

# Self-monitoring required for 12 African countries' arrivals amid Ebola threat

Tony Wong

The Macau Health Bureau (SSM) announced yesterday that from today it will strengthen its health monitoring measures for those arriving in Macau from various African countries in response to the World Health Organisation's (WHO) latest assessments of the potentially deadly Ebola\* virus disease.

An SSM statement yesterday noted that during a recent joint online press briefing, the Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (Africa CDC) and the WHO warned that 10 African countries are at high risk of the latest Ebola outbreak in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and Uganda. The 10 high-risk countries are Angola, Burundi, the Central African Republic (CAR), Ethiopia, Kenya, the Republic of the Congo (ROC), Rwanda, South Sudan, Tanzania, and Zambia.

The SSM statement said that in response to the ongoing Ebola outbreak in the DRC and Uganda, and remarks made by the Africa CDC and the WHO during their joint press briefing, the Macau Health Bureau decided to strengthen its measures to tackle the Ebola threat, with the aim of further reducing the risk of Macau recording imported cases.

The statement also underlined that the Macau Health Bureau also made the decision after referencing the Chinese Centre for Disease Control and Prevention's (China CDC) latest guidelines for the prevention and control of the Ebola virus disease.

The strengthened measures will start at 9 a.m. today, the statement said.

According to the statement, health inspection personnel at all major border checkpoints will reinforce health enquiries and risk assessments for individuals who have visited the relevant countries within the last 21 days or who hold passports from these countries, comprising the DRC and Uganda hit by Ebola outbreaks, as well as the 10 newly classified high-risk African countries.

If a person who has visited any of the 12 African countries presents with symptoms suggestive of the Ebola virus disease, they will be immediately transferred to the public Conde de São Januário Hospital Centre for further assessment and examination, the statement said, adding that those without symptoms will be subject to health monitoring and management by the Macau Health Bureau.

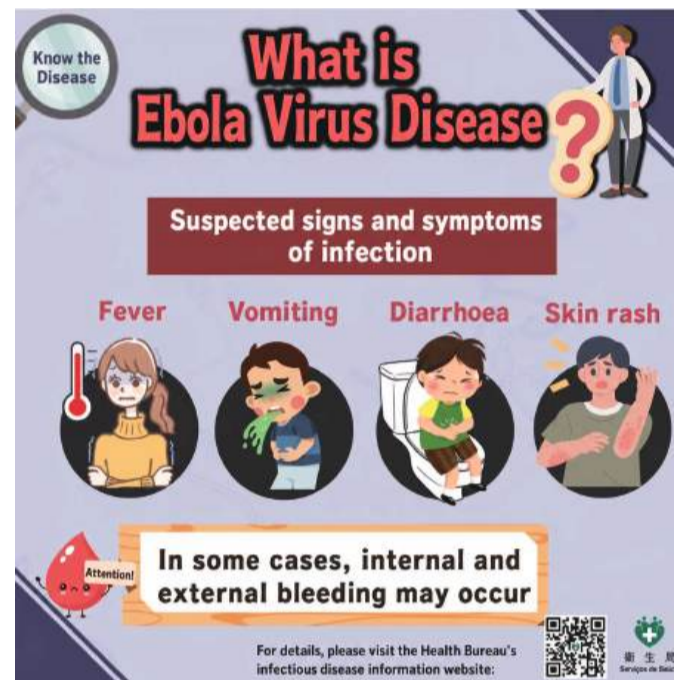
The statement said that given that the incubation period for the Ebola virus disease can be up to 21 days, individuals arriving in Macau who have visited any of the 12 African countries are now required to undergo self-health management for a period of 21 days from the date of entry, where the Health Bureau will conduct health monitoring and follow-up measures on the individuals concerned throughout the 21-day period.

The individuals concerned, the statement said, should self-monitor their health condition daily during the 21-day period. If they come down with symptoms such as fever, fatigue, headache, sore throat, vomiting, diarrhoea, or unexplained bleeding, they should seek medical treatment immediately, the statement said.

If they need to go to a medical institution for diagnosis and treatment, they should avoid using public transport, take personal protective measures, avoid physical contact with others, and inform the healthcare workers of their travel history and contact history, the statement said.

The Macau Health Bureau's latest initiatives to respond to the Ebola threat came after it issued a warning early last week urging residents and private medical institutions to stay vigilant against the Ebola virus disease, after the WHO declared the ongoing Ebola outbreak in the DRC and Uganda a Public Health Emergency of International Concern. ■

\*Ebola is a severe viral illness which can lead to high fever, internal bleeding, and organ failure, and it can be fatal. Ebola spreads when bodily fluids (such as blood, vomit, diarrhoea,



The poster released by the Health Bureau (SSM) yesterday shows information on the Ebola virus disease. The AI-translated English text was arranged by the Post.

and sweat) of an infected person come into direct contact with another person's broken skin or eyes, nose, or mouth. Early symptoms usually begin suddenly and can include fever, severe weakness, muscle pain, headache, and sore throat, followed by vomiting, diarrhoea, rash, and sometimes bleeding. Because symptoms can resemble other illnesses at first, rapid diagnosis and strict infection-control are crucial. There's no single cure, but treatment focuses on supportive care and targeted therapies. – Poe

## WHO urges DRC's neighbours to act immediately on Ebola



World Health Organisation (WHO) Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus speaks during a press conference on the Ebola outbreak in Democratic Republic of Congo and Uganda, in Geneva, yesterday. – AFP

GENEVA – The countries neighbouring the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) are at high risk from Ebola and should act immediately to counter the virus, the World Health Organisation's head said yesterday.

"Countries bordering DRC are at especially high risk and should take immediate action," said WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, adding that he would travel today to the DRC, the epicentre of the current outbreak of the deadly disease.

"The outbreak is spreading rapidly," Tedros told a virtual ministerial meeting on the viral haemorrhagic fever, which spreads through direct contact with bodily fluids. It can cause severe bleeding and organ failure.

He said the current outbreak was "especially challenging".

"First, the delay in detecting the outbreak means that we are now playing catch-up with a very fast-moving

epidemic. We are urgently scaling up operations but at the moment, the epidemic is outpacing us," he said by videolink from Geneva.

Secondly, the eastern provinces of the DRC, where the outbreak was first detected on May 15, "are highly insecure, with intensified fighting in recent months (and) there is also significant distrust of outside authorities among the local population".

Thirdly, he pointed out, there were "no approved vaccines or therapeutics" for the Bundibugyo strain of Ebola behind the current outbreak.

The WHO has recorded 10 confirmed Ebola deaths and 220 suspected deaths in the DRC since May 15. One person is confirmed dead in neighbouring Uganda.

Ten African countries are at risk of being affected by the Ebola virus, in addition to the DRC and Uganda, the African Union's health agency, Africa CDC, warned on Saturday. – AFP

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### Huawei touts new chipmaking technology to sidestep US restrictions

Chinese tech giant Huawei said yesterday it had developed a new way of making semiconductors that could get around its US-enforced lack of access to the most advanced chipmaking equipment. – Story on p. 7

### Thais join efforts to rescue 7 trapped in Laos cave

Cave rescue experts from Thailand who aided the dramatic 2018 retrieval of a youth football team joined efforts yesterday to extract seven people trapped in a flooded cave for five days in neighbouring Laos, Laotian state media said. – Story on p. 8

### Pope apologises for Vatican role in justifying slavery

Pope Leo XIV yesterday issued an unprecedented apology for the Vatican's role in justifying slavery and said the delay in condemning the practice was "a wound in Christian memory". – Story on p. 11

# Gongbei Customs seizes 6 cultural relics at Wanzai checkpoint

Armindo Neves

Zhuhai's Gongbei Customs announced in a statement yesterday that its officers seized 6 cultural relics at Zhuhai's Wanzai Port (border checkpoint) recently.

According to the statement, while conducting routine inspections at the checkpoint of Wanzai Ferry Terminal, customs

officers noticed an anomaly in the luggage of one traveller.

Wanzai ("Cove") is the Putonghua Pinyin spelling of the place. In Macau and Hong Kong, the same name is spelt "Wan Chai" in Cantonese transliteration.

Gongbei Customs did not elaborate on where the traveller is from.

Upon inspection, the statement

said, customs officers discovered seven suspected cultural relics among the items the passenger was carrying.

Upon assessment by the Guangdong Provincial Cultural Heritage Appraisal Station, according to the statement, two of the items were identified as "late Qing Dynasty light-outlined blue-and-white lotus-patterned dishes", one as a "late Qing Dynasty blue-and-white lingzhi\*-patterned dish", one as a "late Qing Dynasty blue-and-white figure-patterned vase", one as a "Republic of China period famille rose\*\* figure-patterned four-lugged jar" and one as a "blue-and-white landscape-patterned bowl produced in Japan between the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century". The statement underlined that all six items are classified as general cultural relics that are prohibited from being taken out of the country.

Gongbei Customs reminded the public that according to the Cultural Relics Protection Law of the People's Republic of China (PRC), any cultural relics intended for export must undergo inspection by an authorised cultural relics exit-entry examination agency designated by the State Council's cultural relics administration.

Upon approval, the State Administration of Cultural Heritage will issue an exit permit for verified cultural relics, and the relics can only be exported through designated border checkpoints.

Any entity or individual shipping, mailing, or carrying

cultural relics out of the mainland must declare them to customs, and customs officers will release the items only upon presentation of the verified cultural relics' export permits.

*\*Lingzhi" is a medicinal, "luminous "mushroom. - Gemini*

*\*\*A type of Chinese porcelain, decorated in overglaze enamels. - Wiktionary*

## Macau Customs seizes frozen beef backstrap worth 28,000 patacas

Macau Customs Service officers raided a parallel-trading den in the peninsula's northern district on Thursday, where they seized 900 kilograms of frozen beef backstrap\* worth 28,000 patacas in total.

According to a statement on Saturday, the officers caught a 26-year-old local male who ran the den and hired parallel traders to

smuggle frozen beef backstrap from Macau to the mainland.

The man faces a fine in compliance with the relevant provisions listed in the External Trade Law, the statement said.

Moreover, the statement added, the man violated the Food Safety Law as the supposedly frozen beef backstrap was stored merely at room temperature, adding that the Customs Service has meanwhile transferred the case to the Municipal Affairs Bureau (IAM) for follow-up action.

Meanwhile, as the business premises in question did not possess a valid operating licence, the case has been referred to the Financial Services Bureau (DSF) for follow-up. ■

*\*Beef backstrap can refer to two very different things depending on context: a premium cut of meat for human consumption or a natural, single-ingredient dog chew. - Gemini*



This undated handout photo provided by Zhuhai's Gongbei Customs yesterday shows 6 cultural relics seized by its officers recently.



This undated handout photo provided by Macau Customs Service on Saturday shows frozen beef backstrap stored at room temperature at a parallel trading den in the peninsula's northern district on Thursday.

## Macao Union Medical Centre to hold public open day

Rui Pastorin

The Islands Healthcare Complex – Macao Medical Centre of Peking Union Medical College Hospital, aka Macao Union Medical Centre, will be hosting its public open day on June 6, a Saturday, with its programme set to feature highlights including one-on-one free health consultations for the first time.

A public open day targets the whole community at large, not just certain segments of it.

According to a statement on Friday, the free health consultations will be on a first-come, first-served basis, with tickets to be obtained during the event day. The statement said that doctors in clinical dietetics, rheumatology and immunology, dermatology, urology, surgery and neurology will "address participants' enquiries and offer

professional medical advice".

Other activities meanwhile include hospital tours and five health lectures featuring resident experts from Peking Union Medical College Hospital (PUMCH) stationed in Macau and medical staff from the Macao Union Medical Centre. They will discuss nutrition and health care, chronic disease management, maternal and child health care, tumour prevention and medical aesthetics, with registration open until 5 p.m. on June 4.

Shuttle buses to and from the centre will be available on the day.

One can find more event information on <https://www.cmm-pumch.gov.mo/>, along with its WeChat service account and Facebook page.

The statement did not elaborate on what language(s) would be used. ■



This poster provided by The Islands Healthcare Complex - Macao Medical Centre of Peking Union Medical College Hospital promotes the public open day slated to take place on June 6.

## Heat shelter opens after yellow hot weather alert

Khalel Vallo

The Social Welfare Bureau (IAS) opened Macau's temporary heat shelter yesterday in conjunction with Caritas Macau after the Meteorological and Geophysical Bureau (SMG) issued a yellow hot weather alert.

The shelter is located at 34 Rua Leste da Ilha Verde, Bairro da Ilda Verde Building (青洲東街34號青洲坊大廈E1的避寒中心).

The shelter offers free accommodation, snacks and beverages.

The yellow hot weather warning indicates a "very hot" weather forecast, typically triggered when temperatures are expected to reach 33 degrees Celsius or higher. Issued by the Macau Meteorological and Geophysical Bureau (SMG), the advisory signals a high risk of heatstroke. The government typically opens up temporary cooling centres (customarily at the emergency shelter in Ilha Verde) to offer respite from the blazing heat and high UV indexes for vulnerable individuals. In the winter, the shelter provides protection from particularly cold weather. The centre is run by Caritas Macau on behalf of the government.

