiming to promote intergenerational harmony and community care, according to an opening statement by the Association of the Friends of Pátio do Espinho Macau (APEM).

The event was co-hosted by the Association of the Friends of Sam Pa Mun Macau.

This time, the event was themed "Intergenerational Harmony, Family Fun and Community Care", featuring stage performances, game booths, workshops, and an interactive experience zone. The event also showcased "Dim Dim" and "Tim Tim", the mascots designed by Nicole dos Santos Pedro. She is a local tertiary student majoring in design.

Speaking to reporters on the sidelines of the event, APEM Vice President Apple Lai (黎惠儀) said the fun day also offered free haircuts, with a particular focus on assisting the elderly. She added that the initiative aimed to cultivate a community-minded spirit among the younger generation, and expressed hope that similar events would be organised in the future to bring residents closer together.

APEM member Tina Santos told the *Post* that her family and their neighbours have lived in Pátio do Espinho for five generations. She said that experiencing the COVID-19 pandemic had made the community realise the vital importance of solidarity, which ultimately inspired them to establish the association. Her main hope, she said, is to unite the community in caring for the elderly and vulnerable.

Santos noted that this year's Fun Day featured new booths designed to give youngsters a platform to showcase their talents, cultural and creative products.

Chi Lam Vai (茨林圍, aka Chi Lam Chuen – 茨林村) known in Portuguese as "Pátio do Espinho", is a 400-year-old, formerly walled village that lies just a street away from the UNESCO World Heritage-protected Na Tcha Temple, one of Macau's two temples dedicated to the divinity known in Putonghua as Nezha. It is also close to the UNESCO World Heritage-listed Ruins of St Paul's. ■



"Dim Dim", one of the two mascots of the "Intergenerational Fun Day" hosted by the Association of the Friends of Pátio do Espinho Macau (APEM), poses with eventgoers yesterday in Luís de Camões Garden. – Photos courtesy of APEM

Xi-Trump summit – a fine example of China's head-of-state diplomacy

Continued from p.2

On the aviation front, the statement said, "The two countries reached arrangements concerning China's purchase of aircraft from the United States, as well as US guarantees for the supply of aircraft engines and related parts to China".

This, once again, shows that economic and commercial relations between China and the US are, of course, a two-way street. Ideally, they benefit both sides as equally as this is possible in the constantly changing world of international trade.

Xi stated during the summit that China and the United States both stand to gain from cooperation and lose from confrontation. "We should be partners, not rivals", he said. His appeal is one that commands agreement.

I expect other countries to pay close attention to the "milestone" summit, as Xi described it, Tokyo and Brussels (as well as certain individual EU member states) in particular, and draw the right conclusions, such as accepting the fact that Taiwan is an inalienable part of China and, consequently, an internal Chinese affair.

Regrettably, the folly of claiming that Taiwan is an "independent nation" is being supported by a "fan club" of misguided politicians in North America, the EU, Australia and Japan, among others.

Concerning China-US ties, Washington should endeavour to heed The Four Red Lines in China-US Relations "that must not be challenged", announced by the Chinese Embassy in Washington, DC, shortly before Trump's arrival in Beijing Wednesday: 01 The Taiwan Question; 02 Democracy and Human Rights; 03 Paths and Political Systems; and 04 China's Development Right.

I am realistically optimistic that Sino-US ties have entered a new course, particularly for reasons of political and economic pragmatism. However, the desired partnership needs to be carefully cultivated by both sides; mutual respect and trust are the *sine qua non*.
– Harald Brüning

*Xi, Trump hold private meeting at Zhongnanhai in Beijing <https://www.macaupostdaily.com/news/28223>

** Xi cites philosophy of harmony to promote China-US coexistence <https://www.macaupostdaily.com/news/28230>

*** Its pronunciation is very unlike the one of the English pronoun "he". Its Putonghua pronunciation is similar to the guttural "ch" in the Scottish word "loch" ("lake") or the Spanish "j" in José. "Hé" is the core of the Confucian ideal "harmony without uniformity", i.e., a state of balanced coexistence. It is also the first character in the word for "peace" (和平 – héping).

**** The concept is controversial among political scientists. I recommend reading US political scientist Joseph S. Nye, Jr.'s (1937-2025) "Understanding International Conflicts – An Introduction to Theory and History", Third Edition, pages 11-19, about the controversy. Incidentally, the book's "The Peloponnesian War" chapter quotes Karl Marx as observing that "men make history, but not in conditions of their own choosing".

***** Briefing by Foreign Minister Wang Yi on China-US summit and common understandings <https://www.macaupostdaily.com/news/28228>

*****China, US achieve positive outcomes in economic, trade consultations: MOC <https://www.macaupostdaily.com/news/28229>

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Forum discusses role of non-tertiary education in achieving appropriate economic diversification

Armando Neves

An educational forum hosted by the Youth Association of the Chinese Educators' Association of Macau was held at the Macau Science Centre (MSC) in Nape on Saturday.

According to an association statement, the forum –co-hosted by the Chinese Educators' Association of Macau (EDUM) – was themed "From 'Education to Helping Macau Prosper' to 'Building Macau with Talent'". It discussed the role of non-tertiary education in achieving Macau's appropriate economic diversification.

Education and Youth Development Bureau (DSEDJ) Deputy Director Iun Pui Iun pointed out in a speech that President Xi Jinping said in 2021,

while addressing a joint meeting of the general assemblies of the Chinese Academy of Sciences (CAS) and the Chinese Academy of Engineering (CAE), as well as the national congress of the China Association for Science and Technology (CAST) that "competition in today's world is a talent competition and education competition."

Iun also said that the bureau continues to improve Macau's professional development system for teaching staff, offering nearly 900 professional development activities in the 2025–2026 school year, totalling 240,000 hours.

Iun highlighted that the bureau is actively promoting the development of digital education and is collaborating

with four national key laboratories to enhance the competencies of teaching staff in six key areas of AI application: assisting instruction, supporting learning, aiding communication, facilitating assessment, contributing to holistic education, and improving administration.

Ma Io Fong, chairman of the Youth Association of EDUM, noted in his speech at the one-day forum that 2026 marks the beginning of the nation's 15th Five-Year Plan. At this critical juncture in the development of a strong education system, Ma said that Macau's education sector must not only "help Macau to prosper" but also "build up Macau". He added that young teachers should actively connect with community resources to align classroom instruction with the needs of Macau's '1+4' industrial development strategy, thereby paving the way for students' future career development.

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



Youth Association of the Chinese Educators' Association of Macau Chairman Ma Io Fong delivers a speech during Saturday's forum at the Macau Science Centre in Nape.



Guangdong Polytechnic Normal University (GPNU) instructor Ma Dongying speaks to reporters on the sidelines of Saturday's forum at the Macau Science Centre.

– Photos: Armando Neves

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.

Ma Dongying, an instructor from Guangdong Polytechnic

Normal University (GPNU), told reporters on the sidelines of the event that non-tertiary education in Macau should focus on cultivating students' technological literacy to support the appropriate diversification of the economy. She emphasised that policy guidance and the development of school platforms are equally important, and that curricula, teaching staff, and funding must be fully aligned accordingly. ■

Health Bureau urges travellers to remain vigilant over hantavirus cases

Khalel Vallo

The local Health Bureau (SSM) said in a statement last week that it is continuing to monitor developments surrounding a hantavirus outbreak linked to an Atlantic cruise ship, urging residents travelling overseas, particularly to South America, to strengthen personal hygiene and avoid contact with rodents and their excretions.

The bureau said the advisory follows a notification released by the World Health Organisation (WHO) on Wednesday regarding confirmed hantavirus infections connected to a cruise vessel operating in the Atlantic region.

According to the WHO, passengers and most crew members had disembarked by May 10 and have returned to their home countries or transit destinations, while health authorities in the relevant countries continue contact tracing and monitoring measures.

As of May 13, a total of 11 cases had been reported, including three deaths. Among the reported cases, eight were confirmed infections, two were classified as suspected cases, and one remained under investigation.

The bureau said all confirmed cases involved infection with the Andes virus, which is the only hantavirus strain known to allow limited human-to-human transmission. The bureau noted that person-to-person transmission generally requires prolonged close contact and is more commonly seen among family members, intimate partners, caregivers, and healthcare workers.

Citing the WHO's assessment, the bureau said the public health risk for individuals associated with the cruise ship was considered "moderate", while the overall risk to the global general population remained "low". The bureau added that Macau has not recorded any hantavirus infection cases over the

past 30 years, indicating that the local transmission risk remains low.

The hantavirus disease is caused by infection with hantaviruses and can manifest as haemorrhagic fever with renal syndrome (HFRS) or hantavirus pulmonary syndrome (HPS), according to the statement. The incubation period for HFRS is generally between 12 and 16 days, but can extend up to 56 days, while HPS usually develops within six days to several weeks after exposure, averaging around 14 days.

The statement said that the disease is primarily transmitted through exposure to saliva, urine or faeces from infected rodents. Humans may become infected through direct contact with contaminated materials or by inhaling virus-containing aerosols, noting that early symptoms also include fever, fatigue and muscle pain.

In severe cases, patients with HFRS may develop bleeding complications and kidney damage, potentially progressing to acute renal failure, the statement said, while HPS may lead to coughing, shortness of breath, respiratory failure and shock.

The bureau noted that HFRS is mainly reported in Asia, Europe and Africa, while HPS is more commonly found in North and South America. As there is currently no specific treatment for hantavirus infection, the bureau stressed that prevention remains the most effective strategy.

Residents are advised to maintain good personal hygiene, wash their hands regularly, keep living environments clean, carry out rodent control measures, avoid contact with wild rodents and wear waterproof gloves when handling potentially contaminated animals or excreta, the statement said.

The Health Bureau said it will continue monitoring the international situation and urged residents to stay alert to rodent-related infection risks, particularly when travelling to affected regions. ■

INCLUSION CONFERENCE & FESTIVAL

May 19th 2026 @ School of Nations

MELCO 新濠

9.00 am	OPENING & WELCOME SPEECH	12.50 pm	MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING – PARENTAL SUPPORT In traditional Chinese by Sandy Sinn (Hong Kong)
9.40 am	HOW A SENSE OF COHERENCE ENHANCES SELF-AWARENESS AND SELF-ADVOCACY by Karine Estadieu (Macau)	2.00 pm	GUT HEALTH AND PROBIOTICS: SUPPORTING INDIVIDUALS WITH ID In traditional Chinese by Sally Poon (Hong Kong)
10.15 am	OFFLINE CONNECTION: REDISCOVERING TRADITIONAL & NOVEL APPROACHES TO RELATIONSHIP BUILDING by Dr. Amber Perymon (Hong Kong / USA)	2.40 pm	PSYCHOLOGICAL DEVELOPMENT & MENTAL HEALTH CHALLENGES IN CHILDREN AND ADOLESCENTS In traditional Chinese by Dr. Zhang Ni (China)
11.25 am	CHAMPIONING INCLUSION: LIFE, SPORT, AND THE BATTLE TO BE FULLY SEEN by various Special Olympics athletes & advocates	3.15 pm	Q&A SESSION In traditional Chinese
12.05 pm	PANEL DISCUSSION		

presented by: MELCO, SCHOOL OF THE NATIONS, 銀河娛樂 GALAXY ENTERTAINMENT, 夢想無界基金 WE CAN DREAM TOGETHER

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Philippine Consulate General spotlights 'Baybayin' to youngsters



This photo shows the materials prepared for participants to use during Baybayin 101 held at the Philippine Consulate General in Macau in Nape yesterday. – Photos: Rui Pastorin



Benjamin Descallar Jr. poses after yesterday's interview at the Philippine Consulate General in Macau in Nape.