Speaking to the *Post* yesterday, a Caritas Macau staff member said

that under the yellow hot weather alert, the heat shelter is open from 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. Meanwhile, under the orange hot weather alert, the heat shelter runs from 10 a.m. through 8 a.m. on the following day.

The local weather station uses a two-level hot weather warning system. The orange alert signifies "extremely hot" weather, typically issued when maximum temperatures are forecast to surpass 34 or even 35 degrees Celsius.

According to the alert issued by the local observatory yesterday afternoon, the mercury reached 33.3 degrees

Celsius at the Outer Harbour station.

According to an IAS statement yesterday, the bureau urged residents to pay attention to the physical condition of elderly family members, seniors living alone, people with chronic illnesses and physically vulnerable individuals, and to take appropriate precautions against heat-related health risks during the hot weather period.

Residents seeking information about the operation of the heat shelter can contact the bureau during office hours on 2827 0939 or during non-office hours on 6399 1963. ■



This photo taken yesterday shows the temporary heat shelter on Rua Leste da Ilha Verde yesterday. - Photo: Khalel Vallo

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

### Macau Weather

**VERY HOT.**  
**CLOUDY APART FROM SUNNY PERIODS.**  
**FORCE 3 TO 5 SOUTH TO SOUTHWESTERLY WINDS WITH GUSTS.**  
**RELATIVE HUMIDITY WILL RANGE BETWEEN 70% AND 95%.**



27°C~32°C

Source: SMG

## China to release foreign trade data for GBA

GUANGZHOU – China will release data on foreign trade in goods for the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area (GBA) as a whole, as part of broader efforts to further advance the area's development.

The move is included in a package of 20 measures recently unveiled by the General Administration of Customs (GAC) to support the development of the GBA, a world-class city cluster bringing the Hong Kong and Macao special administrative regions together with nine mainland cities in the economic powerhouse of Guangdong, including Guangzhou, Shenzhen and Zhuhai.

Currently, trade data for the region's mainland cities, Hong Kong and Macao are compiled separately under different statistical systems, making it challenging to derive aggregate figures for the region through direct addition.

Chinese mainland customs authorities will work with their counterparts in Hong Kong and Macao to study and compile aggregate data on trade in goods for the GBA and release it in due time, said Lin Shaobin, an official with the General Administration of Customs.

The data will support more accurate analysis of trade trends and structure in the region, while giving the public a more complete picture of its economic performance, Lin noted.

The GBA, one of China's most open and vibrant economic hubs, has shown strong resilience and vitality in foreign trade. In the first four months of this year, the imports and exports of the nine mainland cities in the area climbed 18.4 percent year on year to 3.4 trillion yuan, contributing around one-quarter of the country's overall foreign trade growth. – Xinhua

## Macau's border crossings reach 100-million benchmark, 14 days earlier than 2025: police



This undated handout photo released by the Public Security Police (PSP) yesterday shows border crossers thronging the departures hall of the Barrier Gate border checkpoint, Macau's busiest checkpoint.

Tony Wong

The number of entries and exits recorded at Macau's border checkpoints so far this year reached 100 million on Sunday night, reaching the benchmark 14 days earlier than last year, the Public Security Police (PSP) announced in a statement last night.

Border crossers comprise permanent and non-permanent Macau SAR residents, non-resident workers (NRWs), tourists, non-local students enrolled in local educational establishments, and others.

In 2025, Macau recorded 235 million entries and exits at its border checkpoints, the highest annual number on record, representing a 9.8 percent increase from 2024.

In 2025, the then cumulative number of entries and exits at Macau's border checkpoints exceeded the 100-million benchmark on June 7, while this year the cumulative number reached the 100-million benchmark on Sunday, May 24.

Macau has nine border checkpoints, comprising five land

border checkpoints with Zhuhai City in Guangdong Province, three passenger ferry terminals, and the international airport in Taipa.

As of Sunday night, according to the PSP statement, the cumulative number of border crossings at the Barrier Gate checkpoint so far this year accounted for 52.2 percent of the total number of border crossings at all checkpoints during the period, while the Qingmao checkpoint, the Hengqin checkpoint, and the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge's (HZMB) Macau checkpoint made up 15.4 percent, 14.7 percent and 10.8 percent of the total respectively.

Together with the small Zhuhai-Macao Cross-border Industrial Zone checkpoint (its border crossings accounting for only 0.1 percent of the total), Macau's five land border checkpoints accounted for 93.2 percent of the total number of border crossings recorded at the city's nine checkpoints during the period, i.e., between January 1 and May 24 this year.

Only those working at the Zhuhai-Macao Cross-border Industrial Zone can use the checkpoint there. ■

## 'Felicidade Topsy Weekend' draws 20,000 visitors to Rua da Felicidade

Khalet Vallo

A three-day cocktail and music event held on Rua da Felicidade near Avenida de Almeida Ribeiro attracted nearly 20,000 attendees, blending nightlife, live performances and local business promotions to revitalise one of Macau's best-known historic streets.

Organised by the Macau General Union of Neighbourhood Associations (known as Kai Fong in Cantonese), the "Felicidade Topsy Weekend" concluded on Sunday after transforming the legendary "Street of Bliss" into a nightlife and entertainment hub featuring signature cocktails, live music, and spending reward campaigns.

The opening ceremony was held on Friday and was attended by representatives from government entities, community organisations and businesses, including the Liaison Office of the Central People's Government in the Macao SAR, the Macau Government Tourism Office (MGTO) and the Municipal Affairs Bureau (IAM), according to a statement by the association last week.

Addressing the ceremony, Kai Fong President John Chan Ka Leong said that the initiative aimed to preserve the district's cultural identity while introducing modern tourism and consumer experiences to attract both residents and visitors to the neighbourhood, said a Kai Fong statement, which estimated that the event drew a crowd of nearly 20,000.

One of the event's main attractions was a lineup of themed cocktails created by more than 25 bartenders from Macau and neighbouring regions, the statement noted, adding that the drinks incorporated over 100



This undated handout photo provided by Kai Fong yesterday shows visitors during the "Felicidade Topsy Weekend" on Rua da Felicidade ("Street of Bliss") near Avenida de Almeida Ribeiro.

locally inspired flavours sourced from businesses around the street.

The statement noted that ingredients including herbal tea, shrimp roe, chilli oil, peanut candy, preserved plums, oyster sauce and duck liver were reinterpreted into cocktails using modern mixology techniques.

Meanwhile, the event also featured a creative market, DJ performances and concerts by artistes including Hong Kong singer Ben Cheng Tsun-yin, known professionally as Tyson Yoshi and local singer Vivian Chan (陳慧敏), the statement pointed out.

According to the statement, many visitors extended their stay into the late evening to continue dining, shopping and participating in activities around the district. Some attendees also suggested extending future operating hours or adding more nighttime sessions.

The statement noted that the event aligned with Macau's broader "Tourism+" development strategy by promoting the night economy and encouraging longer visits, while revitalising one of the city's historic districts through culture, entertainment and local business engagement. ■

## Macau logs record 14.6 million visitors in Jan-April

Staff Reporter

Macau recorded the entry of over 14.6 million visitors in the first four months of the year, up 13.1 percent year-on-year, representing an all-time historical record for the period under review.

In the first four months of this year, the number of visitor arrivals totalled 14,655,300, according to data released by the Statistics and Census Bureau (DSEC) on Friday. This figure comprises same-day visitors (9,103,273) and overnight visitors (5,552,027), whose growth rates were 20.1 percent and 3.3 percent, respectively.

Between January and April, the number of foreign visitor arrivals reached 1,009,892, an increase of 10.7 percent year-on-year. Visitors' average length of stay was one day, while that of overnight tourists stood at more than two days.

In April, the number of visitor arrivals was 3.44 million, up 11.3 percent year-on-year.

On average, Macau recorded 114,713 visitor arrivals per day in April, equivalent to 16.7 percent of

Macau's population.

At the end of the first quarter of this year, Macau's population stood at 688,100, according to official demographics.

In terms of visitor source markets last month, the number of visitor arrivals from the Chinese mainland rose by 13.1 percent year-on-year to 2.4 million. Visitors from Hong Kong (680,521) and Taiwan

(101,453) increased by 3.1 percent and 32.2 percent, respectively.

Foreign visitor arrivals in April totalled 254,136, up 10.5 percent, led by tourists from the Philippines (51,544), South Korea (40,603), and Thailand (29,008). Regarding long-haul visitors, the number of Macau's US visitor arrivals rose by 13.9 percent year-on-year to 15,299 last month. ■



Guests queue for taxis outside the Studio City integrated resort in Macau's Cotai entertainment district on Friday. – Photo: Carl Leong

## ABOUT The Young Post

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



## St Paul School's charity bazaar aims to foster students' responsibility and commitment: principal

Armindo Neves

Macau's well-known Saint Paul School held its annual charity bazaar on Saturday on Rampa dos Cavaleiros in the Areia Preta district.

Speaking during the one-day event's opening ceremony, the school's principal, Fr. Athanasius Chen Xin Wang, said: "Charity is an ongoing process of moral cultivation".

Fr. Chen pointed out that the bazaar, themed "Let kindness be your light, and love your fire", aimed to encourage students to engage in charitable sales and acts of care, putting into practice the truth that "it is more blessed to give than to receive".

He emphasised that education is not only about imparting knowledge, but also about fostering students' responsibility and commitment. He wished the event every success.

The *Post* interviewed event participants and bazaar organisers on Saturday.

Fr. Lawrence The Reh, the school's director of pastoral care, told the *Post* that the atmosphere at the bazaar was joyful. Teachers, students, and parents all pulled together, demonstrating the true value of community collaboration.

He noted that the essence of charity is love, and that by giving and sacrificing their time, students learn to care for the world and for people in need.

He also noted that the entire event was led and organised by the student association, with teachers assisting from the sidelines, reflecting a spirit of whole-school participation.

Fr. Lawrence underlined that while the students give, they also receive in return, and these acts of kindness will resonate throughout their lives. He expressed his hope that the students would grow up healthy and happy, always accompanied by love and goodness.

A student who heads the student association, surnamed Lam, told the *Post* that he was responsible for coordinating about 100 staff members for Saturday's event, expected to attract around 3,000 participants. He felt that organising the bazaar had taught him practical skills not found in textbooks, such as budget planning, resource management, crowd control, and duty scheduling, truly embodying the spirit of service.

Two Primary 5 students, surnamed Kwok and Tai, both said they found the booth games interesting and the lucky draw prizes generous. They were happy that the proceeds would go towards helping disadvantaged groups, adding that they hoped to continue volunteering in the future.

A parent, surnamed Ieong, said the process of queuing and taking turns politely during the event helped instil

values and develop interpersonal skills in his seven-year-old son.

Another parent, surnamed Lai, said during the event she believed the bazaar spreads positive energy and has a beneficial educational impact on children. Her child was due to serve as a stall volunteer in the afternoon.

Lam I Teng, the teacher in charge of the religious booth, noted that the stall featured four games designed to help participants learn about Catholic teachings. She added that a successful charity bazaar not only brings joy but also teaches students to care for those in need, thereby serving an evangelising purpose.

Leung Kwok Wai, a teacher running another booth, said that his stall's main message was that although people are not perfect, they should strive continuously to improve themselves. Despite challenges caused by rainy weather during preparations, both teachers and students remained undaunted.

Karen Lai, the school's director of student affairs, said this year's bazaar featured a new booth run by the Catholic school's moral education department. The theme was "Nourish the heart with virtue, walk forward with kindness", putting into practice the school motto, "*Alere Flammam*" (a Latin phrase that translates literally as "to feed the flame"; it is traditionally used metaphorically to mean "feeding the flame of knowledge").

In terms of fundraising, a clothes donation drive was held at the school last week. Lai thanked the parents for their dedicated support and expressed hope that the total raised would exceed last year's record of over 345,000 patacas.



Saint Paul School Principal Fr Athanasius Chen Xin Wang speaks to school reporters during Saturday's charity bazaar at Saint Paul School Macau on Rampa dos Cavaleiros in Areia Preta district.

- Photos: Armindo Neves



The school's Director of Pastoral Care Fr. Lawrence The Reh (sixth from left) and other representatives pose during Saturday's charity bazaar. - Photo courtesy of Saint Paul School

## IAM records 2,000 visits at inaugural Int'l Tea Day Carnival



This undated handout photo provided by the Macau Municipal Affairs Bureau (IAM) shows members of the public taking part in a tea tasting activity.

Rui Pastorin

Macau's inaugural "International Tea Day Carnival" took place on May 16 at both the Tea Culture House and the surrounding Lou Lim Ioc Garden, seeing a total of 2,000 visits during its one-day run, according to its organiser, the Municipal Affairs Bureau (IAM).

The bureau noted in a statement released on Friday that "International Tea Day" is annually celebrated on May 21, as designated by the United Nations. While it has passed, the statement underlined that more activities are set to take place in Macau from next month all the way to December, being

geared towards promoting Chinese tea culture. Guided tours at the Tea Culture House will also be available on the first, third, and (if that is the case) fifth Saturdays and the corresponding Sundays of each month at 3 p.m.