Interview by Rui Pastorin

The Philippine Consulate General in Macau yesterday gathered youngsters to introduce them to, and spark their interest in “Baybayin”, an ancient, pre-colonial Philippine script.

Held as part of the consulate’s activities commemorating the Philippines’ National Heritage Month, “Baybayin 101” marked the third time that they have hosted an event geared towards enabling participants to learn about the country’s “Baybayin” script, which originates from the Tagalog word baybay or “to spell”.

Sessions started a year ago for the consulate general’s personnel and local Filipino community leaders, with yesterday’s edition being specifically aimed at youths aged 12 to 17.

The around two-hour, lively session was led by Benjamin Descallar Jr., aka Jet, an electrical engineer with a strong passion for and personal interest in the ancient script, particularly advocating for learning the way it was used in the past. He introduced the history and background of Baybayin to a total of 12 youngsters, while also teaching the basics of reading and writing in it.

Highlighting its background, Descallar told the *Post* before the session that research shows that Filipinos already had their

own writing system across the archipelago before the arrival of the Spanish on March 16, 1521, while there was also a high percentage of literacy.

The script features 17 syllabic characters, with 14 consonants and three major vowels, according to information from yesterday’s session, where it was also noted that each character is a combination of a consonant and a vowel, except for the major vowels.

A lost script, Descallar highlighted that Baybayin has had a resurgence in recent years, with some opting to have the script as a tattoo. Baybayin can also be observed in calligraphy, the Philippine passport, street signage in the Philippine capital of Manila, and on money, along with symbols on government offices, Descallar added.

“We are trying to spread the knowledge as far as we can, especially to the younger ones”, Descallar said, adding that the event’s aim was to garner interest and possibly enable them to share what they’ve learnt with others who they interact with every day, particularly Filipinos who have lived outside the country for a long time.

And whether near or far from the Philippines and regardless of whether or not they are well-versed in their mother tongue, Descallar highlighted the significance of

knowing about one’s heritage. “It’s important for people to know their heritage. For Filipinos, even if they are born outside of the Philippines, their blood is still Filipino. So, it’s very important to know who you are before you try to become what you want to be”, he said, harkening back to a saying by Philippine national hero José Rizal (1861 to 1896).

Descallar highlighted how he hopes that youngsters could continue to learn, even as a hobby, after yesterday’s lesson. Speaking about how his interest in the script started, he said:

“I started learning on my own. And I joined Facebook pages” he said, particularly highlighting one called “Baybayin Buhayin” (“Revive Baybayin”) that also provides materials for learning the script along with those for disseminating information to others interested. “It really is just a passion and interest, not actually a profession. I am not a linguist”, Descallar said, but was quick to add he hopes that others will also experience that same interest, enough to pursue it as a passion outside of their own professional lives. “I hope after today, everybody will pick something up”.

Yesterday’s session was also joined by Consul General Edna May G. Lazaro and other staff of the consulate. ■

Macao Int’l Museum Day Carnival draws crowds with cultural activities



Youngsters perform Cantonese Opera during yesterday's “Macao International Museum Day Carnival 2026” in Praça dos Lótus in Ilha Verde district yesterday. – Photos: Khalel Vallo

Khalel Vallo

The “Macao International Museum Day Carnival 2026” brought 26 museums to Praça dos Lótus in Ilha Verde district yesterday, offering interactive games, workshops and performances to celebrate International Museum Day and promote cultural engagement within the community.

The one-day annual event hosted by Macau’s museums featured a range of activities, including children’s Cantonese Opera performances, educational workshops and interactive booths, attracting residents and visitors throughout the afternoon.

The opening ceremony was officiated by several government officials and cultural representatives, including Cultural Affairs Bureau (IC) President Deland Leong Wai Man, who addressed attendees during the event. In her speech, Leong highlighted this year’s International Museum Day theme, “Museums Uniting a Divided World”, describing museums as important public spaces that connect different cultures and communities.

“As open and accessible public spaces, museums serve as important links connecting different cultures”, Leong said, noting that museums across Macau joined hands this year to organise exhibitions, workshops, creative competitions and other activities aimed at revitalising museum resources and encouraging greater public participation through innovative experiences. She added that hosting the carnival in Praça dos Lótus integrated historical, artistic, cultural and technological elements into community life while providing a platform for inclusiveness and cultural sharing among different age groups. “Over the years, museums across Macau have remained committed to bringing cultural and museum resources closer to the public”, Leong said, adding that such efforts help strengthen residents’ cultural identity.

During the opening ceremony, organisers also held the inauguration of the “Senior Docent Training Programme 2026” and the award presentation for the “2026 Macao International Museum Day Joint Museums Postcard Design Contest”. The docent programme* aims to enhance seniors’ cultural knowledge and communication



Cultural Affairs Bureau (IC) President Deland Leong Wai Man addresses the carnival's opening ceremony yesterday.

skills through training, visits and guided tour practice, according to a statement by the bureau yesterday.

Open to permanent residents aged between 55 and 75, the programme expanded its quota from 25 to 30 participants due to strong public response, the statement said. Meanwhile, the event’s postcard design competition encouraged participants to reflect on the role of museums in contemporary society through creative expression.

The contest featured children, youth, illustration and AI tool creation categories, receiving 185 entries in total. Throughout the carnival, participating museums hosted numerous themed activities and workshops, including cultural games, heritage challenges, painting demonstrations and interactive science activities designed to highlight the educational role of museums.

Among the participating institutions were the Macau Museum of Art (MAM) in Nape, Maritime Museum in Barra, and Macau Science Centre (MSC) in Nape. ■

* A docent programme is a structured initiative designed to train and manage volunteers – known as docents – who act as guides and educators within cultural institutions. Derived from the Latin word *docere* (to teach), these programmes bridge the gap between a collection and its audience. While most commonly associated with museums, these programmes are also found in art galleries, zoos, botanical gardens, and historical heritage sites. – Gemini

Melco Resorts & Entertainment presents
Macau Premiere of
A MAX BESSMERTNY FILM
THE VIOLIN CASE
走失的小提琴
In theaters 22.05.2026

Award-winning Director Max Bessmertny (6th from right) and Virginia Ho Hoi lan (4th from right) pose with cast members, guests and representatives attending Friday's premiere of Bessmertny's first feature length theatrical film "The Violin Case" at Studio City Cinema in Cotai, which saw many ranging from film lovers to the crew behind the movie to celebrate its first public showing on the big screen. – Photo: Rui Pastorin

Govt receives 222 bids for 7 stalls in Toi San market's future food court

Tony Wong

The Municipal Affairs Bureau (IAM) received 222 bids for its public tender for the lease and operation of seven stalls to be set up in the future food court in the Tamagnini Barbosa Market, before the submission deadline on Friday.

The Tamagnini Barbosa district in the northern peninsula is known as Toi San in Cantonese.

The bureau launched the tender on April 1. Potential bidders were required to submit their tenders by 1 p.m. on Friday last week.

The bureau announced the number of bids submitted for the tender in a statement on Friday.

The two-floor Toi San Market opened in 2005.

The bureau, the public entity tasked with managing the city's wet markets, is scheduled to launch a project in the next quarter to revitalise the Toi San Market. The project will include converting the entire first floor into a food court with around 150 seats.

In addition to various stalls selling fresh food and traditional groceries across the market's two floors, the wet-market municipal complex in Toi San district currently has nine stalls selling

local favourites on the ground floor. However, the building currently does not have a dedicated cooked food centre with a dining area.

The upcoming revamp will convert the entire first floor into a food court with 16 stalls, while the entire ground floor will be dedicated to selling fresh food and traditional groceries. The ground floor will be reconfigured to house 23 stalls to be operated by the current stallholders selling fresh food and traditional groceries.

The current nine stalls selling local delicacies will be relocated to the future food court on the first floor. The other seven stalls will be allocated to new operators through the public tender that was launched early last month.

The bureau will now start assessing the submitted bids based on various criteria in order to choose the winners of the seven stalls.

The revamp project was initially slated to start in the first quarter of 2026. However, the bureau announced in a press conference in March that the project was now scheduled to get off the ground in the third quarter of 2026. ■



The new version of an artist's rendition released by the Municipal Affairs Bureau (IAM) in March shows the future food court on the first floor of the Toi San Market.

2026 legislature Open Day draws 4,300 visits, up 62.3 pct

Tony Wong

This year's annual Open Day of the Legislative Assembly (AL) yesterday drew a total of 4,300 visits, the legislature said.

Located near Macau Tower, the Legislative Assembly building was open to members of the public between 10 a.m. and 6 p.m. yesterday.

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

This year's number of visits to the Open Day represented an increase of 62.3 percent from the 2,649 recorded in last year's Open Day.

The legislature's 2024 Open Day drew 2,340 visits.

During yesterday's Open Day event, members of the public were able to visit the building's atrium, the hemicycle used for plenary sessions, the multi-purpose hall, and the three meeting rooms used for committee meetings, where information panels were set up for presentations, while legislators and Legislative Assembly staff members were there to provide explanations.

The local legislature consists of 33 members.

Legislative Assembly President André Cheong Weng Chon, Vice President Alan Ho Ion Sang, and other lawmakers were present during yesterday's Open Day to greet and talk to visitors, some of whom took photos with them.

Speaking to reporters during yesterday's Open Day, Cheong noted that the Open Day event aimed to enable residents to gain a better understanding of the legislature's facilities and operations.

Cheong underlined that residents' enhanced understanding of its operations can help the legislature better exercise its legislative and supervisory duties and play its role as a bridge between them and the government.

The current, eighth term of



Visitors take photos of a singing performance in the legislature's hemicycle during yesterday's Open Day. — Photo: Tony Wong

the Macau Special Administrative Region's (MSAR) Legislative Assembly commenced on October 16 last year.

Cheong is a newcomer to the legislature after serving as the MSAR's secretary for administration and justice between December 20, 2019 and October 15 last year. Cheong is one of the seven members whom Chief Executive Sam Hou Fai appointed to the 33-member legislature. Cheong was unanimously elected by his peers as the hemicycle's speaker during the new legislative term's first plenary session on October 16 last year.

Cheong also said yesterday that the current-term legislature has launched a new programme, enabling schools, community associations, and residents in general who are unable to visit the Legislative Assembly building on the Open Day to book a visit on other days throughout the year.

Cheong also said that the government's stronger cooperation has enabled the current-term legislature to complete reviewing bills submitted by the government more quickly.

After the passage of its outline during a plenary session in the legislature's hemicycle, a bill submitted by the government will

be passed to one of the legislature's standing committees for an article-by-article review between legislators and government officials, after which it will be resubmitted to another plenary session for its second and final debate and article-by-article vote. Afterwards, the bill will be promulgated in the Official Gazette (BO) to become law.

Since the current-term legislature started on October 16 last year, seven bills have been passed in their second and final reading, Cheong noted.

During yesterday's Open Day event, 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, arranged for their students to perform at various locations in the Legislative Assembly building.

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

5-day INCLUSION Conference & Festival starts today

Rui Pastorin

The INCLUSION Conference & Festival kicks off its programme today, with two days of free-admission conferences set between today and tomorrow, followed by three consecutive days of the "Macau Golf Masters" tournament.