Highlighting the activities, the statement said that sessions for the "Charm of tea and traditional Chinese clothing" are slated to take place at the Tea Culture House's first floor on June 13, July 11, August 8, September 12, October 10, November 7 and December 12. The "Shen-hour\* tea tasting with singing bowl music" activity meanwhile will be held on July 25, September 26 and November

21, according to the statement.

Lastly, "Painted tea tins" invites parents and children to jointly design and paint tea tins, with workshop sessions to be held on June 27, August 22, October 24 and December 26, the statement said.

One can register for the activities on the Macao One Account in phases. More details are available on [www.iam.gov.mo](http://www.iam.gov.mo). ■

*\*The Shen hour is the ninth of the 12 traditional Chinese "shichen", which divides the day into two-hour periods. The Shen hour runs from 3 p.m. to 5 p.m. Traditionally, one Chinese hour ("shichen") is 120 minutes long. – Google AI*

## After diesel, Macau govt also subsidises petrol and LPG

Staff Reporter

Macau's Cross-departmental Working Group for Fuel Monitoring has announced that, following diesel, the government will also launch a subsidy programme for liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) and petrol.

The two-month measures, which started at 00:00 a.m. today, are implemented until 11:59 p.m. on July 25, offering direct discounts of 2.55 patacas per kg of LPG and 1.5 patacas per litre of petrol, the working group announced in a press conference on Friday.

The working group consists of officials from the Economic and Technological Development Bureau (DSED), the Consumer Council (CC), the Environmental Protection Bureau (DSPA), the Statistics and Census Bureau (DSEC), and the Fire Services Bureau (CB).

According to the announcement, the objective is to mitigate the effects of the sharp volatility and significant rise in global prices of petroleum products, resulting from the recent and ongoing instability of the international geopolitical situation. The initiative serves as a complement to the diesel price subsidy previously announced, according to the press conference held at the DSED headquarters in the Luso International Bank Building in Nam Van.

LPG users will now benefit from a direct subsidy of 2.55 patacas per kg at the time of purchase. Fuel companies are required to display the prices

before and after the subsidy on sales invoices or retail price lists, in order to inform consumers of the amount actually borne by the government.

Petrol users will benefit from a subsidy of 1.5 patacas per litre on the amount actually paid. When calculating the selling price, fuel companies must first deduct the discounts usually granted to their customers, and then subtract the government subsidy from that already reduced price.

The government expects to spend 16 million patacas on the LPG subsidy and 25 million patacas on the petrol subsidy, thereby 41 million patacas in total, according to the press conference.

During the press conference, the working group stressed that the legislation in force establishes a maximum limit for the storage quantity of flammable and explosive substances, including LPG, meaning residents and merchants do not need to hoard the product. The government has already coordinated with suppliers to guarantee a stable distribution, recommending that orders be placed only according to actual needs, the press conference underlined.

Since May 11, the government has been providing a diesel subsidy of 3.3 patacas per litre for vehicles and all industrial and commercial premises where diesel-powered equipment is operated, for a period of two months, with a budgeted expenditure of 80 million patacas. ■

### Petrol Price Subsidy Scheme

- **Recipient:** Petrol users
- **Amount:** Retail selling price of petrol, after deduction of all promotions and discounts,

**Subsidy of 1.5 patacas per litre**

- **Subsidy allocation period:** from 00:00 on May 26, 2026 to 23:59 on July 25
- **Consultation hotline:** 8597 2233

(Call during office hours for DSED)

Infographic issued by the Macau government on Friday. Translation arranged by The Macau Post Daily.

## 7 wine producers offer taste of Tejo wines in Macau

Rui Pastorin

Wine producers, industry members and professionals, along with members of the public, gathered yesterday for the one-day Tejo Wines Tasting Showcase at Artyzen Grand Lapa Macau.

Organised by Tejo wines, the one-day event featured seven wine producers from Portugal's Tejo region, which event information highlighted as having deeply-rooted heritage in Portugal's oldest wine region. It was divided into two sessions, with an afternoon session exclusive to professionals, companies, wine shops, and importers, while an open session for the general public took place in the evening. Tejo Wines Marketing Manager Martim Pestana highlighted to the *Post* during an interview yesterday, noting the importance of presenting good wines with a lot of structure and flavours to consumers.

Following the Macau tasting event, the seven wine producers will continue to showcase their wines at the international business-to-business tradeshow Vinexpo Asia in Hong Kong from today through Thursday. Coming to these two events, Pestana highlighted the importance of the Asian market and staying in it. "We want to increase our brand and our sales of wines in this market", Pestana said. He



Wine enthusiasts visit one of the booths set up for the Tejo Wines at Artyzen Grand Lapa Macau. – Photo: Rui Pastorin

described it as a "huge market" with lot of people and "a lot of targets".

In terms of Macau specifically, Pestana pointed out the connection between Portugal and the city including its relations and familiarity with the Portuguese culture and wine producers. "For us, it's very important to stay and represent Portugal in this market".

The event had taken place prior to the COVID-19 pandemic (2020-2022), Bruno Simões, the managing director of DOC DMC, which handles local coordination, told the *Post* yesterday.

Touching on event attendees and their objectives, Simões said that some are looking for importers and

a way to enter their market, while there are those who are already in the market, with an importer and distribution. Those who have distribution here want to raise the profile and promote the Tejo wine region\*, while there are those seeking importers.

Overall, Simões said he believes that the Tejo wine region is "already known in Macau" and has a good presence. ■

*\*Tejo, until 2009 named Ribatejo, is a Portuguese wine region covering the same areas as the Ribatejo Province. It takes its name from the river Tejo (Tagus being its traditional English name). – Wikipedia*

## Smoking banned outside 8 additional schools & 4 crèches

Tony Wong

Smoking has been barred in outdoor areas within 10 metres of the entrances to eight more schools and four more crèches since yesterday, bringing the total number of such schools to 11 and such crèches to five in the city.

The new measure, which started yesterday, was announced by the Health Bureau (SSM) in a statement on Sunday.

The statement noted that with the aim of better protecting children from exposure to second-hand smoke, the Health Bureau rolled out a smoking ban in outdoor areas within 10 metres of the entrances to three schools and a crèche on November 24 last year, where those violating the smoking ban are fined 1,500 patacas. The statement said

that the smoking ban has been well received by teachers, students and their parents.

The statement said that after comprehensive assessments in collaboration with the Municipal Affairs Bureau (IAM), the Health Bureau (SSM) chose eight more schools and four more crèches to be newly covered by a smoking ban within 10 metres of their respective entrances.

Consequently, the statement pointed out, smoking has now been banned in outdoor areas within 10 metres of the entrances to 11 schools and five crèches, where those violating the smoking ban will be fined 1,500 patacas.

In Macau, smoking is banned in all indoor public venues and facilities, except smoking lounges in casinos and at the airport. In addition, smoking is also prohibited in certain outdoor

public areas such as public parks and gardens, public beaches, footbridges, pedestrian underpasses, and within 10 metres of all public bus stops.

Illegal smoking carries a fixed fine of 1,500 patacas.

According to Macau's anti-smoking law, specifically the Tobacco Prevention and Control Law, the Health Bureau can, on a case-by-case basis, designate additional outdoor public areas as statutory no-smoking zones beyond those listed in the law after obtaining the green light from the respective public entities governing the areas concerned.

Consequently, the outdoor areas within 10 metres of the entrances to the 11 schools and the five crèches are now also statutory no-smoking zones so that those smoking there face a fine of 1,500 patacas. ■

## Xi urges faster building of closer China-Pakistan community with shared future in new era

BEIJING – China and Pakistan should accelerate the building of a closer China-Pakistan community with a shared future in the new era, and achieve more results in all-weather cooperation between the two countries, President Xi Jinping said yesterday.

Xi made the remarks when meeting with Pakistani Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif in Beijing. He also urged the two sides to bring more benefits to the people of both countries, contribute to promoting regional peace and stability, and set an example for building a community with a shared future with neighboring countries.

Since the establishment of diplomatic relations 75 years ago, China and Pakistan have forged an unbreakable traditional friendship, Xi said, noting that the strategic mutual trust and practical cooperation between the two sides have effectively promoted the development of each country.

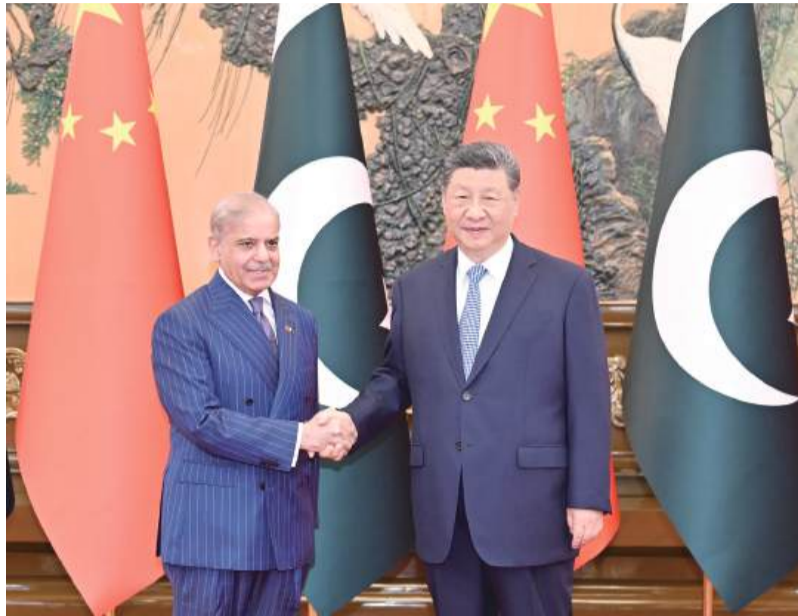
China has always prioritized the development of China-Pakistan relations in its neighborhood diplomacy no matter how the international situation changes, Xi said.

Xi told Sharif about receiving a letter from Pakistani students at Tianjin University in north China, who pledged to serve as builders of China-Pakistan cooperation, promoters of exchange, and guardians of friendship.

“I feel gratified to see that the cause of bilateral friendship has successors,” Xi said.

Stressing that China firmly supports Pakistan in safeguarding its independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity, Xi said China is ready to maintain high-level exchanges with Pakistan, enhance strategic communication and grasp the correct direction of the development of bilateral ties.

Xi called on both sides to solidly advance the action plan for building



President Xi Jinping meets with Pakistani Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif (left), who is on an official visit to China, at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing yesterday. – Xinhua

a China-Pakistan community with a shared future, coordinate the construction of major landmark projects and “small but beautiful” livelihood initiatives, and deepen all-round cooperation in agriculture, industry, artificial intelligence, talent cultivation and other fields.

Both sides should carry out security cooperation at a higher level and in broader fields to jointly maintain regional peace and stability, Xi said, adding that China commends Pakistan for taking the initiative to play a mediating role in restoring peace in the Middle East.

Both sides should continue to maintain close communication and coordination, jointly oppose unilateralism and Cold War mentality, and work together to promote an equal and orderly multipolar world and an inclusive economic globalization, Xi added.

Sharif said President Xi is a great friend of the Pakistani people, and also a great friend of all peace-loving people in the world.

Under the strong leadership of President Xi, China’s economy has achieved remarkable

accomplishments that have attracted worldwide attention, providing a solid guarantee for maintaining world peace and building a multipolar world, Sharif said.

He said Pakistan firmly adheres to the one-China principle, steadfastly supports China’s position on all issues concerning its core interests, and will always be a good friend and partner of China.

Pakistan stands ready to learn from China’s experience in governance, deepen cooperation under the Belt and Road Initiative, promote the construction of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, and continuously advance Pakistan-China relations to bring benefits to the two peoples, he added.

Sharif said that Pakistan appreciated China’s support for Pakistan in mediating the US-Iran negotiations, noting that President Xi’s four propositions on the Middle East situation provide a guiding framework for peace in the region.

Pakistan is willing to closely coordinate with China and jointly contribute to promoting world peace and stability, he added. – Xinhua

## China ready to promote practical cooperation with Singapore: Chinese FM

BEIJING – China attaches great importance to the development of China-Singapore relations, and is willing to maintain the momentum of high-level exchanges, promote practical cooperation in various fields, and enhance people-to-people exchanges with Singapore, Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi said yesterday.

Wang, also a member of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of China Central Committee, made the remarks when holding talks with Singaporean Foreign Minister Vivian Balakrishnan in Beijing.

Noting that over the past year, under the strategic guidance of leaders of the two countries and joint efforts of both sides, the all-round high-quality and future-oriented partnership between China and Singapore has maintained

a good momentum, Wang urged the two countries to continue to enhance strategic communication, increase mutual trust, jointly address the ever-emerging global challenges at present, and safeguard the overall situation of regional peace and stability.

Wang said that maintaining the security of global industrial and supply chains and the smooth flow of maritime navigation is in the common interests of the international community, and China is willing to continue to make efforts to this end.