According to a recent statement by organisers Charity Association of Macau Business Readers, more than 600 participants from Macau and elsewhere in the Greater Bay Area (GBA) and other parts of the world are expected to join the meaningful programme, which altogether gathers international experts, educators, healthcare professionals, families, advocates, and athletes.

Regarding the two-day conferences, the opening conference will be hosted by MGM at MGM COTAI, while the second day hosted by Melco Resorts & Entertainment will take place at the School



This undated handout photo recently provided by the Charity Association of Macau Business Readers shows a group photo of participants in the Macau Golf Masters.

of the Nations tomorrow, the statement said.

The statement added that this year's event centres on "evidence-based approaches and practical strategies aimed at strengthening support systems for neurodiverse individuals and their families, while

encouraging broader community participation and long-term inclusion initiatives". Among the core conference topics to be tackled are mental health, depression, and suicide prevention strategies; and neurodiversity, lifelong learning, and independent living, according

to the statement.

Keynote presentations and panel discussions, as well as consultation sessions and support groups for parents and caregivers, will be part of the programme. Both conference days are open to professionals, educators, parents, caregivers,

NGOs, and advocates from Macau and the rest of the GBA, the statement said.

The final three days will meanwhile be for the Macau Golf Masters at the Macau International Golf (MIG), with the statement noting that the tournament will feature elite golfers with neurodiversity and physical disabilities from around the world, with 48 players competing across five divisions.

Charity Association of Macau Business Readers President Paulo A. Azevedo was quoted by the statement as saying: "Our goal is not simply to host an event, but to contribute to a more informed, connected, and inclusive community across Macau and the Greater Bay Area."

Galaxy Entertainment Group's (GEG) Broadway Macau serves as the event's official hospitality partner for international delegates. ■

Youngsters nurture bonds through sustained Sino-US exchanges

Analysis

SHANGHAI – At a Shanghai stadium, Chinese and American students squared off across ping-pong tables for a friendly match, where the rhythmic bounces of the ball alternated with shared laughter. The spirited rally has enabled the younger generation to engage with a history that predates them by decades.

In 1971, a US table tennis team made a historic trip to China, marking the reopening of channels for friendly people-to-people exchanges between the two countries.

Fifth-grader Xie Siyi, who joined American youngsters for the Shanghai event in April to celebrate the 55th anniversary of Ping-Pong Diplomacy, recalled the joy of the moment. “I hope we can play together like this more often. We may come from different places, but our laughter and cheers are the same,” Xie said.

Young people today from both countries are increasingly seen as vital bridges in bilateral relations. They are expected to strengthen bonds of friendship and goodwill to advance the stable, healthy and sustainable development of Sino-US ties.

After accompanying young athletes on the Shanghai tour, Ron Chow, co-chair of the US-China Youth and Student Exchange Association, told Xinhua he hopes young people from both countries will continue to break down cultural barriers and build friendships.

“In doing so, students from both sides may feel more connected to one another, thereby contributing to the people-to-people friendship,” Chow said, adding that his association will keep working hard in this regard.

A GROWING ENDEAVOR

The moments around ping-pong are just one chapter of a much larger story. In November 2023, China announced an initiative to invite 50,000 young Americans to China

for exchange and study programs over five years. Various organizations across the Pacific have hosted activities including cultural tours, sports events and tech seminars.

To support this initiative, China has launched the Young Envoys Scholarship program to provide short-term study, exchange and internship opportunities for young Americans.

By December 2025, more than 42,000 young people from over 500 schools and institutions of the United States had visited China under the initiative, according to a report released by Xinhua Institute, a think tank affiliated with Xinhua News Agency.

The fact that 80 percent of the five-year goal had already been reached speaks to the strong desire among American youth to understand China, said Milinda Sylvain, principal of Diamond Minds Transformational Leadership Academy in Miami, Florida.

During an event held last December at China’s Consulate-General in Chicago, some participants of the initiative shared their experiences in China. Emmanuel Garcia-Gomez Jr., a student at Muscatine High School, was one of them.

“I think to get to know China through school or class is one thing, but to actually get to know China by being in it and knowing the people is a whole different thing,” he said. “The taste, the feel, the smell, the sights of China really paint a picture of how good a place it can be.”

MORE THAN FRIENDSHIP

Young people are especially well-placed to demonstrate creativity and originality. David Chong, founder and president of the US -China Youth and Student Exchange Association, said youth exchanges used to be confined to school visits or sightseeing tours; now they have become more professional and diverse.

In late April, Shanghai hosted the 2026 China-US Youth Health

Dialogue. Around 100 doctors, medical students, and professionals from the two countries gathered to discuss cutting-edge medicine, clinical practice, and talent development.

Through research collaboration, hospitals in the United States and China can work together to answer key questions more quickly and make expensive medical procedures, such as spinal fusion, more affordable and accessible, said Aiyush Bansal, a research program manager at the Center for Neurosciences and Spine at Virginia Mason Medical Center.

Georgios Antonios Margonis, a senior research scientist at the Department of Surgery, Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center, noted that while the United States has a long tradition in biomedical research, China can offer rich, diverse data from its large population. “That can be a very successful blend,” Margonis said.

Also in April, nearly 100 American high school students took part in a tech-focused event in Beijing. They visited tech centers, interacted with humanoid robots, and explored with Chinese scholars feasible paths for artificial intelligence (AI) to empower the inheritance of cultural heritage.

Co-organizers of the event, including the US -China Youth and Student Exchange Association, signed a cooperation agreement to promote youth exchange programs across fields such as AI, ecological conservation, and cultural communication.

“China offers real-world scenarios where AI technologies can be trained, implemented, and put to use for the benefit of the people,” said Chong.

Looking ahead, Chong expressed the hope to deepen collaboration with China in AI and beyond. “We’re looking forward to bringing 1,000 young American students and scientists to China each year for sustained, reciprocal exchanges,” Chong said. – Xinhua

China’s ancient encyclopedia strengthens cross-Strait cultural exchanges

Analysis

LANZHOU – In a climate-controlled repository in northwest China’s Gansu Province, Fung Mingchu leaned toward a display case, her eyes fixed on a rare surviving set of ancient Chinese texts.

For the former director of the Taipei Palace Museum, the moment carried the weight of decades.

“My wish has finally come true,” Fung told Xinhua. After spending years guarding the Wenyuange copy, she has now seen with her own eyes all the surviving three-and-a-half copies of the Siku Quanshu.

The Siku Quanshu, or The Complete Library of the Four Treasuries, is considered one of the most comprehensive book collections in Chinese history. It was compiled during the Qing Dynasty (1644-1911).

Of the seven copies originally produced, only three and a half survive today. The Wenyuange copy is housed at the Taipei Palace Museum, the Wenjing copy at the National Library of China in Beijing, and the Wensuge copy in Lanzhou, capital city of Gansu.

Chu Hui-liang, a former researcher at the Taipei Palace Museum, shared Fung’s excitement as they viewed the neatly stacked 1,128 camphorwood book chests housing the Wensuge copy.

“As descendants of the Chinese nation, it is a source of great pride to witness this monumental work with our own eyes,” Chu said.

“We often call the stains on ancient texts ‘age spots.’ But the Wensuge copy is nearly free of such marks. It proves that through the efforts of generations of book guardians in Gansu, it has been well preserved,” Chu added.

Xiao Xuezhi, director of the Gansu Provincial Library where the repository is located, said local authorities have invested heavily in improving preservation conditions since the Wensuge copy arrived in Gansu. The province has also set up dedicated institutions and staffing arrangements to ensure long-term protection.

Over the years, the library has developed a preservation approach suited to local conditions, using the building’s structure and natural ventilation to regulate temperature and humidity, while relying on camphorwood chests to protect against insects and mildew.

Another former Taipei Palace Museum researcher, Lin Tieng-jen, gently touched the pages and the wooden case with gloved hands under the guidance of museum staff. A specialist in ancient Chinese cartography, Lin had systematically studied the Wenyuange copy but rarely had the chance to touch it.

“I can’t bear to let go, yet I dare not touch it too much,” he said. The Wensuge copy, he noted, is similar to the Wenyuange copy in the calligraphy, line spacing and even the design of the wooden cases.

“The Siku Quanshu is a monumental collection that preserves the very essence of Chinese heritage,” Fung said, emphasizing its growing research value. She expressed the hope for future joint exhibitions.

Upon learning that the Wensuge copy has been digitized and is set for facsimile publication, Fung envisioned a “digital reunion” of the copies from both sides of the Strait.

Fung also expected more cross-Strait efforts to help people explore the classics through digital platforms and cultural creative products. – Xinhua

Symposium held for social sciences sector to study, implement Xi Jinping Thought on Culture

BEIJING – A symposium for the social sciences sector to study and implement Xi Jinping Thought on Culture was held in Beijing yesterday, with participants calling for accelerating the building of a Chinese intellectual system in philosophy and social sciences.

Li Shulei, a member of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Committee and head of the Publicity Department of the CPC Central Committee, attended the symposium and delivered a speech.

Noting that China’s philosophy and social sciences community has steadily advanced knowledge innovation, theoretical innovation and method innovation since the 18th National Congress of the CPC in 2012, participants at the symposium called for further

study and implementation of Xi Jinping Thought on Culture and accelerating the building of a Chinese intellectual system in philosophy and social sciences.

Participants at the symposium urged deeper systematic and academic research and interpretation of the Party’s new theories, more research into major theoretical and practical issues related to Chinese modernization, and greater efforts to promote the inheritance and development of Chinese culture as well as the exchanges and mutual learning between civilizations.

They said these efforts would help advance the high-quality development of philosophy and social sciences and contribute more wisdom and strength to advancing Chinese modernization. – Xinhua



Visitors wearing VR glasses experience archaeology scenes at Zaozhuang Museum, Shandong Province, yesterday. Museums across the country have been receiving large numbers of visitors in the run-up to today's International Museum Day. – Xinhua

Prabowo recognises 'problems' with free meal scheme

Jakarta – Indonesian President Prabowo Subianto acknowledged on Saturday that the government's programme to provide free meals to combat malnutrition, his signature project, "comes with many problems".

Thousands of people have fallen ill since the much-hyped billion-dollar scheme was launched in January 2025, with critics calling for its suspension over hygiene concerns and accusations of corruption.

"It's true that there are many problems and challenges. Free nutritious meals comes with many problems, we must put things in order," Prabowo said in a speech in East Java posted to his official YouTube channel on Saturday.

The scheme, which is said to have provided meals to more than 61 million people by March, was also among the first to be cut back as Jakarta seeks to counter the economic impact of the Middle East war.

Indonesia cut the programme from six days a week to five in March to save up to 40 trillion rupiah (US\$2.3 billion).

Prabowo said that the scheme still has public support despite the list of problems.

"Free nutritious meals are so important for our nation. Everywhere I go, I meet ordinary people, farmers, saying, 'sir, please

don't stop the free nutritious meals programme, this really helps my grandchildren to be able to eat,'" he said.

The scheme was Prabowo's flagship policy in the 2024 presidential election campaign.

Anti-graft watchdog Indonesia Corruption Watch (ICW) filed a complaint last week against Dandan Hindayana, the head of the National Nutrition Agency tasked with distributing the free meals, local media reported.

ICW claimed in its submission to the Corruption Eradication Commission that there were discrepancies of nearly US\$50 million in the halal certification procurement budget.

Prabowo said he would take swift action against anyone "who violates the rules".