Noting that Singapore is an important ASEAN member and will assume ASEAN’s rotating presidency next year, Wang said China expects the Singaporean side to continue playing an active role in promoting China-ASEAN cooperation.

Balakrishnan said Singapore highly values its relations with China, adheres to the one-China policy, and firmly opposes “Taiwan independence.”

Singapore is willing to maintain close high-level exchanges with China, promote practical cooperation in various fields, carry out key cooperation projects of both sides, and promote regional connectivity, he said.

Singapore is ready to promote greater progress in ASEAN-China comprehensive strategic partnership, support the Global Development Initiative, and uphold multilateralism and free trade, and is willing to work with China to make joint efforts in promoting world peace, development and prosperity, he added. – Xinhua

## China strongly condemns terrorist attack in Pakistan’s Balochistan

BEIJING – China strongly condemns a terrorist attack in Pakistan, which has caused heavy casualties, and expresses deep condolences to the victims and sincere sympathies to the injured and the bereaved families, Chinese foreign ministry spokesperson Mao Ning said yesterday.

According to reports, a passenger train in Balochistan Province, southwestern Pakistan, was hit by a bomb attack on Sunday. The death toll has risen to 47, including 20 soldiers, while 98 others were

injured, as of yesterday. The Balochistan Liberation Army has claimed responsibility for the attack.

Mao said China stands resolutely against terrorism in all its forms and will continue firmly supporting Pakistan in combating terrorism, maintaining solidarity and stability, and protecting public safety.

“We stand ready to further strengthen counter-terrorism cooperation with Pakistan to jointly safeguard regional peace, security and stability,” said the spokesperson. – Xinhua

## Xi calls on China, Serbia to advance wide-ranging cooperation

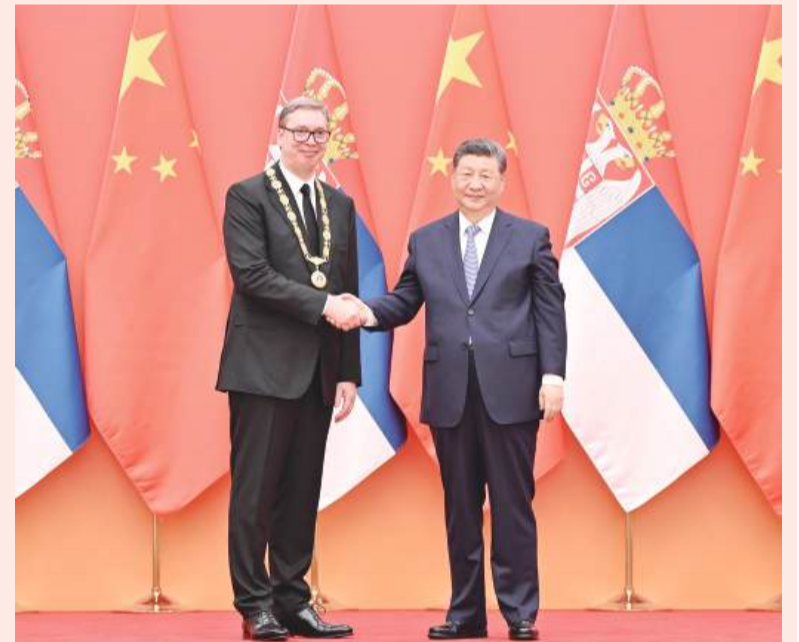
BEIJING – China and Serbia should better align development strategies, implement the mid-term action plan for Belt and Road cooperation, and advance cooperation in transport and energy infrastructure among others, President Xi Jinping said yesterday.

Xi made the remarks when holding talks with Serbian President Aleksandar Vucic, who is on a state visit to China.

Against the backdrop of a new scientific and technological

revolution and industrial transformation, the two sides should expand cooperation in emerging sectors such as artificial intelligence, the digital economy, green energy and advanced manufacturing to foster new growth drivers, he said.

Xi also called on both countries to leverage visa exemption policies, the free trade agreement and direct flights to expand all-round cooperation in culture, education, sports, tourism and sub-national exchanges. – Xinhua



President Xi Jinping holds a ceremony to award Serbian President Aleksandar Vucic (left) the Friendship Medal of the People’s Republic of China at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing yesterday. – Xinhua

## Dialogue, negotiation right path for Iran situation: foreign ministry

BEIJING – China always believes that dialogue and negotiation are the right path for the Iran situation, and the use of force is a dead end, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Mao Ning said yesterday.

Mao made the remarks at a regular news briefing when asked to comment on media reports that the United States and Iran are close to reaching an agreement.

“Now that the door of dialogue has been opened, it should not be shut again. It is important to steady the momentum in easing the situation, keep to the direction of political

settlement, and reach a solution that accommodates the concerns of all parties through dialogue and consultation,” the spokesperson said.

Mao said that efforts should be made to reopen the shipping lanes as soon as possible, respond to the calls of the international community, and jointly maintain stable, unimpeded global production and supply chains.

Mao also called for efforts to reach a comprehensive and lasting ceasefire as soon as possible and to restore peace and stability to the Middle East and the Gulf region at an early date. – Xinhua

## 9 dead, 11 missing after heavy rain lashes Chongqing

CHONGQING – Nine people were killed and another 11 were unaccounted for as of yesterday afternoon after heavy rain, which started on Saturday night, had battered Yongchuan District in southwest Municipality of Chongqing, said local authorities.

Rescue and response efforts are still underway. The municipal and district-level flood control and drought relief emergency headquarters have so far dispatched a total of 1,827 rescue personnel of various categories.

From Saturday night to early Sunday morning, a sudden and extreme catastrophic rainstorm struck Yongchuan, triggering flash floods and geological disasters in multiple areas of this district.

Anxi Village is one of the worst-hit areas. Rescuers trekked across piles of accumulated mud and rock debris there, using life detectors to search for missing persons. In the meantime, some rescuers deployed large excavators and other engineering machinery in carrying out relief operations.

“We are conducting rescue operations via manual searches supported by engineering machinery, to ensure no area is left unsearched,” said Guo Yufei, a rescuer. The rescue site has seen the use of 37 sets of remote-controlled excavators, 3D laser scanners and other equipment.

The disaster-stricken areas are marked by complex hillside terrain, a wide range of mud and rock deposits, large elevation differences, and high

risks due to their proximity to river courses. Various technical means are deployed at the site to ensure safety in carrying out rescue work.

Guo said measures including low-altitude patrols by drones and close-range observation by safety officers have been adopted at the site to ensure the rescue work is done safely and efficiently.

Rescuer Yang Zulin was monitoring the slope stability with a slope radar, and the cloud map generated on the screen showed the deformation of the slope in real time.

“If we find that the slope has large deformation or is on the verge of sliding, we will issue an early warning to the site in time to ensure the safety of every rescue worker at the scene,” Yang said.

As of 6 a.m., Yongchuan had provided accommodation for 2,141 residents from 1,113 households. A total of 42 resettlement sites had been set up across the district, with a total capacity of 9,005 people.

At the resettlement site of Shouyong Primary School in Banqiao Town, many disaster-affected residents were taking a rest. Sufficient daily supplies such as bottled water and food were available on site.

Liu Xiaoyan, a staff member of the resettlement site, said the resettlement area has provided sufficient supplies for affected people, ensuring that they have access to food, clothing, clean drinking water, safe shelter and medical services. – Xinhua



An aerial drone photo taken yesterday shows the rescue site of the flood-hit area after a heavy rainstorm hit Yongchuan District in Chongqing Municipality. – Xinhua

## Mainland's consumer market posts steady growth in Jan-April

BEIJING – The mainland's consumer market maintained stable performance in the first four months of this year, as a raft of pro-consumption policies continued to take effect, according to the Ministry of Commerce.

In April, demand for green and smart products remained robust. Data from the ministry showed that sales of smart glasses on major monitored platforms surged 5.9-fold year on year last month, while sales of handheld cameras rose 26.9 percent from a year earlier. The country's new energy vehicle market penetration rate reached 61.4 percent in April, exceeding 60 percent for the first time.

Growth in rural consumption outpaced that of urban areas in the first four months of the year.

Retail sales of consumer goods in rural areas increased 2.8 percent year on year during this period, 1 percentage point faster than the growth recorded in urban areas.

Inbound consumption continued to heat up, as Chinese mainland expanded visa-free policies and further optimized its departure tax refund policies. In the January-April period, departure tax-refund sales in Guangzhou and Shenzhen, both in south China, had surged 186 percent and 145 percent year on year, respectively.

Previously released official data showed that Chinese mainland retail sales of consumer goods, a key gauge of the country's consumption strength, had expanded 1.9 percent year on year in the January-April period of this year. – Xinhua

## Shenzhou-23 astronauts enter Tiangong space station

BEIJING – The three astronauts aboard Shenzhou-23 spaceship have entered the Tiangong space station and met with another astronaut trio yesterday, starting a new round of in-orbit crew handover.

The Shenzhou-21 crew aboard Tiangong opened the hatch at 5:13 a.m. and welcomed the new arrivals, according to the China Manned Space Agency (CMSA).

The two crews then took group

pictures for the eighth space get-together in China's aerospace history.

They will conduct handover work aboard the space station, the CMSA said.

– Xinhua



This image captured at Beijing Aerospace Control Center yesterday shows a group picture of the crew of Shenzhou-21 and Shenzhou-23 spaceships. The three astronauts aboard Shenzhou-23 spaceship have entered the Tiangong space station and met with another astronaut trio yesterday, starting a new round of in-orbit crew handover.

The Shenzhou-21 crew aboard Tiangong opened the hatch at 5:13 a.m. and welcomed the new arrivals, according to the China Manned Space Agency (CMSA). – Xinhua

## Huawei touts new chipmaking technology to sidestep US restrictions

Rebecca Bailey

SHANGHAI – Chinese tech giant Huawei said yesterday it had developed a new way of making semiconductors that could get around its US-enforced lack of access to the most advanced chipmaking equipment.

Huawei has been at the centre of a geopolitical standoff in recent years after Washington warned its equipment could be used by the Chinese government for espionage, an allegation the firm denies.

Sanctions since 2019 have cut Huawei's access to components and technologies made by the United States and some of its allies – including the lithography machines used to make the world's most advanced chips.

However, the head of Huawei's semiconductor division He Tingbo said yesterday that the company will be able to produce chips equivalent to next-generation 1.4-nanometre (1.4nm) ones by 2031.

Taiwan's TSMC, the industry leader, has projected it will be able to do the same by 2028.

Cutting-edge chips that can train and power artificial intelligence systems are a crucial and highly sensitive element of the technology rivalry between the United States and China.

The computing power of chips has increased dramatically over the decades as makers cram them with more microscopic electronic components.

Huawei's announcement sug-

gests it might have sidestepped the need for extreme ultraviolet lithography (EUV) machines, which have been considered crucial for mass manufacturing chips of 5nm or under.

“Over the past six years, I have often been asked... how did you survive and come back on top?” He said in a presentation to the International Symposium on Circuits and Systems (ISCAS) in Shanghai.

She said the new technique came about through a shift in how chipmaking has been conceptualised historically.

“Moore's Law”, a principle developed by Intel co-founder Gordon Moore, states that the number of transistors – devices regulating the flow of electricity – on a chip doubles every two years.

A higher density of transistors results in a smaller chip or one the same size with faster processing power.

He proposed yesterday “the Tau Scaling Law”, or “Her's Law”, by which instead of optimising for space, designers optimise for the time taken for the various elements making up a chip to communicate.

This overcomes a key challenge facing Moore's Law that Intel sums up as: “You can make something smaller and smaller and smaller... until you can't”.

US sanctions have meant that “these challenges arrived earlier and are tougher” for Huawei, He said.

“Our solution is feasible and affordable. The performance of the new chip can fully compete with

that of the other path,” she said.

Huawei's next iteration of its Kirin chip, set to launch in the autumn, will be the first to fully adopt an architecture called “LogicFolding” based on the new principle, the company said.

### “No way out”

“Over the past six years, there was a period when I felt quite frustrated, as if there was really no way out,” He told reporters after the ISCAS presentation.

But she said she had been inspired by “a masterpiece of engineering”, southwestern China's Dujiangyan irrigation system that was originally constructed around 256 BC.

She said she realised she was just facing problems others would come across 10 years later.

“I can confidently say in the coming 10 years our solutions for mobile computing and AI computing will be competitive,” He told reporters.

But she acknowledged that obstacles remained in scaling up – not least the necessity for new design tools and the challenges of overheating.

The Tau Scaling Law “underscores the company's ambition to lead rather than follow in the global chip race”, said George Chen, Partner and Chair of Digital Practice at The Asia Group.

“Even without a new product launch today, Huawei's intent is clear – and its trajectory will likely heighten US concerns.” – AFP

## Around 20 injured after spraying incident in Tokyo mall

TOKYO – Around 20 people were injured at a luxury shopping complex in central Tokyo yesterday after a man sprayed a substance inside, police and fire department officials said.

Tokyo police spokesman Yusuke Koide told AFP that a man sprayed a substance at an ATM on the ground floor of the building, while a local fire department official said “around 20 people were injured” after a report of a “smell”.

The road in front of the mall – located in the touristy and upmarket shopping district of Ginza – was blocked off following the incident, and fire trucks lined the street.

However, shoppers continued to come and go from the building using side entrances.

An AFP reporter at the scene saw two people on stretchers being put into an ambulance, while firefighters and officials dressed in hazmat suits took people from the mall into specialised trucks to examine them.

“As of now, 19 people have been transported to a hospital,” fire department official Ryosuke Kobayashi told reporters.

Public broadcaster NHK said the injuries appeared to be light.

It said the spray was believed to have contained the irritant capsaicin, the active component of chilli peppers, according to unidentified investigative sources.



Women that were inside the Ginza 6 Shopping Centre walk past an emergency vehicle in Tokyo yesterday, after an individual allegedly sprayed a substance in the area. – AFP

One 70-year-old woman who was at the mall told the broadcaster that her throat started “stinging and hurting” as she approached the ATM.

“By the time I arrived, the commotion had already started, and I thought there might have been a small fire or something.

“Once I went into the ATM corner, my throat felt scratchy, almost numb,” she said.

Police are investigating the cause, a fire department officer at the scene said.

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

However, there are occasional stabbing attacks and even shootings,

including the assassination of former prime minister Shinzo Abe in 2022.

Fourteen people were injured in a stabbing attack in a factory in central Japan in December last year, during which an unspecified liquid was also sprayed.

Japan remains shaken by the memory of a major subway attack in 1995 when members of the Aum Shinrikyo cult released sarin gas on trains, killing 14 people and making more than 5,800 ill.

Five members of the Aum cult dropped bags of Nazi-developed sarin nerve agent inside morning commuter trains on March 20, 1995, piercing the pouches with sharpened umbrella tips before fleeing. – AFP

## Cambodia’s Hun Sen pardons detained opposition leader

PHNOM PENH – Cambodia’s acting head of state, former prime minister Hun Sen, pardoned opposition leader Kem Sokha yesterday from a sentence of almost three decades for treason.

Kem Sokha, who was convicted of trying to topple the former long-ruling leader’s government and sentenced to 27 years, “is pardoned”, Hun Sen posted on social media alongside a royal decree signed by him.

Hun Sen, who ruled Cambodia for nearly four decades, stepped down as prime minister in 2023 and handed power to his eldest son, Hun Manet.

But Hun Sen is still president of the Senate, remains an influential figure in national politics, and is acting head of state while King Norodom Sihamoni receives medical treatment abroad.

Kem Sokha, 72, was arrested on treason charges in 2017 and sentenced six years later, but was ordered to serve his time under house arrest in the capital, Phnom Penh.

The co-founder of the dissolved opposition Cambodia National Rescue Party (CNRP), Kem Sokha has repeatedly denied the charge.

Rights advocates say his prosecution was designed to bar him and his popular opposition movement from politics after the party made electoral gains against

Hun Sen’s entrenched Cambodian People’s Party.

United Nations rights experts said in 2023 that Kem Sokha’s trial appeared to have been “artificially prolonged”.

They said his conviction was “politically motivated” and evidence of a “pattern of the misapplication of laws” to target political rivals.

A lower court earlier stripped Kem Sokha of his political rights and banned him from meeting foreigners or anyone who is not a family member.

Kem Sokha’s lawyer Pheng Heng told AFP that the pardon, which he called a “positive step”, released him only from the 27-year sentence of house arrest.

His political rights, including holding office and voting, were permanently revoked, the lawyer said.

### ‘Conciliatory spirit’

UN rights chief Volker Turk said this month he was “deeply concerned” by a Cambodian court rejecting Kem Sokha’s appeal against his treason sentence on April 30.

Yesterday’s pardon did not undo an additional sentence against Kem Sokha, added by the appeals court, banning him from leaving the country for five years, the royal decree said.

The opposition leader said in a letter to the appeals court dated yesterday that he would not appeal

against its decision to the Supreme Court, although he was “not satisfied”.

“Resolving this issue with a conciliatory spirit through dialogue between Khmer and Khmer is the best option for the national and Cambodian people’s interest,” Kem Sokha said, referring to the majority ethnic group in Cambodia.

Prime Minister Hun Manet said the pardon was a “further step in strengthening national solidarity (and) unity”, in a Facebook post.

Kem Sokha first ran for parliament in 1993, the nation’s first election, supported by the UN, since emerging from years of civil war and the genocide of the Khmer Rouge period in the 1970s.

He left politics in 2002 to found the Cambodian Center for Human Rights.

Five years later, he rejoined the political fray with his newly established Human Rights Party, which he would later merge with opposition figurehead Sam Rainsy’s party to form the CNRP.

Scores of political opponents were convicted during Hun Sen’s time in power while Sam Rainsy, Hun Sen’s long-time rival, lives in self-exile in France.

Rights groups have long accused Cambodian authorities of using legal cases as a tactic to silence opposition voices and legitimate political dissent. – AFP

## Philippines ends rescue operation for 12 missing in building collapse

Faith Brown

ANGELES CITY – Emergency officials said late yesterday they had ended a two-day rescue operation for at least 12 people believed buried in the debris of a collapsed building in the northern Philippines.

The bodies of four people, including a Malaysian man and two trapped construction workers, have so far been pulled from the debris of the nine-storey condominium project that collapsed onto a nearby hotel in the city of Angeles north of Manila early on Sunday.

There had been hope earlier yesterday when thermal sensors detected what rescue officials described as “signs of life” in one area of the wreckage. However, no survivors or further bodies were subsequently found, regional fire bureau spokeswoman Maria Leah Sajili said.

The rescue operation was formally declared over last night and the search was suspended overnight before “retrieval operations” begin on today, she told reporters.

The Malaysian man, who was a guest in the hotel, and the two construction workers were all found trapped but alive on Sunday.

However, all three died before they could be pulled from the rubble. The fourth confirmed fatality has not yet been identified.

Seventeen people had originally been listed as missing but rescue officials said one of them contacted officials yesterday to confirm he had not been in the

area at the time, Sajili said.

She said that most of the remaining 16 were construction workers who were sleeping at the site at the time.

Officials said up to 70 people were employed at the construction site, although most had gone home for the weekend.

Alfredo Albis, 55, told AFP he believed two of his cousins who worked with him at the building site were among the missing.

“They were working here to earn for their families,” said Albis, who was asleep at a nearby barracks for workers when the structure collapsed.

### Lack of safety gear

The cause of the collapse is not yet known, but regulators had been monitoring the project.

Labour department inspectors shut the site down briefly in September 2024 over occupational safety standards violations, regional labour department official Geraldine Panlilio said yesterday.

“Our labour inspectors had monitored poor working conditions, a violation that would put our workers at risk,” Panlilio said in an interview on Manila radio station DZMM.

Its workers “lacked safety gear” such as hard hats, boots, safety belts and lifelines, and worked under poor lighting and with no visible safety signage, she said.

Construction resumed a month after the shutdown when the contractor complied with safety requirements, Panlilio said. – AFP

## Thais join efforts to rescue 7 trapped in Laos cave

VIENTIANE – Cave rescue experts from Thailand who aided the dramatic 2018 retrieval of a youth football team joined efforts yesterday to extract seven people trapped in a flooded cave for five days in neighbouring Laos, Laotian state media said.

Seven Laotian villagers entered the cave in central Xaysomboun province, about 125 kilometres northeast of the capital Vientiane, on May 20, state-run Laophattana News said.

They were searching for gold but were trapped inside the cave after heavy rain triggered flash flooding, blocking their exit, it added.

Authorities and villagers have been working to pump water out of the cave, but rescue teams have not been able to reach the group.

“We still do not know whether there are any signs of life or if they are still alive,” Bounkham Luanglat, president of a Laotian volunteer rescue association, told AFP.

About 100 people from Laos and Thailand have gone to the site in Long Chanh district to help in the rescue operations, the association said.

Two Thai rescue specialists and another expert from Finland

who participated in the rescue of the “Wild Boars” team – who spent nearly three weeks trapped by flash floods in northern Thailand’s Tham Luang cave complex in 2018 – arrived at the Laos cave yesterday, Laophattana News said.

The Laotian rescue group said in a letter dated Saturday that it was appealing to charities in Thailand for specialist personnel and equipment, including water pumps, generators and thermal imaging devices, to help locate and extract the seven trapped people.

The group described the situation as a humanitarian emergency and urged Thai partners to contribute, as rescuers were working in difficult flood conditions.

“The mission is tough because of rain when we went down (into the cave). We had to move out as the water level was increasing,” Thai rescuer Chakkit Taengtan said in a video posted to his Facebook page on Sunday.

The cave system, located in a remote area, extends deep underground, with multiple levels and some passages reaching more than 100 metres from the entrance, the Laotian rescue group said. – AFP

## India orders migrant detention centres sparking expulsion fears

NEW DELHI – India's ruling Hindu-nationalist party has ordered detention centres for undocumented Bangladeshis and Rohingyas in West Bengal state, sparking fear among minorities that it could lead to arbitrary expulsions.

The directive comes just days after Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) won power in the eastern state for the first time since the country's independence in 1947.

The order calls on local authorities to set up "holding centres" for "apprehended foreigners" awaiting deportation, as part of a broader crackdown on illegal migration.

The government has defended its "detect, delete, deport" principle, saying those targeted are migrants staying illegally in the country.

"Illegal migration has security and socio-economic ramifications which are often well beyond law enforcement" read the order, issued last week.

The decision has fuelled anxiety among West Bengal's roughly 35 million Muslims, many of whom share linguistic and cultural ties with neighbouring Bangladesh.

Critics say the measure reflects the government's long-standing hardline stance on immigration, with top BJP members referring to Bangladeshi migrants as "termites" and "infiltrators" in the past.

The party has pursued similar policies in the neighbouring state of Assam, where it has overseen sweeping identification drives and largescale detentions.

Rights activists say hundreds have been deported to Bangladesh from Assam without due legal process, often based on ethnic profiling.

Many of them have been allegedly pushed across the border at gunpoint, according to activists and lawyers who have challenged the measures in court.

They argue the policies disproportionately impact the Muslim population by conflating religious identity with illegal migration.

The planned centres in West Bengal have drawn particular concern because of the state's porous border with Bangladesh and its long history of migration.

The inclusion of Rohingya refugees in the order has also drawn criticism.

India has previously been accused by humanitarian groups of forcibly returning Rohingyas to Myanmar, despite ongoing conflict there, in potential violation of international norms on refugee protection.

Adding to the unease of the Muslims, the BJP-led government in Assam yesterday introduced legislation to curb polygamy and amend personal religious laws, which critics say could further marginalise minorities. –AFP

## Torrential rains, floods kill 11, injure 15 in Afghanistan

KABUL – At least 11 people were killed and 15 others injured as torrential rains and devastating flash floods swept through multiple provinces in Afghanistan over the past 24 hours, the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) reported yesterday.

The deadly weather struck parts of Panjshir, Paktia, Baghlan, and Takhar provinces, according to NDMA spokesperson Hafiz Mohammad Yusuf Hammad.

The floods caused extensive

destruction, washing away dozens of homes and shops while severely damaging hundreds of acres of farmland and rural roads, Hammad added.

Afghanistan has been battered by severe rainfall and deadly flash floods in recent weeks, resulting in heavy loss of life and massive economic damage. Official figures indicate that more than 275 people have died and over 350 others have been injured in weather-related disasters during this period. –Xinhua



British climber Kenton Cool gestures upon his arrival at the Tribhuvan International airport in Kathmandu on Sunday, after breaking his own world record for the most ascents of the Mount Everest by a non-Nepali with his 20<sup>th</sup> summit. –AFP

## Taj Mahal, Village People and elephants: Rubio's India excursion

Shaun Tandon

AGRA, India – Marco Rubio leads US foreign policy as diplomacy on Iran goes down to the wire, but he is also making time for cultural attractions as divergent as the Taj Mahal and the Village People.

Rubio, who serves as President Donald Trump's secretary of state and national security advisor, took a day for sightseeing in India yesterday, touring the Taj Mahal, the renowned monument to love.

"It's one of the wonders of the world," Rubio said of the imposing mausoleum in Agra.

"I think it's important to show respect to the culture of the countries that you visit."

Rubio travelled to the Taj Mahal with his wife Jeanette, who usually shuns the spotlight. He put his arm gently around her as they posed on a bench that featured the iconic shot of Princess Diana in 1992.

Jeanette was not the only person to take pictures with Rubio at the Taj.

He also posed with members of the Village People, the disco group originally associated with the camp New York gay underground but whose cultural meaning has been transformed entirely by Trump after he adopted their song "YMCA".

They flew in to perform Sunday night at a gala party in New Delhi for the 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary of US independence, where they serenaded Rubio with "Happy Birthday" over a towering four-tier cake. Rubio turns 55 on Thursday.

The party was the brainchild of the US ambassador to India, Sergio Gor, a high-octane former aide to Trump, who eagerly joined the Rubios at the Taj Mahal.