"My government has no hesitation: anyone who violates the rules, who strays, who abuses their authority, will be disciplined, we will clean them up, we will remove them from their position," he said.

More than 20 percent of children in Indonesia are affected by stunting caused by severe malnutrition.

The government hoped the scheme would provide meals for at least 82.9 million people, or about one-third of the country's population, in its bid to combat food insecurity. – AFP

Indonesia's first giant panda is set to charm the public

BOGOR – With his signature black and white fur, the first giant panda born in Indonesia is growing and thriving ahead of his public debut this month.

Satrio Wiratama was born in November last year in Taman Safari Indonesia, a zoo in Cisarua, West Java, to a pair of pandas loaned by China to Indonesia.

"There are so many Indonesians who had to go all the way to China just to see baby pandas. Now they don't have to anymore," zoo director Aswin Sumampau told reporters Friday.

Inside the enclosure built to welcome his parents, the 170-day-old cub, whose name means "brave and noble warrior", was playing with a panda stuffed toy and a bamboo teether.

His mother, Hu Chun, and his father, Cai Tao, arrived in Indonesia in 2017 when they were both seven years old as part of "panda diplomacy" aimed at celebrating 60 years of bilateral ties between the two countries.

Nicknamed Rio, the cub was the only panda born in a zoo outside China in the past three years, Aswin said.

Ahead of his debut later this month, Rio has already amassed many fans who can't wait to see him.



Satrio Wiratama meaning "noble and brave knight" and known as Rio, is a 170 days old male giant panda cub, the first panda cub born in Indonesia from a couple brought from China in 2017, at the Panda Palace of Taman Safari Indonesia in Bogor, West Java on Friday. – AFP

"The little panda is cute, adorable and totally heart-melting," a fan wrote on the zoo's social media page.

Rio currently weighs more than 11 kilograms and is still learning to climb, according to Bongot Huaso Mulia, the veterinarian caring for him.

The cub, whose coat is still peppered with reddish fur, is very

active and still nursing, he said.

China has a long history of using giant pandas - a national icon - in its diplomatic outreach.

Indonesia maintains it has no maritime disputes with China in the South China Sea, unlike other Asian nations, and does not contest ownership of reefs or islets there. – AFP

Train driver tested positive for drugs in Bangkok train-bus collision

BANGKOK – The train driver in the Bangkok train-bus collision case tested positive for drugs, Thai media reported yesterday.

On Saturday afternoon, a train traveling from Chachoengsao Province to Bang Sue in Bangkok collided with a bus at a railway crossing in the center of Bangkok, triggering a fire accompanied by popping sounds. Several other

cars and motorcycles were also involved. The accident has caused eight deaths and 32 injuries. All the deceased were people on the bus.

More detailed urine test results of the train driver and the railway crossing signalman will be officially announced today, and the relevant personnel will be charged, Thai police said.

– Xinhua



Humanoid robots dressed as Buddhist monks attend at a parade as part of a 'Lotus Lantern Festival' to celebrate the upcoming Buddha's birthday, in Seoul on Saturday. (More on page 16) – AFP

Philippines asks top court to allow ICC drug war arrest of senator

MANILA – The Philippines said it has asked the country's Supreme Court to allow it to arrest ex-president Rodrigo Duterte's chief drug war enforcer to stand trial in an international tribunal.

The International Criminal Court last week unsealed an arrest warrant against Senator Ronald Dela Rosa, accusing him along with Duterte and other "co-perpetrators" of the "crime against humanity of murder".

Dela Rosa briefly sought refuge in the Senate last week while asking the Philippine Supreme Court to stop an ongoing attempt by government agents to arrest him.

"By his own conduct, he has placed himself outside the protection of the law," the government's chief lawyer, Solicitor-General Darlene Berberabe, said in a filing that asked the court to dismiss Dela Rosa's petition.

"Until he submits himself to lawful authorities, he must be deemed a fugitive from justice and should not be allowed to seek any relief from the courts," said the document, dated May 16 but only made available to the media yesterday.

Dela Rosa's current whereabouts were unknown after he discreetly left the Senate building on Thursday.

The justice department said Friday the ICC warrant would only be served once the Supreme Court resolves Dela Rosa's Supreme Court petition – unless he tried to flee abroad in which case he would be detained.

The court made no immediate comment.

Dela Rosa has said the ICC warrant was illegal since the Philippines pulled out in 2019 from the treaty that created the tribunal.

Berberabe argued that withdrawal from the treaty "does not relieve a state party from cooperating in proceedings already initiated before the ICC".

The ICC prosecutor launched an examination of the Philippine drug crackdown in 2018.

The bloody campaign, launched by Duterte after being elected president in 2016, left thousands dead, many of them drug users and low-level narcotics peddlers, according to human rights monitors.

Duterte was arrested in March last year, flown to the Netherlands on the same day, and is detained in The Hague awaiting trial.

Dela Rosa served as national police chief from 2016 to 2018.

After retirement, he was elected to the Senate in 2019 and retained his seat in last year's midterm elections. – AFP

5 suspected anti-govt armed members killed in clashes with troops in central Philippines

MANILA – Five suspected anti-government armed members were killed in a series of clashes with government troops in Negros Occidental province in the central Philippines on Saturday, the Philippine army said yesterday.

The military said fighting

erupted between soldiers and members of the New People's Army at around 6 a.m. Saturday [local time], and two more encounters followed later in the day at around 2 p.m. and 5 p.m., according to the military.

Government troops recovered

several firearms and explosives from the encounter sites, including a machine gun, rifles, a grenade launcher and a hand grenade.

Local authorities said at least 180 families from three affected villages were evacuated to safer areas amid the fighting. – Xinhua

Nepali duo break own records on Everest

Anup Ojha

KATHMANDU – A Nepali climber dubbed the “Everest Man”, Kami Rita Sherpa, scaled Mount Everest for a record 32nd time yesterday, while Lhakpa Sherpa broke her own women’s record with an 11th summit.

“Today, Nepali climbers have once again written history on this glorious mountain,” Prime Minister Balen Shah said, in a post on social media.

“Such historic achievements can only be attained through unwavering courage, strict self-discipline, and sincere dedication to one’s work,” he added.

Kami Rita Sherpa, 56, first stood on the top of Mount Everest in 1994 while working for a commercial expedition.

Since then, he has climbed Everest almost every year, guiding clients.

Lhakpa Sherpa, 52, known as the “Mountain Queen”, first stood on the top of Everest in 2000, becoming the first Nepali woman to successfully summit and descend the world’s highest peak.

“This is another milestone in Nepal’s mountaineering history,” Himal Gautam, spokesperson for Nepal’s Tourism Department, told AFP.

“Their record gives greater excitement to other climbers...By breaking records through

healthy competition on Everest, will help make climbing safer, more dignified, and better managed.”

‘Just working’

Kami Rita Sherpa, speaking in 2024, after another ascent of the 8,849-metre peak said that he was “just working” and did not plan on setting records.

A climbing boom has made mountaineering a lucrative business since Edmund Hillary and Tenzing Norgay Sherpa made the first ascent in 1953.

Nepal has issued a record 492 Everest permits this season, with a city of tents set up at the foot of Everest for climbers and support staff.

Shah yesterday also praised the contribution of the Sherpa community, calling them “unsung heroes of the Himalayas,” for bravely accepting risks and safely guiding climbers from around the world to the summit.

As most mountaineers attempt the ascent with the help of at least one Nepali guide, about a thousand climbers are expected to head for the summit in the next few days.

The high numbers have rekindled concerns about overcrowding on the mountain, especially if poor weather shortens the climbing window. – AFP



Supporters and activists of the Jamaat-e-Islami party holding placards protest against rising fuel prices triggered by the Middle East war, in Islamabad, Pakistan on Friday. – AFP

Indian drug bust seizes 227 kg of Captagon in first big haul

MUMBAI – Indian police have seized 227 of the powerful synthetic stimulant Captagon* worth nearly US\$19 million, the country’s first seizure of the drug, the interior minister said on Saturday.

Anti-narcotics officers also arrested a Syrian national, who the ministry said was a member of an “international drug syndicate”.

Captagon is little known in India, and the ministry said the drugs had been smuggled into the country in a container from Syria “with sheep wool as a declared consignment”, a statement said.

“Preliminary investigation has revealed that the seized consignment was intended for transshipment to the Gulf region, particularly Saudi Arabia and neighbouring Middle Eastern countries,” it said.

The drug became Syria’s largest export during the civil war that erupted in 2011, with its trade serving as a key funding source for the government of ousted president Bashar al-Assad.

Syrian authorities have reported numerous major seizures of Captagon since Assad’s fall.

Neighbouring countries also continue to report the interception of large shipments.

“Our agencies have achieved the first-

ever seizure of Captagon, the so-called ‘jihadi drug’,” Home Minister Amit Shah said in a statement posted on social media.

“We will clamp down on every gram of drugs entering India or leaving the country using our territory as the transit route,” he said.

Officers first seized 31.5 kg of Captagon tablets after searching a house in the capital New Delhi on May 11.

It said the tablets had been “carefully concealed in a commercial chapati (flat bread) cutting machine which preliminary investigation suggests was intended for export to Jeddah, Saudi Arabia”.

After questioning the Syrian national, anti-narcotics agents then raided a container at Mundra port in the western state of Gujarat, seizing a further 196 kg of Captagon.

“This operation... exposes attempts by international syndicates to use India as a transit hub,” the ministry said.

*Captagon is a highly addictive, synthetic amphetamine-type stimulant. Originally a brand name for a prescription medication in the 1960s, it is now an illegally manufactured street drug commonly trafficked through the Middle East. It is primarily known as “chemical courage” and the “poor man’s cocaine”. – Gemini



Demonstrators holding placards reading “Bring Insiya home” (left) and “Reunite Insiya with her mother” (right), referring to Insiya, who was abducted in 2016 in Amsterdam at the age of two and taken to India where she remains with her father, shout slogans during a protest outside Huis ten Bosch Palace in The Hague on Saturday, on the occasion of Indian President Narendra Modi’s visit to King Willem-Alexander. Narendra Modi visited Netherlands on a three days trip from Friday to yesterday. – AFP

Crackdown in Southeast Asia pushes scam networks to Sri Lanka

Amal Jayasinghe

COLOMBO – A surge in arrests of suspected foreign scammers in Sri Lanka has authorities concerned that the island is fast becoming a hub for online crime, following sweeping crackdowns in hotspots Cambodia and Myanmar.

Officials say some scam networks forced out of countries in Southeast Asia have simply shifted to new bases, increasingly moving operations to Sri Lanka – an attractive destination due to a relaxed visa regime and reliable, high-speed internet.

Since the start of the year, police have arrested more than 1,000 foreigners, mainly from China, Vietnam and India, for alleged involvement in cybercrime, spokesman Fredrick Wootler said, a jump from 430 for the entirety of 2024 and even fewer last year.

Last month, Sri Lankan customs officials intercepted nine Chinese nationals attempting to smuggle used mobile phones and laptops in the hundreds, raising suspicion they were to be used in large-scale fraud operations.

Fraud compounds where scammers lure internet users into fake romantic relationships,

cryptocurrency investments and betting platforms have flourished across Southeast Asia.

Initially largely targeting Chinese speakers, the criminal groups behind the compounds have expanded operations into multiple languages.

Those conducting the scams are sometimes willing con artists, and other times trafficked foreign nationals forced to work.