Crowds were kept 100 metres away, but the Taj Mahal did not go into a full shutdown as it did for Vice President JD Vance.



US Secretary of State Marco Rubio (left) poses alongside his wife Jeanette at the Taj Mahal in Agra yesterday. –AFP

The Rubios, joined by Gor and senior aides, later flew to the desert city of Jaipur, where they took open-windowed jeeps up a ragged road to tour the imposing Amber Fort, the former residence of the Rajput maharajas that stares down on a lake.

Rubio was welcomed at the fort by twirling dancers in red turbans pounding drums, to which he gave a fist of approval.

After a brief tour, he was welcomed at his hotel, a converted palace, by assembled elephants, white horses and camels as peacocks fluttered in the garden.

### Wooing India

The excursion is unusual for Rubio, who in nearly a year and a half on the job has preferred short, business-like trips and rarely done events outside of government meetings.

Rubio said he was taking advantage of a one-day break in his schedule before a meeting in New Delhi today of the Quad - Australia, India, Japan and the United States. He will also stop in Armenia today on his way home.

The hectic pace comes as Rubio comments daily on Iran,

predicting chances of an imminent breakthrough.

Rubio was not entirely away from Iranian influence at the Taj Mahal, whose domes and four-way charbagh gardens are heavily influenced by Persian architecture.

The Taj Mahal was built in the 17<sup>th</sup> century on orders of Mughal emperor Shah Jahan as a mausoleum for his beloved wife Mumtaz Mahal who died in childbirth.

Rubio is visiting four cities over four days in India as he seeks to revive ties with a country successive US administrations saw as a like-minded partner.

Trump has shaken up that approach since returning to office, temporarily imposing high tariffs, warming to both China and India's historic adversary Pakistan, curbing visas used by Indian professionals, and reposting insulting language about Indian immigrants.

In remarks Sunday by speakerphone to the party, Trump insisted he was on board with the relationship, telling the crowd: "We've never been closer to India, and India can count on me 100 percent". –AFP

## Australia spy agency 'stretched' before Bondi attack: intelligence boss

SYDNEY – Australia's spy agency was "stretched" by threats on many fronts in the lead-up to an antisemitic mass shooting at Bondi in December, the nation's intelligence chief said yesterday.

Sajid Akram and son Naveed are accused of opening fire as Jewish families thronged Bondi Beach for a Hanukkah celebration, killing 15 people in Australia's worst mass shooting in decades.

Top security official Mike Burgess fronted an inquiry into the shootings, where he was asked about Australia's counter-terror capabilities.

Burgess said the Australian Security Intelligence Organisation had been "stretched" by a wide array of threats, ranging from religious extremism to young

people radicalised online.

But he said the spy agency still had enough resources to do its job.

"We were not leaving serious matters untreated or uninvestigated," he told the high-powered Royal Commission inquiry.

"Again, I'd stress, we are not all-seeing and all-knowing.

"In retrospect, I still think that our resourcing was sufficient for the problems we faced," he added.

Burgess will later be grilled on confidential intelligence arrangements in a closed-door hearing.

The mass shooting has sparked national soul-searching about antisemitism and widespread anger over the failure to shield Jewish Australians from harm.

Australia announced a suite of gun law reforms following the shootings, including a nationwide gun buyback scheme.

The buyback scheme has since stalled as the federal government struggles to convince Australia's states and territories to sign on.

Royal commissions hold public hearings and can sometimes run for years.

The inquiry is led by Virginia Bell, a widely respected former High Court judge.

Alleged gunman Sajid Akram, 50, was shot and killed by police during the assault.

His 24-year-old son Naveed, an Australian-born citizen who remains in prison, has been charged with terrorism and 15 murders.

–AFP

# Trump links normalizing ties with Israel to Iran peace deal

Washington – US President Donald Trump yesterday said Saudi Arabia and other Gulf nations must normalize ties with Israel as part of efforts to reach a deal with Iran, adding fresh uncertainty into protracted peace negotiations.

Progress over a deal to end the conflict that broke out in late February has slowed as both sides talked down the prospect of an imminent agreement, with Tehran saying they were not close to signing and Trump warning he was in no hurry.

In another hurdle for any deal, the US leader said it should be mandatory for Qatar, Pakistan, Egypt, Turkey and Jordan to sign up to the Abraham Accords, a set of agreements brokered in 2020 with nations historically hostile to Israel.

“After all the work done by the United States to try and pull this very complex puzzle together, it should be mandatory that all of these Countries, at a minimum, simultaneously, sign onto the Abraham Accords,” he wrote in a lengthy social media post.

“Those Countries discussed are Saudi Arabia, The United Arab Emirates (already a Member!), Qatar, Pakistan, Turkiye, Egypt, Jordan, and Bahrain (already a Member!)”

Trump said he had spoken to



People cross a street past a billboard on the facade of a building depicting the Strait of Hormuz with a caption in Persian reading “Forever in Iran’s Hand”, in Vanak Square in Tehran yesterday.

Iran’s foreign ministry said yesterday, that Tehran was collecting fees for “navigational services” on ships transiting the strategic Strait of Hormuz, rather than imposing tolls.

the leaders of those countries on Saturday about efforts to end the war with Iran. Bahrain and the UAE have already signed the accords, along with Morocco and Sudan.

US and Iranian forces have observed a ceasefire since April 8 while diplomats push for a negotiated settlement, although Iran has maintained controls on Gulf shipping through the Strait of Hormuz and the US Navy has sought to blockade Iran’s ports.

Trump said earlier yesterday

that a deal with Iran would either be “great and meaningful” or there would be “no deal.”

But while the accords were welcomed by some as a foreign policy success, they remain deeply unpopular among the public in many parts of the Middle East, not least because they do not tackle the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

The issue is fraught as countries like Gulf heavyweights Saudi Arabia and Qatar have said they will never normalize ties with Israel

unless an independent Palestinian state is created.

Anna Jacobs of the Arab Gulf States Institute in Washington said Trump’s latest demand added to the disaster that has been the war on all fronts for Gulf nations.

“The national security of the Gulf states has been threatened more than ever before because of President Trump’s reckless decisions, and he expects Arab states to thank him and to normalise relations with Israel, which they will not do at this stage,” she said.

“These expectations and assumptions from this US administration shows how little they understand the Middle East.”

## ‘Going crazy’

Trump’s maximalist demand came after top US diplomat Marco Rubio suggested a deal could be reached within the day, causing world oil prices to tumble based on renewed optimism about an agreement.

“We thought we might have some news last night, maybe today,” Secretary of State Rubio told reporters during a visit to New Delhi, referring to hopes for a deal.

“We have what I think is a pretty solid thing on the table in terms of their ability to open up the straits,

get the straits open.”

But Iran’s foreign ministry spokesman Esmail Baqaei poured cold water on hopes for a quick final settlement.

“It is correct to say that we have reached a conclusion on a large portion of the issues under discussion,” he told a weekly news briefing.

“But to say that this means the signing of an agreement is imminent – no one can make such a claim.”

In Iran’s capital Tehran, residents who spoke to Paris-based journalists said they were losing patience at the lack of diplomatic progress.

“We’re going crazy. Imagine getting hopeful ten times a day, and disappointed a hundred times a day,” said Amir, 40.

“We’re all frustrated.”

## ‘Critical moment’

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said on Sunday that he and Trump had agreed that “any final agreement with Iran must eliminate the nuclear threat entirely.”

Iranian officials have stressed that, despite the long-standing US demand for an end to its uranium enrichment, talks on the issue of the Islamic republic’s nuclear programme have been deferred until after an initial agreement.

## Iran health official says supreme leader suffered only ‘superficial’ wounds in US-Israeli strike

TEHRAN – An Iranian health ministry official said yesterday the injuries suffered by supreme leader Ayatollah Mojtaba Khamenei in US-Israeli strikes in late February were only “superficial”, offering a rare account of the day he was wounded.

The 56-year-old has not appeared publicly since he was named as Iran’s supreme leader on March 8, issuing only written statements, fuelling speculation about his health.

In March, US Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth said Mojtaba was “believed to be alive, wounded and disfigured”.

Mojtaba succeeded his father, Ali Khamenei, who was killed in US-Israeli strikes on February 28 that triggered retaliatory Iranian

attacks across the region.

Yesterday, health ministry spokesman Hossein Kermanpour described the day Mojtaba was wounded and his arrival at a hospital, which he did not identify.

He said Mojtaba arrived at the hospital around 1 p.m. Tehran time on February 28 and “entered the operating room along with several other wounded individuals.”

“Apart from superficial injuries to the face, head and legs, which caused neither amputation nor any particular medical problem, nothing major had happened,” Kermanpour told ILNA news agency.

“From my perspective as a physician these were not considered serious injuries and required no special procedures apart from one or two stitches.”

He added that Mojtaba, who was fasting until nightfall during the Muslim holy month of Ramadan, “refused to break his fast and kept fasting until iftar, which itself showed his good health.”

Kermanpour said he was discharged from the hospital at around 2 a.m. on March 1, but did not say to where he was moved.

On May 7, Iran’s President Masoud Pezeshkian said he had met the leader and that their meeting lasted two and a half hours.

Three days later, Iranian state TV said the head of Iran’s military central command, Ali Abdollahi, met with the supreme leader who gave “new directives and guidance for the continuation of operations to confront the enemy.”

## Iran hangs another protester as dozens more risk execution: rights groups

Stuart Williams

PARIS – Iran yesterday executed a man on charges related to protests this year, the latest in a spree of hangings on political or security accusations since the start of the US-Israeli war with dozens more risking execution, rights groups said.

Some three dozen men have been hanged on charges related to protests, membership of banned opposition groups, or espionage since wartime executions resumed in March, according to rights groups.

The latest man to be hanged was

Abbas Akbari, who was accused of attacking an official building in Nain in the central province of Isfahan during the peak of the protest movement in January.

“The primary purpose of these executions is to instil fear in society and prevent future protests,” said the director of Norway-based NGO Iran Human Rights (IHR) Mahmood Amiry Moghaddam.

He added the surge in executions has resulted in no “serious political consequences for the Islamic Republic”.

“Unless the political cost of

executions increases, we are likely to witness the continuation, and even escalation of daily executions in the weeks and months ahead,” he said.

The Hengaw group, also based in Norway, described the execution as “a clear example of state-sanctioned killing aimed at intimidating society and suppressing the people’s legitimate right to protest”.

The judiciary’s Mizan Online website described Akbari as “one of the armed leaders” of protests in his region.

## Israel military issues new evacuation warning for 10 Lebanon villages



Smoke rises following an Israeli airstrike on the Rashidieh Palestinian refugee camp in the Tyre district of southern Lebanon yesterday.

JERUSALEM – Israel’s military warned residents of 10 villages, most of them in southern Lebanon, yesterday to evacuate their homes ahead of expected strikes against alleged Hezbollah targets.

“In light of Hezbollah’s violation of the ceasefire agreement, the Israel Defense Forces are compelled to operate against it with force,” the military’s Arabic-language spokesman, Colonel Avichay Adraee, said in a social media post, listing the names of the villages.

“For your safety, you must evacuate your homes immediately and move at least 1,000 metres away from these towns and villages to open areas.”

Later yesterday, Adraee issued another evacuation warning directed at residents of a building in Rashidiyeh and two buildings in Burj al-Shamali, near the city of Tyre.

“We urge residents of the building marked in red on the attached map, as well as nearby buildings: you are

located near a facility used by the Hezbollah terrorist organisation,” he wrote on X.

“For your safety, you must evacuate immediately and move at least 300 metres away.”

Israel has repeatedly targeted what it says are Hezbollah-linked sites in Tyre, causing extensive damage in several areas and prompting many residents to flee the city.

Despite a ceasefire that came into effect on April 17, Israel and Hezbollah have continued to exchange fire on a near-daily basis.

According to Lebanese authorities, Israeli strikes since early March have killed more than 3,100 people.

The Israeli military also announced yesterday that a soldier had been killed the previous day in southern Lebanon.

That brings the number of Israeli soldiers killed since the outbreak of hostilities with Hezbollah to 23. One civilian contractor has also been killed.

## S Africa government holds urgent talks over anti-migrant tensions

JOHANNESBURG – South African government ministers held urgent talks yesterday to address tensions over illegal migration as protesters again demanded that undocumented foreign nationals be made to leave the country.

Citizen-led groups that accuse illegal migrants of crime and taking jobs from locals have issued a deadline for them to go home by June 30, an ultimatum that has no official backing but has created alarm.

Justice, defence and crime ministers held an “urgent meeting” to finalise a “plan to combat racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance”, the government said.

They would also meet political parties and groups behind a wave of protests against illegal foreign nationals, it said.

Demonstrations have been building across the country over recent months, raising fears of a repeat of previous bouts of violence such as in 2008 when 62 people – including 21 South Africans – were killed.

Last week several hundred foreign nationals from countries including the Democratic Republic of Congo, Rwanda and Somalia

sought protection in the eastern port city of Durban, saying locals were going door-to-door to tell them to leave by June 30.

African governments have expressed alarm, and Ghana is planning to repatriate this week hundreds of its nationals, its high commissioner Benjamin Quashie told AFP at the weekend, admitting many had expired work permits.

In new protests yesterday, hundreds of residents of the Katlehong township southwest of Johannesburg demanded police verify the documents of foreign nationals operating businesses, the SABC national broadcaster said.

A protest against a lack of services in a poorer suburb of the central city of Bloemfontein also targeted foreign nationals, it said.

The government has urged African nations to address the economic and governance crises that cause people to flock to South Africa, the continent’s most industrialised country.

“This is a shared responsibility,” foreign minister Ronald Lamola said at the weekend on the sidelines of a meeting of the 16-nation Southern African Development Community.

– AFP

## UK beats May heat record with 33.5C registered near London

LONDON – Britain broke its record yesterday for the hottest day in May, according to the national weather agency, with the mercury rising to 33.5C near London as the country baked in a sweltering heatwave.

The previous hottest May day saw 32.8C heat, first registered in 1922 and again in 1944.

It is just the latest temperature record to tumble in the UK, which saw its hottest year on the books in last year, with scientists warning that the country is unprepared for the ever-more frequent heatwaves driven by man-made climate change.

The Met Office had earlier forecast highs of 35C, after heatwave conditions spread to parts of southeast England and London by Sunday night.

“Temperatures at Heathrow have recently reached 33.5C, provisionally beating the all-time May record,” the Met Office wrote on social media.

“Records are usually only broken by tenths of a degree – making this heatwave unprecedented for the time of year,” the weather agency added earlier.

Yesterday was also expected to be the hottest bank holiday ever.

“We rarely see temperatures above 35C, even in the summer months, so to see temperatures



People relax in the sunshine on the beach in Brighton, on the south coast of England yesterday, as yesterday is expected to be the hottest bank holiday ever, with heatwave conditions spreading to parts of southeast England and London. – AFP

getting close to 35C in May is, as I say, pretty historic,” Met Office meteorologist Tom Morgan told the domestic Press Association news agency.

“It’s nice to have it, but it is much, much hotter than it should be in the UK,” Andrea Quaine, a 41-year-old mother, told AFP in London as temperatures exceeded 30C on Sunday.

“I am worried about it because it obviously shows that global warming is happening,” she added.

“The weather here, it’s like a mini version of hell. It’s boiling. It’s like really hot. The sunscreen,

it will protect me, but it’s really hot,” said 10-year-old Liza Nizari, who was visiting London from Manchester in the northwest.

Scientists say human-induced climate change is making extreme weather events like heatwaves, droughts and floods more intense, resulting in temperature records being broken more frequently.

Climate advisers last week warned the UK government that the country was “built for a climate that no longer exists” and urged it to adapt infrastructure like schools and hospitals for a warming planet.

– AFP

## Brazil’s Lula starts radiotherapy after removal of skin lesion



Brazil’s President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva bows his head, showing a scar from skin cancer surgery performed last month, during the signing into law of a bill establishing a National Day of Remembrance for the Victims of COVID-19 in Brasilia on May 11. – AFP

SAO PAULO – Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva yesterday began a course of preventive radiotherapy after a cancerous skin lesion was removed from his scalp last month, a hospital statement said.

Lula, 80, who is seeking a fourth term in October elections, has shared several posts on social media in recent months showing his exercise routine, in an apparent bid to allay concerns about his age.

Lula had a visible basal cell carcinoma removed last month by dermatologist Cristina Abdalla, who described it as “common” and “caused by sun exposure.”

After the removal, “a decision was made to proceed with a complementary course of preventive superficial radiotherapy,” the Sirio-Libanes Hospital in Sao Paulo said in a statement.

Lula has worn a hat in recent public appearances since the removal, as he did after a 2024 surgery for a brain bleed caused by a domestic accident.

Lula also had cataract surgery on his left eye in January.

The veteran leftist’s main election rival looks likely to be Senator Flavio Bolsonaro, the son of former far-right president Jair Bolsonaro. – AFP

## Pope apologises for Vatican role in justifying slavery

VATICAN CITY – Pope Leo XIV yesterday issued an unprecedented apology for the Vatican’s role in justifying slavery and said the delay in condemning the practice was “a wound in Christian memory”.

In a major text warning about the risk of “new forms of slavery” behind the digital economy, Leo said Church institutions owned slaves until the Middle Ages.

“In the early modern period, the Apostolic See of Rome, responding to requests from sovereigns, intervened several times in order to regulate and legitimize forms of subjugation, and, in certain cases, the enslavement of

‘infidels,’” he wrote.

It was only in the 19<sup>th</sup> century that “a formal, absolute and universal condemnation of slavery was clearly articulated,” he said in the text, “Magnifica Humanitas” (Magnificent Humanity).

“For this, in the name of the Church, I sincerely ask for pardon,” Leo wrote.

Popes have in the past have apologised for the involvement of Christians in the slave trade.

John Paul II denounced it in 1992 before issuing a sweeping request for forgiveness for historical injustices in 2000.

Pope Francis also repeatedly

denounced contemporary forms of slavery.

But Leo’s words went further by mentioning the Vatican’s direct involvement in legitimising slavery.

“It is true that past events cannot be judged anachronistically, as though the moral criteria that matured over time had always been available. Yet neither can we deny or diminish the delay with which both society and the Church came to denounce the scourge of slavery.”

“This constitutes a wound in Christian memory, one from which we cannot consider ourselves detached,” he said. – AFP

## TAP Air Portugal cuts losses ahead of privatisation

LISBON – TAP Air Portugal said yesterday that it had reduced its losses during the first quarter as the government prepares to sell shares in the airline it bailed out during the COVID pandemic.

The net loss fell to 40 million euros (US\$46.6 million), largely thanks to increased passengers on flights to North and South America, after a loss of 108 million euros in the same quarter last year.

Total passenger growth was 6.4 percent year on year to 3.7 million.

“This performance reflects a clear focus on delivering our strategy, with the South and North American markets continuing to play a key role in driving the increase in operations and revenues, translating into a meaningful improvement in operating results,” chief executive Luis Rodrigues said in a statement.

But TAP expects higher fuel costs in the coming months due to the Middle East war, “and we remain focused on mitigating

this through disciplined capacity allocation, rigorous cost management and active revenue management”, he said.

The Portuguese government is weighing two bids for nearly half of its stake in the state-owned airline, one from Air France-KLM and another from Lufthansa, both lodged in April.

It expects to announce its decision around the end of the summer travel season.

– AFP

## French mother of boys abandoned in Portugal remanded in custody

Levi Fernandes

SETUBAL – A court in Portugal at weekend remanded in custody a French woman and her partner accused of abandoning her two young boys –aged four and five – on a roadside in the south of the country.

The court in the southern port city of Setubal ordered the 41-year-old woman and the 55-year-old man to be placed in pretrial detention for the crimes of child endangerment and abandonment after a two-day hearing.

The man was also charged with aggravated assault against one of the children, the court said after questioning the couple.

The pair were taken away in a police van that drove directly out of the courthouse garage.

The case has drawn widespread attention in Portugal and France since the two small boys were found Tuesday evening crying beside a road near Alcacer do Sal, about 100 kilometres south of Lisbon.

They had been left with backpacks containing food and water but no identity documents, according to Portuguese media.

The couple was arrested Thursday by Portuguese authorities at a cafe central town of Fatima and brought before an investigating judge Friday at the court in Setubal.

“After something like this, abandoning two young children were abandoned, finding this couple relaxed at an outdoor cafe for hours was quite shocking,” a spokesman for Portugal’s GNR police force, Carlos Canatario, told Portuguese television station SIC.

“Their behaviour suggested a certain detachment from the situation, because they did not respond much. They appeared very withdrawn and therefore did not react.”

The couple were questioned for several hours at the court in a first session on Friday.

Upon their arrival at the court, the man, identified by authorities as



A vehicle of the National Gendarmerie of Portugal (GNR) with Marine R. and Marc B. (not pictured) suspected of abandoning two children, prepares to leave the Setubal courthouse in Setubal, Portugal, on Saturday. – AFP

Marc B., had twice shouted “I love you” in French, while the boy’s mother, identified as Marine R., hummed a melody.

Shortly after midnight Friday, as Marc B. was leaving the courthouse in a police van, he shouted “Portugal Armageddon” toward journalists gathered outside.

On Saturday morning, police officers ensured the pair remained inside the vehicle transporting them until it had fully entered the courthouse garage and the doors had closed.

The children have been placed with a French foster family in Lisbon pending their return to France.

### Boys blindfolded

Portuguese authorities said the brothers had been living with their mother in Colmar, in eastern France, while their father had limited and supervised visitation rights.

French authorities had been searching for the mother and the children since May 11, when the father reported them missing.

France subsequently issued a European arrest warrant.

The mother of the motorist who found the children, Eugenia Quintas, told AFP that one of the boys said they had been blindfolded and told to look for a hidden toy.

When they took their blindfolds off, their mother and her car were gone.

“On them they had an orange, a pear and a bottle of water each. We didn’t see any signs of mistreatment,” she said.

Authorities said the couple appeared to have no known connection to Portugal.

### Sexologist and former officer

The profiles of the two suspects have fuelled public interest in the case.

The woman described herself on social media as a sexologist specialising in body practices, developmental dynamics and trauma care.

Her partner is a former French gendarmerie officer who left the force in 2010 and has shared conspiracy-related and antisemitic content online, according to French media reports.

The case comes only months after another high-profile case involving a French national in Portugal.

Authorities accuse a French man, Cedric Prizzon, of killing his current and former partners in northern Portugal before fleeing with children he had with the two women.

Portuguese authorities have refused France’s request to extradite him, saying the alleged crimes were committed on Portuguese territory. – AFP

## 28 killed when illegal gold mine collapses in Angola

LUANDA – A small artisanal gold mine collapsed in northern Angola at the weekend, claiming the lives of at least 28 miners, nearly half from one family, reports and officials said.

Angola’s rich deposits of diamonds and other minerals, including gold, reportedly draw thousands of men, including from neighbouring countries such as the Democratic Republic of Congo, to illegal and uncontrolled mines.

Authorities recovered the bodies of 28 people aged between 18 and 45 years following the collapse early on Saturday at the mine in Bengo province, northeast of the

capital, Luanda, a police official told national broadcaster TPA.

“These young people were extracting strategic minerals, namely gold, in this area and at a certain point the mine collapsed,” he said on Sunday, adding that authorities were searching for other bodies.

A rescue department official gave the same death toll to local media and said that 13 of the dead were from the same family.

Bengo officials estimated there were around 7,000 illegal miners involved in gold extraction in the province, the Angola Press Agency reported. – AFP

## Inmates alleging torture take over Venezuelan prison

BARINAS – Hundreds of inmates took control of a prison in western Venezuela on Sunday, claiming they were tortured and demanding its director be fired.

Large columns of smoke from burning mattresses and sheets rose from the prison in the city of Barinas as inmates gathered on the roof, chanting, “No more torture! No more torture!” an AFP reporter observed.

They hung banners with messages like “SOS” and “They are torturing us.”

Officers armed with shields surrounded the Barinas Judicial Detention Center, located about 500 kilometers from Caracas.

Dozens of family members waited anxiously nearby. Yelitza Arrollo told AFP that she has not heard from her son, an inmate at the detention center, since May 8.

“They are suffering because they are beating them terribly, torturing them, pouring cold water on them, electrocuting them, setting them on fire, mistreating them terribly,” she said outside the prison. “We want the director removed.”

Relatives said several of the inmates were injured.

Some “1,200 men and more than 100 women incarcerated at

the Barinas Judicial Detention Center have gone on strike,” the Venezuelan Observatory of Prisons, a humanitarian group also known by its acronym OVP, said in a social media post.

The government ministry that runs the prisons “is ignoring the inmates, who have been denouncing mistreatment for over a week. They are not being listened to; on the contrary, they are being shot at and tear-gassed,” OVP said.

For years, activists have criticized overcrowding, limited food and a lack of medical care in Venezuelan prisons, alongside what they claim are systematic human rights violations.

In April, the government confirmed the deaths of five people during a riot at the high-security Yare III prison, about 70 kilometers from Caracas.

In 2023, then-president Nicolas Maduro ordered a military operation to intervene in the country’s major prisons, which had been controlled by gangs for years.

In January, Maduro was dramatically ousted in a lightning US operation that took him and his wife to New York to stand trial on drug trafficking charges. – AFP



Venezuelan prisoners gather in protest on the roof of the Judicial Detention Center (INJUBA) in Barinas, Venezuela on May 24. – AFP

## 1,000s rally in Madrid demanding PM quit over graft allegations

MADRID – Thousands of people marched through the streets of Madrid over the weekend calling for Socialist Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez to resign over allegations of corruption within his entourage.

Demonstrators, many waving red and yellow Spanish flags and brandishing signs saying “Enough!”, made their way through the streets of Madrid behind a large banner that read: “Corruption has a price. No more impunity. Resignation and elections now.”

The protest was called by a group of over 150 civic associations called Sociedad Civil Espanola and backed by the mainstream conservative Popular Party (PP) and far-right Vox.