Officials say the networks operating in Sri Lanka target victims across Asia, including in India, Vietnam and the Philippines, but there are growing concerns Sri Lankans could be next.

Authorities are also investigating whether foreign syndicates were involved in a recent cyberattack on the Sri Lankan treasury that resulted in around US\$2.5 million in losses.

Landlords warned

China, which has stepped up cooperation with regional governments in recent years to crack down on scam networks, has acknowledged the geographical shift.

Beijing’s embassy in Colombo said illicit activity in Sri Lanka had risen following enforcement actions in Cambodia, Myanmar as well as the United Arab Emirates.

“The Chinese government attaches great importance to this trend,” the embassy said in a statement, pledging closer cooperation with Sri Lankan law enforcement agencies.

The networks displaced from Myanmar and Cambodia, where authorities have stepped up raids and deportations, exploit the island’s 30-day tourist visas for nationals of more than 40 countries, including India and China, while others can easily apply for permits online.

Criminal gangs are setting up in rented spaces ranging from luxury villas to office complexes.

Police have begun warning property owners against renting villas and apartments to suspected scam operators, saying they could face prosecution for aiding criminal activity.

The vast scale of these operations has become clearer in recent weeks, with police “getting a lot of calls on a daily basis”, according to spokesman Wootler.

He told AFP that in a single night this week, “we carried out five raids” in the coastal Galle and Matara districts, netting 192 Indian suspects and 29 Nepalis.

Another 280 foreign suspects were arrested last week near the capital Colombo,

and 135 Chinese nationals were apprehended in March at a single scam centre.

Regional crisis

As cases surge, immigration authorities are now playing a larger role in investigations.

“We are getting our agents directly involved because of the increase in the number of cases handled by police,” an immigration official told AFP on condition of anonymity.

The expansion of criminal networks mirrors a broader regional crisis.

A United Nations report issued this year estimated that at least 300,000 people have been trafficked into scam compounds across Southeast Asia.

While Sri Lankan officials say they have not identified foreigners being trafficked into the country, dozens of Sri Lankans have been rescued from scam compounds abroad over the past year.

Wootler said authorities were doing all they could to tackle the growing problem, deporting foreigners who overstay their visa and ensuring those who engage in online crime are “punished by our courts”. – AFP

White House mass prayer event seeks to reclaim US Christian roots

Victoria Lavelle

WASHINGTON, DC – Thousands of people gathered yesterday in downtown Washington for a mass prayer festival featuring speeches by top Trump administration officials – an event critics see as an overt display of Christian nationalism undermining the separation of church and state.

Attendees sang and swayed to Christian music blared out on the National Mall, along with addresses by Christian pastors.

Defence Secretary Pete Hegseth and Speaker of the House Mike Johnson were listed as guest speakers. President Donald Trump and Secretary of State Marco Rubio were scheduled to address the crowd via video.

The gathering was organised by the White House as part of a programme of celebrations for America's 250th anniversary and, in a video message inviting Americans to attend, Hegseth said it was an opportunity to “rededicate this republic to God and country.”

Muscular Christian nationalism has enjoyed a prominent platform since Trump's return to power, and evangelicals form a core element of the president's support base.

Hegseth is a member of an ultra-conservative evangelical church, and his briefings on the Iran war have been notable for their use of bellicose, Christian rhetoric.

“Today, friends, we are in a spiritual war. This is a battle in our day between good and evil, between right and wrong, between truth and lies, between light and darkness,” Pastor Gary Hamrick of Virginia told the crowd.



Christian worshippers listen to speakers and engage in prayer during the Roots of Revival event at the Washington Monument, held a day ahead of yesterday's “Rededicate 250: A National Jubilee of Prayer, Praise and Thanksgiving” in Washington, DC, on Saturday. – AFP

“This is a battle for the very soul of America.”

The US Constitution explicitly bars the establishment of any official religion, but the expression of any faith is also explicitly protected.

“We came here to rededicate our country back to God. Our country has fallen away in so many areas,” Jeana Dobbins, a 67-year-old retiree who travelled from North Carolina with her friend, told AFP.

Attendee Sarah Tyson, holding a “Jesus Saves” sign, said she believes Trump was chosen by God to lead the nation through a new spiritual revival.

“God ordained him for a time like this, because these United States need to wake up,” said Tyson, a middle-aged woman who came from New York with fellow church members.

While previous administrations and presidents have regularly held and attended faith-based gatherings, yesterday's event was

still unusual for its scale and the presence of top cabinet officials.

And apart from a rabbi and a retired Catholic archbishop, almost all the 20 listed “faith leaders” who will speak are evangelical Protestants.

“It's not unprecedented to have a group of evangelical pastors or conservative clergy come together for something like this and blend a certain kind of nationalism with a certain kind of conservative Christianity,” said Sam Perry, a professor at Baylor University, a Christian school in Texas.

But “the Trump administration taking the lead on this celebration at this scale is different than previous events,” Perry added.

The organisers' website said the prayer gathering was for “Americans of every background” but Julie Ingersoll, a professor of religious studies at the University of North Florida, said the list of speakers suggested “an idea of American identity that is rooted in whiteness and Christianity.”

The event “sends a specific message... that they are the mainstream Americans, and the rest of us are sidelined,” Ingersoll said.

The National Mall, which stretches from the US Capitol to the Lincoln Memorial, is a common site for mass rallies and protests – most famously the March 1963 on Washington, when an estimated 250,000 people heard Martin Luther King Jr. deliver his “I Have a Dream” speech.

Yesterday's gathering was scheduled to last around nine hours. – AFP

US senator loses primary bid to Trump-backed challenger

WASHINGTON, DC – A US senator from Louisiana bidding for a third term has lost his Republican primary, in the latest demonstration of US President Donald Trump's hold over his party.

Trump had targeted Bill Cassidy and endorsed an opponent in retaliation for the senator voting to impeach him five years ago.

With 99 percent of votes counted in Saturday's primary election, Cassidy was trailing in third place behind Trump-endorsed challenger Julia Letlow, a congresswoman, and state treasurer John Fleming, effectively shutting Cassidy out of a June 27 runoff.

“Congratulations to Congresswoman Julia Letlow on a fantastic race, beating an Incumbent Senator by Record Setting Numbers,” Trump posted on his Truth Social platform.

The 79-year-old president was also quick to celebrate Cassidy's fall, writing: “His disloyalty to the man who got him elected is now a part of legend, and it's nice to see that his political career is OVER!”

Cassidy delivered some pointed remarks in his concession speech. Without mentioning Trump by name, the lawmaker said American politicians, when they lose a race, don't whine and “don't claim that the election was stolen.”

“Our country is not about one individual, it is about the welfare of all Americans,” he said. “And if someone doesn't understand that, and attempts to control others through using the levers of power, they are about serving themselves, they're not about serving us.”

‘Vote the bum out’

Trump yesterday swiftly turned his attention to another major Republican nemesis in Congress, Kentucky's Thomas Massie who is seeking an eighth term in the House of Representatives but faces a closely-watched primary against a Trump-endorsed challenger.

The president lashed out at Massie – who recently co-sponsored a resolution to stop the

US involvement in the Iran war – calling him a “negative force.”

“Kentucky, vote the bum out on Tuesday,” Trump posted. “We can't live with this troublemaker for another two years.”

Trump's standing nationally has weakened amid economic frustration and divisions among Republicans over Iran.

But among the deeply conservative voters who dominate Republican primaries, his influence remains formidable.

Early this month in Indiana, which neighbours Kentucky, voters ousted five of seven state Republican incumbents who were targeted for refusing to support the president's call to redraw election maps in favour of his party ahead of this year's midterm elections.

Cassidy's loss was another example of that undeniable command Trump still has on the Republican base.

In addition to being one of seven Republican senators to vote in favour of impeaching Trump in 2021, Cassidy served as the key vote to confirm Trump's pick for health secretary, Robert F. Kennedy Jr.

A medical doctor by training, Cassidy has since criticized Kennedy's actions, including changing vaccine recommendations for US children, saying doing so would “make America sicker.”

All eyes now turn to tomorrow's primary featuring Massie, a hardcore conservative who has feuded with Trump on multiple issues, but who still claims the backing of right-to-life groups and the powerful gun lobby.

Massie said yesterday on ABC News show “This Week,” after Trump's jibes, that outside billionaires were pouring money into the race “trying to buy a seat” for Trump.

“They're desperate,” Massie said. “That's why the president's losing sleep and tweeting about this.” – AFP

Around 10 ‘new’ victims in France's Epstein probe: prosecutor

Paris, France

PARIS – Around 10 “new” suspected victims have come forward in a French probe into the network of late US sex offender Jeffrey Epstein, a prosecutor said yesterday.

France opened a human trafficking investigation after the US Justice Department in January released the latest cache of files from the investigation into the disgraced financier, who died in prison in 2019 while facing charges of trafficking underage girls for sex.

French magistrates are seeking to investigate possible offences committed in France or involving French perpetrators who facilitated his crimes.

Top Paris prosecutor Laure Beccuaud said around 20 suspected victims had made themselves known after she in February urged potential victims to speak up.

Some were already known to investigators, she told the RTL broadcaster.

“But we also had new victims come forward, ones we didn't know at all. There are around 10 of them,” she added.

“The choice we've made for the time being is to listen to these victims,” she said.

“A certain number of them are abroad so the investigators have tried to set up meetings to suit when they are able to come to Paris.”

Investigators were also scouring through the so-called Epstein files, and would be searching them for any names mentioned by alleged victims, she said.

“We have also once again pulled out

Mr Epstein's computers, his telephone records, his address books,” she said, adding her team would be “making requests for international assistance”.

French investigators searched Epstein's luxury Paris apartment in September 2019, after he was found hanged in his New York jail cell the previous month.

Suspected victims already known to investigators included women who had spoken during investigations into former European model agency boss Gerald Marie and late model agent Jean-Luc Brunel.

Fifteen women in March urged France to investigate Marie for possible links to Epstein.

Investigators in 2023 closed another probe into accusations Marie committed sexual abuse in the 1980s and 1990s because it was too long ago to be prosecuted.

French authorities arrested Brunel in 2020 after allegations he sexually abused minors and procured victims for the US billionaire. He was found dead in prison in 2022.

Two former models have told AFP that a modelling scout named Daniel Siad groomed them with the aim of delivering them to Epstein in one case in the 2000s, and Marie in the other case in the 1990s.

In the latest human trafficking probe, “none of the people who could potentially be implicated have been questioned” so far, Beccuaud said.

Epstein pleaded guilty in 2008 to procuring for prostitution a girl under the age of 18, and served 13 months in prison before being released on probation. – AFP

Fujimori, Sánchez advance to Peru runoff: official results

LIMA – Right-wing candidate Keiko Fujimori and leftist Roberto Sánchez will face off in Peru’s presidential runoff on June 7, according to the final vote count released yesterday.

The daughter of late former president Alberto Fujimori won the first round on April 12 with 17.1 percent of the vote, followed by Sánchez with 12 percent, the National Jury of Elections (JNE) announced.

Ultraconservative Rafael López Aliaga finished in third place with 11.9 percent, losing to Sánchez by some 21,200 votes.

The first round was marked by delays in the delivery of electoral materials in the capital Lima, with authorities having to reopen some polling stations for a second day.

Still, while the European Union’s election observation mission noted problems in how the vote was conducted, it gave its seal of approval.

López Aliaga meanwhile refused to recognise the results.

“We will immediately challenge this grave crime of treason against the homeland,” the former Lima mayor said on X. “We will not accept results born of fraud and corruption.”

The upcoming runoff is expected to mirror the deeply polarized second round of 2021, when Fujimori faced leftist candidate Pedro Castillo, who went on to serve as president before being ousted in December 2022.

This will be the fourth time Fujimori, 50, is running for president.

For Sánchez, a 57-year-old former trade minister under Castillo, this is his third bid for the office.

The two candidates will compete for the presidency against a backdrop of profound political instability, with Peru having cycled through eight presidents since 2016.

The majority were either removed from office or stepped down to avoid a similar fate over corruption accusations.

Peru is also battling a deepening security crisis, fuelled by a sharp rise in organised crime.

Sánchez begins his runoff campaign embroiled in legal troubles.

Prosecutors have requested a prison sentence of five years and four months against him for allegedly providing false information to the electoral authority regarding campaign contributions between 2018 and 2020.

– AFP



This combination of pictures shows Peru’s presidential candidate for the Fuerza Popular (“People’s Force”) party, Keiko Fujimori (left), leaving her office in Lima on April 14, and Peru’s presidential candidate for the Juntos por el Perú (“Together for Peru”) party, Roberto Sánchez, posing for a picture after an interview with AFP at his campaign office in Lima on April 14.

– AFP

US weighs drone threat from Cuba: report



Cuba’s President Miguel Díaz-Canel (right), Colonel Raúl Guillermo Rodríguez Castro (centre), grandson of former President Raúl Castro, and Armed Forces Minister General Álvaro López Miera attend the funeral of the 32 Cuban soldiers killed during the US incursion in Venezuela at Colon cemetery in Havana on January 16.

– AFP

WASHINGTON, DC – Cuba has obtained more than 300 military drones and recently began discussing plans to use them to attack the US base at Guantánamo Bay, US military vessels and possibly even Florida, Axios reported, citing classified intelligence.

The report came as tensions simmer between Washington and Havana and amid speculation that the United States may be building an argument for military action against the communist-run island.

The development underscores the Trump administration’s concern with the threat from Cuba because of developments in drone warfare and the presence of Iranian military advisers in Havana, Axios cited a senior US official as saying.

“When we think about those types of technologies being that close, and a range of bad actors from terror groups to drug cartels to Iranians to the Russians, it’s concerning,” the unnamed official was quoted as saying. “It’s a growing threat.”

Cuba has been acquiring attack drones from Russia and Iran since 2023 and is seeking to buy more, US officials told Axios.

The report came days after CIA director

John Radcliffe visited Havana, where Cubans have been enduring constant power outages prompted by President Donald Trump’s fuel blockade.

According to Axios, Radcliff warned officials in Havana against engaging in hostilities.

“Director Ratcliffe made clear that Cuba can no longer serve as a platform for adversaries to advance hostile agendas in our hemisphere,” Axios quoted an unnamed CIA official as saying.

The island has been in a standoff with successive US administrations since the 1960s, and the southern state of Florida hosts a large, politically influential Cuban exile community.

Earlier this month Trump said the United States would be “taking over” the Caribbean island, only around 145 km away from Florida, “almost immediately.”

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

US media also reported that US authorities are seeking to indict Raul Castro, the 94-year-old brother of late Cuban leader Fidel Castro.

– AFP

Portugal mourns artist who defied dictatorship

LISBON – Portugal on Saturday mourned celebrated artist João Abel Manta, whose political cartoons defied the oppression of decades of right-wing dictatorship and captured the country’s transition to democracy.

“Portugal bids farewell to one of its great artists, a portraitist who left his mark on Portuguese life,” President António José Seguro’s office said in a statement.

National news agency Lusa quoted a family source as saying Manta died aged 98 at his Lisbon home on Friday, with a tribute held yesterday at a crematorium in the capital.

Born in 1928, Manta trained in architecture and made forays into tapestry, tilework and stage design before devoting himself to drawing, “where he could take a more active part in the struggle against the political regime of the time”, the statement said.

Portugal’s dictatorship years began in 1926, consolidated under Prime Minister António de Oliveira Salazar and continued from 1968 by his successor Marcelo Caetano.

Those decades of authoritarianism saw the small European nation repress opposition, impose strict censorship and embroil itself in protracted colonial wars in Africa.

Manta was briefly jailed in 1948 for belonging to a youth democratic movement and distributing anti-regime material.

The 1974 Carnation Revolution – named after the flowers protesters placed in soldiers’ guns during the peaceful uprising – toppled the regime and initiated a path towards democracy, a seminal moment in modern Portuguese history.

Manta portrayed the final years of dictatorship and the revolution in various newspapers “with renewed joy and a very original sense of humour” and “became the most influential and best-known caricaturist of that period”, Seguro’s office said.

“His portraits and caricatures, and his ability to capture details and transform them into great emblems of a historical moment, make João Abel Manta one of the most popular artists in our country to this day.”

Culture Minister Margarida Balseiro Lopes paid tribute on social media to a man who “leaves an unquestionable mark on our history and collective imagination”.

The Order of Architects said Manta, who won recognition at home and abroad, was “a towering figure of Portuguese culture whose work profoundly shaped Portugal’s contemporary visual and political imagination”.

– AFP

British mountaineer dies in Spanish national park

MADRID – Spanish emergency services on Saturday recovered the body of a missing British mountaineer whose appeal for rescue from a freezing high-altitude route went in vain due to fierce blizzards.

The 61-year-old man called late on Thursday saying he was “disorientated, tired and carrying little equipment” as he returned from a trek in the Picos de Europa national park, the Castile and León region’s emergency services said in a statement.

But “especially adverse” weather conditions, including sub-zero temperatures

and “snow of a considerable intensity”, hampered a search effort that mobilised specialised mountain rescuers and helicopters, added the northwestern region’s emergency services.

Improved weather conditions on Saturday allowed the team to scour the area and find the mountaineer’s body in the Moeno pass, surrounded by craggy peaks that rise above 2,500 metres.

The Civil Guard (gendarmerie) took the body to the village of Riano for legal formalities.

– AFP

Roma near Champions League return with derby triumph, Napoli secure top 4

Terry Daley

ROME - Roma took a huge step towards returning to the Champions League by beating local rivals Lazio 2-0 yesterday in a feisty derby which finished with both teams down to 10 men, while Napoli won 3-0 at Pisa to secure a top-four spot.

Gianluca Mancini smashed home two headers from corners, one in each half, at the Stadio Olimpico to move Roma up to fourth thanks also to Juventus' shock 2-0 home defeat to Fiorentina.

Roma haven't played in the Champions League since being knocked out in the last 16 by Porto in 2019, an absence which has left the capital club lagging behind their rivals.

But a win next weekend at relegated Verona will guarantee Roma a spot in Europe's elite club competition thanks to a two-point gap separating them from both fifth-placed Como, 1-0 winners against Parma, and Juve who are now sixth.

"We should be happy because now it depends on us, we no longer have to rely on other teams' results," Roma coach Gian Piero Gasperini told reporters.

"Today can be happy for winning the derby and then we'll get to preparing for the next match, which is huge."

The derby and all four other fixtures were pushed forward by half an hour to avoid a clash with the men's final at the Italian Open tennis tournament, which took place a stone's throw from the Olimpico.

A massive security presence was on show all around the stadium but the atmosphere in the ground was one-sided with the Lazio fans continuing their months-long boycott of matches in protest against owner Claudio Lotito.

Roma's loud home support belted out song after song after a potentially massive win which yesterday meant much more than just local pride.

The volatile nature of the derby was highlighted by Nicolò Rovella and Wesley both being sent off in a scrap shortly after Mancini bulleted home the decisive second goal from Paulo Dybala's corner in the 66th minute.

Milan hold on, Napoli in

AC Milan are third, level on 70 points with Roma after a hard-fought 2-1 win at Genoa which came thanks to a Christopher Nkunku penalty five minutes after half-time and Zachary Athekame's drilled strike eight minutes from the end.

The seven-time European champions' form has fallen off a cliff in recent weeks but a win at home over Cagliari next weekend will guarantee Massimiliano Allegri's team a spot in the top four.

Scott McTominay got the ball rolling for Napoli in the 21st minute with his 14th goal of the season in all competitions, and the deal was as good as done five minutes later when Amir Rrahmani forced Eljif Elmas' corner.

Rasmus Hojlund rounded off a straight-forward win in stoppage time as Napoli pulled five points ahead of Como and Juventus with one game remaining.

Denmark striker Hojlund has been on loan from Manchester United who will now receive a reported 44 million euros as Champions League qualification has triggered the obligation to buy in the deal agreed with the Premier League giants.

Juventus, who looked like the one team who would easily stay in the top four, now need a helping hand after a dismal performance against Fiorentina team which had nothing to play for other than to give a bloody nose to their fierce rivals.

Luciano Spalletti's team, who face local rivals Torino next weekend, are not out of the picture yet as they have a better head-to-head record than Roma and a significantly better goal difference than Milan, so dropped points from both those teams or Como would leave an opening.

"I can't judge my players just on the basis of today... but the fact that we haven't reacted, not played at our best is down to me," said Spalletti.

Inter Milan will be officially awarded their 21st league title at the San Siro after drawing 1-1 Verona, with the trophy presentation on the pitch before a parade around Milan for the rest of the day. — AFP

West Ham on brink of Premier League relegation, Man Utd seal 3rd

Steven Griffiths

LONDON — West Ham's 3-1 defeat at Newcastle left Tottenham realistically only needing one more point to win the battle for Premier League survival, while Bruno Fernandes made history in Manchester United's 3-2 win over Nottingham Forest yesterday.

Spurs can avoid dropping out of the English top flight for the first time in nearly 50 years with victory at Chelsea tomorrow, but a draw would also likely suffice thanks to their much superior goal difference over West Ham.

A third consecutive defeat left the Hammers needing favours and they were well beaten at St. James' Park against a Newcastle side who had little to play for.

Nick Woltemade turned in Harvey Barnes' cross for his first league goal since December.

William Osula then finished off a flowing Newcastle move to double the lead inside 20 minutes.

Osula struck again with his fifth goal in six games and even a stunning strike from Taty Castellanos was little consolation for the visitors.

West Ham's only hope of survival is if they beat Leeds on the final day and Tottenham lose to both Chelsea and Everton.

Assist king

Fernandes equalled the Premier League record of 20 assists in a season as United secured third place at Old Trafford.

The Portuguese international moved alongside Thierry Henry and Kevin De Bruyne in the single-season assist list when his cross was turned in by Bryan Mbeumo for United's third goal at Old Trafford.

Luke Shaw volleyed United in front after just five minutes,



Manchester United's Brazilian midfielder Casemiro gestures to fans with his wife Anna Mariana on the pitch after his final home appearance in the English Premier League match against Nottingham Forest at Old Trafford in Manchester, north west England, yesterday. — AFP

but Forest levelled a wide open encounter early in the second half when Elliot Anderson's cross was headed in by Morato.

United raced down the other end and Matheus Cunha's goal was allowed to stand despite a VAR check for handball by Mbeumo in the build-up.

Fernandes' record-equalling moment arrived 14 minutes from full-time when Mbeumo prodded in his drilled cross for his first goal since February.

Morgan Gibbs-White reduced the deficit in the 78th minute.

But United held on to add another victory to their impressive run since interim boss Michael Carrick arrived in January.

Carrick is expected to sign a two-year contract to remain in charge on a permanent basis.

"Over the coming days there'll be clarity in the situation," the former United midfielder said of his future.

European dreams

Dominic Calvert-Lewin scored the only goal in stoppage-time at Elland Road as Leeds beat Brighton 1-0 to damage the Seagulls' hopes of European qualification. — AFP

Brentford, in eighth place, also suffered a blow to their European ambitions in a 2-2 draw against Crystal Palace.

Ismaila Sarr's sixth-minute penalty put Palace ahead before Dango Ouattara hauled Brentford level in the 40th minute.

Adam Wharton restored Palace's advantage with his first goal for the club in the 52nd minute, but Ouattara struck again in the 88th minute.

Sunderland are also in contention for European qualification after a 3-1 win at Everton lifted the Black Cats up to ninth.

Fulham slipped to 13th after a 1-1 draw at relegated Wolves hampered their chances of Europe next season.

Earlier, troubled Chelsea hired Xabi Alonso as their new manager, less than 24 hours after losing 1-0 against Manchester City in the FA Cup final.

Alonso, who agreed a four-year contract with 10th-placed Chelsea, led Bayer Leverkusen to the Bundesliga title in 2024 but was sacked by Real Madrid in January after just seven months in charge. — AFP

Football shorts

Mourinho says 'contact' between his agent and Real Madrid

MADRID — Benfica coach Jose Mourinho confirmed his agent Jorge Mendes has been in contact with Spanish giants Real Madrid.

The veteran Portuguese coach, 63, has been strongly linked with a sensational return to the Santiago Bernabeu 13 years after he left Los Blancos.

"There is contact between the club and Jorge," said Mourinho late Saturday after Benfica completed an unbeaten season in the Portuguese top flight, finishing third.

However, Mourinho said he personally has not had any contact with Madrid president Florentino Perez, or anyone else at the club, and that his future will be decided in the coming week.

Madrid will finish a second straight season without a major trophy, and coach Alvaro Arbeloa said Saturday he would be "happy" for Mourinho to replace him. — AFP

Little Elversberg completes rise with first promotion to Bundesliga

MUNICH — Tiny Elversberg gained their first promotion to the Bundesliga when they beat Munster 3-0 yesterday, the final day of the Bundesliga Two season, to secure second place on goal difference.

Schalke had already locked up first place. They finished eight points ahead of Elversberg and Paderborn, 2-0 winners at Darmstadt. Hannover, who could also have finished on 62 points, were held 3-3 at home by Nuremberg.

Elversberg finished with a plus-25 goal difference. Paderborn were at plus-14. They will face Wolfsburg, who finished 16th in the top flight, in a playoff. The first leg is in Wolfsburg on Thursday and the return in Paderborn four days later.

Elversberg represent the double

town of Spiesen-Elversberg which, with a population of 12,800, will become the smallest community in Bundesliga history. The record is held by Unterhaching, with 22,000 inhabitants when the club played in the Bundesliga in the early 2000s.

While Unterhaching are on the southern outskirts of Munich, Elversberg are in Saarland, Germany's smallest state by area which has a population of just over one million. The club is 15 kilometres from the state capital Saarbrücken.

Elversberg, who were still playing in the fourth tier in 2020-21, narrowly missed out on promotion to the Bundesliga last season, losing to Heidenheim in the play-offs.

Elversberg's stadium, which is undergoing renovation, currently has a capacity of 9,300, which is set to increase to 15,000 by January 2027. — AFP



Inter Milan players parade on an open bus to celebrate their 21st scudetto (Italian Championship victory) with supporters outside San Siro stadium after the Italian Serie A match against Hellas Verona in Milan, yesterday. — AFP

Sinner wins Italian Open, extends Masters tournament streak

Tennis

Terry Daley

Rome – Jannik Sinner won the Italian Open yesterday after beating Casper Ruud 6-4, 6-4 to claim a record-extending sixth consecutive Masters 1000 tournament victory.

World number one Sinner has now completed the 'Golden Masters' by winning all of the ATP's top-ranked events after becoming the first Italian champion at the Foro Italico since Adriano Panatta 50 years ago.

Only Novak Djokovic had previously won all nine Masters 1000 events before yesterday, but there was little doubt about Sinner triumphing over the last 10 days.

Sinner heads into Roland Garros, which starts next weekend, on a 29-match winning streak after beating Ruud for a fifth time in as many meetings.

"There was a lot of tension you know, on both sides and (it) was not perfect, perfect tennis from both of us," said Sinner.

"But I'm really, really happy, it's been an incredible last two-and-a-half months."

And his run of match wins is even longer – 34 in Masters 1000 tournaments – another record he has established in a season in which he has dominated the men's tour.

Sinner can complete his collection of Grand Slams at Roland Garros and, with his great rival

Carlos Alcaraz out of action, few would bet against him securing a first title on Paris clay.

Ruud has won more matches and tournaments on clay than anyone else on the men's tour since the start of 2020 – last winning a Masters 1000 event at Madrid last year – but he couldn't beat Sinner for the first time.

Norwegian Ruud had never won a set against Sinner in any of their previous four meetings, but immediately improved on the fearful hammering he received here from the Italian last year by winning the first two games.

But Sinner broke straight back and took the lead in the match after an opening set in which the world number 25 held his own against a player he'd previously said "cannot lose".

Sinner then broke Ruud again at the start of the second set and from there it was just a matter of time before he won the championship, even though Ruud performed with credit in front of a packed centre court crowd.

"I know that in football it's a different story," joked Ruud, whose country will play in a World Cup for the first time since 1998.

Norway reached this summer's World Cup in the United States, Canada and Mexico at the expense of Italy, who in March failed for a third consecutive time to qualify for the global showpiece.

However, yesterday was a

doubly-good day for Italian tennis as Simone Bolelli and Andrea Vavassori also won the men's doubles title, beating second seeds Marcel Granollers and Horacio Zeballos 7-6 (10/8), 6-7 (3/7), 10-3.

– AFP



Italy's Jannik Sinner (left) celebrates with Norway's Casper Ruud, after winning the men's final of the ATP Rome Open tennis tournament at the Foro Italico in Rome yesterday. – AFP

Denmark's Antonsen wins badminton Thailand Open title

Badminton

BANGKOK – Denmark's Anders Antonsen won the badminton men's singles final of the Thailand Open yesterday, getting his revenge against homegrown Kunlavut Vitidsarn who defeated the Dane last year.

World-ranked No. 3 Antonsen won 9-21, 24-22, 21-18 in 1 hour 37 minutes in Bangkok yesterday.

The 29-year-old Dane entered the finals after a walkover win in the semi-finals when world No. 1 Shi Yuqi of China withdrew. Shi exited the Malaysia Open early in January due to a back injury.

Antonsen admitted he got a "little bit lucky" with Shi pulling out, calling the Chinese athlete "a very difficult opponent".

But the noise of the Bangkok

crowd and trying to find his grip powder in his bag during the final match had hurt Antonsen's focus.

"My mind was everywhere else but on the match. But suddenly I was leading 5-0 and I was like, 'oh wow, OK, I have a chance now,'" he said.

World No. 2 Kunlavut, 25, won last year's Thailand Open, beating Antonsen in the final.

"To get the win this year feels incredible," Antonsen said.

Kunlavut called it a "very tough match", adding that Antonsen had "come to attack first" and his height allowed him to "control anything in the court".

In the women's singles final, world-ranked No. 3 Akane Yamaguchi of Japan defeated China's Chen Yufei, who is ranked fourth.

Yamaguchi won 21-14, 21-18 in 39 minutes.

"This year I did not make another final so this result is very important for me," she said after her victory.

"As the game progressed, I felt that Chen Yufei was attacking more so rather than being nervous, I tried to stay calm and play my own game," Yamaguchi said, adding she was "happy to play a good, attacking game".

In the women's doubles final, China's Bao Lijing and Cao Zihan came out on top over Rin Iwanaga and Kie Nakanishi of Japan.

Indonesians Leo Rolly Camando and Daniel Marthin triumphed in the men's doubles over Indians Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty after back-and-forth match points.

In mixed doubles, Mathias Christiansen and Alexandra Boje of Denmark beat China's Zhu Yijun and Li Qian 21-17, 21-15. – AFP

Di Giannantonio wins Catalan Grand Prix, Alex Marquez hurt in horror crash

MotoGP

BARCELONA – Ducati rider Fabio Di Giannantonio triumphed in a crash-hit Catalunya MotoGP yesterday which saw Alex Marquez taken to hospital injured after being flipped off his bike.

The race was red-flagged twice, the first time after Pedro Acosta's bike cut out and Marquez made contact with him, with his Ducati-Gresini destroyed in a horrific crash.

On the first corner after the restart, French rider Johann Zarco crashed and the race was red-flagged again, and restarted with 12 laps remaining.

Acosta started on pole and was out in front until Di Giannantonio snatched the lead with two laps remaining.

Joan Mir and Fermin Aldeguer also edged ahead of Acosta, who then came to grief shortly before the end after being wiped out by Ai Ogura, who was hit with a time penalty and dropped to ninth.

Race organisers said Mir, who finished second, and several other riders are under investigation for tyre pressure regulations. Fermin Aldeguer completed the podium.

Overall leader Marco Bezzecchi struggled all weekend but was able to extend his advantage after his closest contender Jorge Martin suffered his fifth crash of the weekend.

Raul Fernandez took out Martin after trying an aggressive move down the inside while they were challenging for the lead, leaving Bezzecchi, who finished fifth, 13 points ahead.

Di Giannantonio hurt his hand in the first terrifying crash when the Italian was hit by a wheel from Marquez's ruined bike, but the VR46 man recovered to claim his first MotoGP win in three years.

"I'm so happy. But first of all, I was really worried about all the riders who crashed," said Di Giannantonio.

"Today has not been an easy day for everybody. I really hope that Alex (Marquez) is fine. We've been really lucky."

"We know that our sport is amazing. We try to give an amazing show, we are humans, we are in danger."

Di Giannantonio's victory moved him up to third overall on 116 points, followed by Acosta on 92.

Marquez, who triumphed at last year's Catalan Grand Prix and also won the sprint on Saturday, was pushing leader Acosta when the accident happened.

Acosta lost speed because of a technical issue and Marquez hit his bike, veering off the track into a terrible crash before being taken to hospital, conscious.

Last weekend, Alex Marquez's older brother Marc, the reigning champion, was injured after another violent crash at Le Mans.

The second major incident was a collision involving Zarco, Luca Marini and Francesco Bagnaia.

Zarco was taken by ambulance to hospital for checks after he was caught up with Bagnaia's bike.

LCR MotoGP team boss Lucio Cecchinello said Zarco had pain in "the femur area", his left leg and knee. – AFP



The motorcycle of Team Gresini Racing MotoGP's Alex Marquez hurtles through the air as he crashes during the 2026 Catalunya Moto GP Grand Prix at the Catalunya racetrack in Montmelo, near Barcelona, yesterday. – AFP

Vingegaard climbs to victory as Eulalio holds firm in pink

Cycling

ITALY – Jonas Vingegaard won the ninth stage of the Giro d'Italia yesterday, edging ahead on a long, slow climb to Corno alle Scale and taking 40 seconds out of his deficit on leader Afonso Eulalio.

This was Vingegaard's second stage win here but surprise overall

leader and fifth-place finisher Eulalio kept his losses to a limit and remains just shy of 2min 30sec ahead of the Dane.

Vingegaard was sporting the king of the mountains blue jersey as stage nine embarked from the pretty Adriatic seaside town of Cervia for a sunny but breezy 184km route, culminating with a gradual 28km uphill slog.

Home hero, the veteran climber Giulio Ciccone, was part of the original escape and attacked 10km from the summit, knowing however that he was doomed with the peloton less than 2min adrift.

Eulalio grabbed a sizeable lead on stage five and has held his own against Giro favourite Vingegaard and third-placed Felix Gall with great pluck.

Austrian Gall was second again yesterday just 12sec off the pace, while Visma's Davide Piganzoli was third, Thymen Arensman of Ineos fourth and Eulalio fifth at 40sec.

Vingegaard ignited his own Giro title bid on Friday on the formidable Blockhaus climb, and showed again here the damage he might wreak in the final week.

Today, the peloton can take a deep breath on the second rest day.

But tomorrow, a potentially decisive 42km individual time-trial along Italy's west coast can settle or stall the Giro ambitions of the title pretenders.

Some 17 riders have pulled out so far by comparison with 25 who failed to complete the 3,000km trek to Rome in 2025. – AFP

Bulgaria's 'Bangaranga' wins Eurovision, with Israel second

Robin Millard

VIENNA – Bulgaria won the Eurovision Song Contest on Saturday with Dara's catchy floor-filler "Bangaranga"* sweeping the 70th edition of the world's biggest live televised music event and pushing into second place Israel, whose participation had triggered a major boycott.

Bulgaria had missed the last three editions of the glitzy extravaganza but took the crown in Vienna for the first time ever, overtaking Israel at the very end as the points came in, with Romania finishing third.

Pop singer Darina Yotova, known as Dara, was not among the favourites going into Eurovision week but the 27-year-old gained traction following a strong performance in the semi-finals, with her highly-choreographed dance routines.

"Everything is possible: Bulgaria just won Eurovision!" Dara told a press conference.

"I really like breaking rules. I'm really good with following my rules – not anybody else's.

"We wanted to give to the audience something new and fresh, something that is not expected."

'Magnificent story'

Eurovision highlighted that "the song ended up winning both sets of scores, which is the first time the juries and the public have chosen the same winner in almost 10 years, since Kyiv 2017".

Bulgarian Prime Minister Rumen Radev hailed "a young artist who, thanks to her talent and professionalism, has managed to rise above all the complexities and prejudices surrounding the voting process.

"Bulgaria is looking forward to welcoming Europe and the world for Eurovision 2027!" he added on social media.

Around 10,000 glammed-up fans filled the Wiener Stadthalle ("Viennese City Hall") arena in the Austrian capital to watch Saturday's

showpiece final of Eurovision, where, as always, the razzmatazz didn't escape the geopolitics in the background.

Spain, the Netherlands, Ireland, Iceland and Slovenia staged the biggest political boycott in Eurovision history over Israel's participation, citing the war in Gaza.

And it looked as though Noam Bettan was going to win the contest for Israel with his song "Michelle" following a big score in the televoting from the public around Europe.

But as Bulgaria's televote points were revealed, Dara ultimately won by a comfortable margin.

Bulgaria finished with 516 points, ahead of Israel on 343, Romania on 296, Australia on 287, Italy with 281 and Finland on 279.

It was the second year in a row that Israel finished runners-up.

Johannes Pietsch, known as JJ, who won Eurovision 2025 for Austria with his song "Wasted Love", handed over the winner's trophy to Dara.

JJ had opened Saturday's musical extravaganza with a nod to Austria's grand musical history, singing the "Queen of the Night" aria from composer Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart's 1791 opera "The Magic Flute".

"Bangaranga, it's a feeling that everybody has got in themselves," Dara said yesterday as the votes were coming in.

"It's the moment that you choose to lead through love and not fear, and this is a special energy that I know everybody has got in themselves."

Fans streaming out of the arena revelled in Dara's triumph.

"I didn't like the song at first,... but I saw it, I saw the performance, and I was stunned," said Katerina, a Eurovision fan from Greece.

Finnish fiddling, Romanian choking

The bookmakers' overwhelming favourites going into the final were



Winner Darina Nikolaeva Yotova, aka Dara and representing Bulgaria with the song 'Bangaranga', poses with the trophy during a photocall after she won the final of the Eurovision Song Contest 2026 (ESC) at Wiener Stadthalle in Vienna, Austria, on Saturday. – AFP

the Finnish double-act of violinist Linda Lampenius and pop singer Pete Parkkonen, with their song "Liekinheitin", or "Flamethrower".

As the song built to a climax, 56-year-old Lampenius was shredding her bow as she worked her way to the very top of the fingerboard.

Romanian singer Alexandra Capitanescu's switched up the vibe with the 22-year-old's heavy metal song "Choke Me" triggering controversy in the build-up over its repeated lyric: "I want you to choke me".

Australia's Delta Goodrem, who has sold nine million albums, came fourth after wowing the crowds with her song "Eclipse", which was filled with strong moments, ending with her soaring high on a riser coming up out of a glittering piano.

Serbian metallers Lavina had the deepest throat-shredding growl of the night, the Czech Republic's Daniel Zizka navigated a hall of mirrors, while Lithuania's silver-

painted Lion Ceccah brought an air of brooding mystery.

Protests

Some 166 million viewers watched the contest on television last year when it was hosted in Basel.

Earlier Saturday, hundreds of pro-Palestinian demonstrators marched past chanting "boycott Eurovision" and carrying banners reading "Don't celebrate genocide".

Spanish public broadcaster RTVE – traditionally one of Eurovision's major backers – not only boycotted but refused to screen the show.

As it began, it showed the message: "The Eurovision Song Contest is a competition, but human rights are not. There is no room for

indifference. Peace and justice for Palestine."

Belgian broadcaster VRT said ahead of the final that it was unlikely to compete in next year's Eurovision if the European Broadcasting Union (EBU), which organises the event, did not hold a direct vote on Israel's participation in the contest. – AFP

* In the context of the song by Bulgarian pop star Dara, "Bangaranga" is a stylised variation of the Jamaican Patois word "Bangarang". The word traditionally refers to uproar, chaos, disorder, or a riot. In the song's lyrics – specifically the line "Welcome to the riot" – it is used to describe a high-energy, explosive atmosphere. – Gemini

'Peaky Blinders' creator says he has licence to reinvent James Bond

CANNES – "Peaky Blinders"* creator Steven Knight, who is writing the next "Bond" movie, has strongly hinted that the ageing British spy is about to get really shaken and stirred.

The writer said that Amazon has given him a licence to play with the legendary MI6 secret agent created by author Ian Fleming.

"Bond has been bulletproof. People have been able to make mistakes and variations and the character has survived," Knight told Screen magazine at the Cannes Film Festival.

"Because the core of it is like a diamond. You can't touch it. The person you are talking about is folklore," he added.

The writer told reporters that he has done research with "the SAS and even more secret outfits" for his reinvention of the next 007 movie,

the first produced by Amazon.

He said he has met special forces and secret services personnel as part of his immersion in their world.

"I am talking to them about what they do every day. It's all real," he said of scenarios he is exploring.

New 'Peaky Blinders' series

Bond's creator Fleming himself "was living that life in the war [World War II]" as an intelligence officer, he added.

"He was doing those things. He knew people doing that stuff, going out there and killing people."

But Knight said his lips were sealed on what new turns Bond might take.

"I can't say anything on the script," he insisted to Screen.

Knight, who has just completed a documentary about Oasis's record-breaking reunion tour, is

in Cannes to drum up business for his Digbeth Loc studio in his native Birmingham, where "Peaky Blinders" is set and shot.

"We are filming the next series [of 'Peaky Blinders'] at the moment, we will have it in the can in a few weeks," he told industry site Deadline. "People are going to be pleasantly surprised how it has turned out, because it is so good."

*Peaky Blinders is a British historical crime drama television series created by British screenwriter, producer and film and TV director Steven Knight. Set in Birmingham, it follows the exploits of the Peaky Blinders crime gang in the direct aftermath of the First World War. The fictional gang is loosely based on an urban youth gang active in the city from the 1880s to the 1920s. – Gemini

Haaland to play Viking in new animated film

CANNES – In an inspired piece of casting, Norwegian striker Erling Haaland is to voice a fierce Viking warrior in a new animated film.

The giant Manchester City centre-forward has long been compared to a marauding Viking on the pitch as he clocks up record after record as the fastest player in history to score 100 Premier League goals.

The film's producers at the Cannes Film Festival confirmed the star was part of the cast of "Viqueens", made by his fellow Norwegian Harald Zwart of "The Karate Kid" fame.

The children's tale, which will be released on Christmas Day, is set in a "world of fearless warrior girls, icy fjords, and Silk Road mythology".

– AFP

World Weather			
CHINA	ASIA-PACIFIC	WORLD	LUSOPHONE
☀️ Beijing 15°C~27°C	☁️ Manila 24°C~33°C	☀️ New York 20°C~28°C	☁️ Lisbon 12°C~21°C
☀️ Shanghai 21°C~30°C	☁️ Bangkok 26°C~34°C	☁️ London 11°C~15°C	☁️ Rio de Janeiro 22°C~27°C
☁️ Hong Kong 23°C~27°C	☀️ Tokyo 17°C~29°C	☁️ Frankfurt 7°C~16°C	☁️ Luanda 22°C~26°C
☁️ Taipei 21°C~31°C	☁️ Singapore 24°C~32°C	☁️ Vancouver 9°C~17°C	☀️ Maputo 15°C~26°C
☁️ Guangzhou 22°C~29°C	☁️ Kuala Lumpur 24°C~35°C	☁️ Paris 9°C~15°C	☁️ Dili 24°C~31°C
☁️ Nanjing 21°C~31°C	☁️ Jakarta 24°C~33°C	☀️ Moscow 15°C~29°C	☁️ São Tomé 26°C~31°C
☁️ Guilin 21°C~29°C	☀️ Seoul 17°C~31°C	☀️ Las Vegas 14°C~26°C	☀️ Praia 19°C~27°C
☁️ Xi'an 17°C~26°C	☁️ Sydney 15°C~21°C	☁️ Monte Carlo 12°C~18°C	☀️ Bissau 21°C~36°C



Buddha's throne

Participants walk with lanterns during a parade as part of a 'Lotus Lantern Festival' to celebrate the upcoming Buddha's birthday, in Seoul on Saturday. - AFP



Cute visitor

A wild boar piglet grazes in a private housing area of Warsaw on Friday. - AFP



Tickled titan

A model skeleton of Nagatitan chaiyaphumensis, Thailand's largest dinosaur, is pictured at the Thainosaur Museum in Bangkok on Friday. Scientists have identified a massive new dinosaur from remains discovered in Thailand, with the creature estimated to have weighed as much as nine adult elephants. - AFP



Big flex

Bodybuilders compete in the 20th South East Asian Championships 2026 at the Myanmar Convention Centre in Yangon on Saturday. - AFP



Yellow submarine

Visitors view underwater world-themed balloon installations during the World Balloon Festival in Warsaw, Poland, on Friday. The festival which ended yesterday, featured large themed installations featuring tropical jungles, underwater worlds, outer space and architectural landmarks created with more than 100,000 biodegradable balloons. - Xinhua



Fantastic butterflies

Performers take part in the Surabaya Vaganza 2026 in Surabaya, East Java province, Indonesia on Saturday. Themed "Garden of Hope," the Surabaya Vaganza 2026 presented decorated floats, light displays and cultural performances to showcase local culture and positive spirits in Surabaya. - Xinhua