Organisers put attendance at 120,000.

The central government’s delegate to the region estimated 40,000

people had turned out for the march, which ended in Plaza Moncloa near Sanchez’s official residence.

After the march ended, a small group of demonstrators tried to head towards the residence but were pushed back by riot police, images on Spanish TV showed.

Three people were arrested and seven police officers suffered minor injuries, according to the central government’s delegate.

“There is no-one left in Pedro Sanchez’s circle who has not been accused of very serious crimes. Spain is being held hostage by a corrupt mafia,” far-right Vox leader Santiago Abascal told reporters before the start of the march.

Sanchez, who came to power in 2018 after using a vote of no-confidence to topple the corruption-mired conservative PP government, has

vowed to carry on despite the proliferation of graft allegations concerning his entourage.

His brother, David, is scheduled to stand trial for influence peddling.

His wife, Begona Gomez, is under investigation in a separate corruption case.

Sanchez has dismissed these cases against his family as politically motivated.

His former right-hand man, ex-transport minister Jose Luis Abalos, is awaiting a verdict in his own corruption trial which ended earlier this month.

On Tuesday, a court put former Socialist prime minister Jose Luis Rodriguez Zapatero, a Sanchez ally, under formal investigation for influence peddling and other crimes, adding to the pressure on the government. – AFP

## Dark clouds hang over S Korea for Son's likely World Cup farewell

Peter Stebbings



HONG KONG – Son Heung-min and South Korea head to North America with a sense of foreboding threatening to envelop them, for what will surely be their talisman's last World Cup.

The 33-year-old skipper has faced growing questions about his faltering form and international future while coach Hong Myung-bo is deeply unpopular with fans.

Pre-World Cup friendlies only added to the sense of disgruntlement, thrashed 4-0 by the Ivory Coast and beaten 1-0 by Austria.

Afterwards, Hong was moved to defend Son, who left Premier League Tottenham last year for Los Angeles FC in the MLS with his best days seemingly behind him.

"Son Heung-min is the heart of our team and I have never once doubted that," Hong told reporters.

South Korea are in Group A alongside the Czech Republic, South Africa and co-hosts Mexico.

They face the Czechs in Guadalajara on the opening day of the tournament on June 11.

If South Korea are to get out of the group they will need the attacker Son to start firing again.

He has scored 54 goals in 143 games for his country and been their inspiration for more than 15 years.

But his powers are clearly on the wane and he has hardly lit up the MLS since Spurs let him go in August last year.

Following the friendly defeat to Austria in England in March, during which Son fluffed his lines, he defiantly denied that he had lost his goalscoring touch.

"I don't think I've suffered any dip in my performance," the Yonhap News agency quoted him as saying.

"When the time comes for me to leave the national team, then I will do it on my own.

"It's disappointing that people talk about decline whenever I hit a dry spell."

Son will be desperate to make up for what was a miserable 2022 Qatar World Cup for him.

He was shadow of himself, forced to wear a mask to protect a fractured eye socket and failing to score as South Korea were

bundled out in the last 16 with a 4-1 hammering by Brazil.

### Coach jeered

South Korea fans saw their side comfortably reach the World Cup unbeaten in qualifying, but they have low expectations of what the team will do in North America.

"Fans' collective confidence level seems to be at an all-time low," Yonhap said this month.

The country's best World Cup performance remains reaching the semi-finals in 2002 when they co-hosted. Since, they have never gone beyond the last 16.

During qualifying, supporters consistently jeered the 57-year-old coach Hong, who led South Korea to a meek group-stage exit at the 2014 World Cup, when they failed to win a game.

Son has pleaded with supporters to get behind the team and the coach.

Fans also have the knives out for the Korea Football Association over the process that saw Hong reappointed two years ago.

Before him were two interim managers and there was the disastrous appointment of Jurgen Klinsmann, who was sacked after just 12 turbulent months.

After the demoralising losses to the Ivory Coast and Austria, Hong defended his use of three centre-backs and wingbacks, saying he wanted his side to be tactically flexible.

"Our players have been playing in the back-four formation for a long time," he said.

"But we've all seen that we can't afford to take just one set of tactics to the World Cup."

South Korea's squad is mostly based abroad and takes in an array of overseas leagues in the United States, Europe and Asia.

Kim Min-jae has been a mainstay in central defence for his country and at 29 the Bayern Munich man dubbed "Monster" should be at his peak.

Lee Kang-in is another who has proven pedigree in top European football, first with Valencia and Mallorca and now with Paris Saint-Germain.

The versatile attacker has been used sparingly by PSG and is linked with a move away this summer.

– AFP

## Yamal headlines Spain World Cup squad, Merino recalled



MADRID – Lamine Yamal is the star name in Spain's squad for the 2026 World Cup named by coach Luis de la Fuente yesterday, which also included Arsenal midfielder Mikel Merino after his recent return from injury.

For the first time at a World Cup, the Spain squad will not feature a Real Madrid player with Dean Huijsen dropped and veteran Dani Carvajal also excluded after struggling through an injury-hit campaign.

Merino, a favourite of coach De la Fuente, appeared as a substitute for the Gunners against Crystal Palace on Sunday in their final Premier League match, for his first appearance since January after a foot fracture.

De La Fuente also called up defenders Eric Garcia and Marc Pubill after impressive seasons with Barcelona and Atletico Madrid respectively, deciding to leave out Huijsen and Atletico's Robin Le Normand.

Along with 18-year-old Barca

star Yamal, Athletic Bilbao's Nico Williams played a key role as Spain won Euro 2024 and he is in the squad despite a season badly disrupted by fitness issues.

Yamal is a doubt for the first matches of the tournament after suffering a hamstring injury with Barca which has kept him out since late April.

The winger is one of eight Barca players in the squad, along with midfielders Gavi, Pedri and goalkeeper Joan Garcia.

"We're coordinating with the medical departments of all the clubs," De la Fuente told reporters.

"The reports that we have say all the players will be ready for the first game or the second."

Gavi returned from a long absence in March after a severe knee injury and has impressed with Barcelona in the final weeks of the season.

Yamal posted a video on social media of Gavi's emotional reaction to the squad announcement, celebrating wildly during a gym session with Barca.

"That shows the human quality this group of players have... one of our strengths, and that's just as important as what they do on the pitch," said De la Fuente.

"I'm glad he got emotional, because we know how much this means to him."

Asked about not calling up any Real Madrid players for the tournament, De la Fuente said that had no impact on his decision making.

"Luckily I'm the national team coach and I don't look at where the players come from," explained the coach.

"They're national team players... I don't look at one club or another. I don't have that local bias a fan might have, for me it's more global..."

"The only thing I want is for these footballers to feel proud of representing the national team."

Spain open their World Cup campaign on June 15 against Cape Verde in Group H, before facing Saudi Arabia and Uruguay.

– AFP



Naegohyang Women's FC players celebrate with the trophy during the victory ceremony after the AFC Women's Champions League final against Japan's Tokyo Verdy Beleza in Suwon on Saturday. Naegohyang won the game 1-0.

– AFP

## Chelsea's poor discipline is a 'problem': McFarlane



LONDON – Interim manager Calum McFarlane has admitted Chelsea's dismal disciplinary record was a key reason for their failure to qualify for Europe.

The Blues finished in 10<sup>th</sup> place in the Premier League after a 2-1 defeat at Sunderland on Sunday ended their faint hopes of securing a European berth for next season.

In the last game of McFarlane's second spell in temporary charge, Chelsea once again finished with 10 men.

French defender Wesley Fofana was sent off for a second yellow card after fouling Wilson Isidor in the 61<sup>st</sup> minute.

Fofana's dismissal was the eighth red card for Chelsea in the Premier League this season and McFarlane conceded it was a major issue throughout a turbulent campaign.

"It's definitely an issue, it's definitely a problem. I think we're by far the team that's got the most red cards in the league," he said.

"Pretty sure if you look at Arsenal, for example, who have won the league, I don't think they had one red card.

"It doesn't help having that many red cards. It's definitely something we need to look at and improve for next year."

Going into the final day of the Premier League season, Chelsea sat eighth in the table - enough to reach the UEFA Conference League - but they ended one point away from European qualification, completing a wretched season that also included an FA Cup final loss to Manchester City.

McFarlane, who first stepped in following Enzo Maresca's exit, returned as interim boss for the last six

games after Liam Rosenior's sacking.

Former Real Madrid and Bayer Leverkusen manager Xabi Alonso takes over on July 1 and McFarlane is adamant the Spaniard will inherit a squad capable of far more than they achieved this term.

"I think that this group has shown when they're at their best and when we're in the right place, we're a match for anyone across Europe, they've shown that this season," he said.

"That hasn't been seen enough throughout the year, that definitely hasn't been seen enough in the second part of the season. We've got some real quality players, we've got a new manager coming in who's got a brilliant reputation in the game.

"We've still had some flashes in the last month of what this group can do. It's doing that on a more consistent basis."

– AFP

## Mexico accepts to host Iran during the World Cup: president



MEXICO CITY - Mexico has "no problem" in hosting the Iranian squad for the 2026 World Cup, Mexican President Claudia Sheinbaum said yesterday.

Iran had announced on Saturday they wanted to be based in the Mexican border city

of Tijuana and not in Tucson, Arizona, as originally planned.

"The United States did not want the Iranian squad on their territory," she said at a press conference.

"They (Iran) therefore asked us: 'can we be based in Mexico?' and we replied yes, no problem'."

– AFP

## Giro leader Vingegaard eyes remaining career goals



Team Visma Lease a Bike Danish rider Jonas Vingegaard celebrates the overall leader's pink jersey on the podium of the 15<sup>th</sup> stage of the Giro d'Italia 2026 - Tour of Italy cycling race between Voghera and Milan, Italy, on Sunday. — AFP

### Cycling

MILAN – Giro d'Italia leader Jonas Vingegaard is closing in on one of his major career goals but he does not expect to keep chasing others for many more years, the Dane said yesterday.

The 29-year-old is bidding to become just the eighth man to complete the clean sweep of three Grand Tours in Italy this month.

Having won the Tour de France in 2022 and 2023, and triumphed at the Vuelta a Espana last year, he is now well-placed in the Giro pink jersey holding a lead of almost two-and-a-half minutes on his nearest challenger, with a week of racing left.

"I just go from year to year. And if I still enjoy it, then I will keep riding," the Visma-Lease a Bike leader said during the Giro's final rest day before a punishing final week which includes three summit finishes.

"This year is my eighth year (as a) pro. I also don't see myself riding until I'm 35. I'm turning 30 (on December 10), so that's actually not in so many years."

First, though, he wants to tick off a few more boxes.

Like his arch rival Tadej Pogacar, Vingegaard targeted some

week-long stage races earlier this year that he had not yet won.

His victories at Paris-Nice and the Tour of Catalonia added to previous successes at Tirreno-Adriatico, the Tour of the Basque Country and the Criterium du Dauphine.

But he is yet to win either the Tour de Romandie or the Tour of Switzerland.

"Obviously, this would be a big goal for me winning here in the Giro," said Vingegaard during a video press conference.

"But I also haven't won all the one-week stage races, which also would be nice to win."

Pogacar likewise has targeted Romandie and Switzerland for the first time this year, winning the former three weeks ago and tackling the latter next month.

He has never won the Vuelta, though, meaning that Vingegaard could beat him to the Grand Tour clean sweep.

### 'I focus on myself'

The Dane will also be aiming to dethrone Pogacar at the Tour in July, and he believes his Giro participation is helping him in that goal.

"I think it can help me in the way that I can get myself to a

higher level," said Vingegaard.

"I've seen in the last years that once I've done one Grand Tour, that actually in the second Grand Tour my level has been higher than it actually has in the first one.

"So that's also what we hope for in the Tour."

Pogacar and Vingegaard have finished as the top two at the Tour in each of the previous five editions.

Pogacar won three of those, adding to his first success in 2020, while Vingegaard has come out on top twice.

In the meantime, Vingegaard wants to win at least one more Giro stage - he has three already - but this time in the leader's pink jersey.

"Obviously, there's also a lot of chances in the third week," he said.

"I also want to try to win a stage in the pink jersey. So for sure, we will go for at least one more stage."

Pogacar won an incredible six Giro stages in 2024 when he pulled off the Giro-Tour double.

But matching Pogacar is not on Vingegaard's mind.

"I just focus on myself. I know Tadej a little bit, and he's a very nice person as well. So, for me, it's just only thinking about how do I get through this Giro." — AFP

## Swiatek, Rybakina cruise through Roland Garros openers

### Jed Court

PARIS - Four-time French Open champion Iga Swiatek and second seed Elena Rybakina both eased into the second round with comfortable wins at a sweltering Roland Garros yesterday, as Stan Wawrinka bade an emotional farewell to the tournament.

Swiatek, playing at a Grand Slam event for the first time since linking up with Rafael Nadal's former coach Francisco Roig, made short work of seeing off Australian teenager Emerson Jones 6-1, 6-2 in just 60 minutes.

The Pole is looking to regain the trophy she won at Roland Garros in three successive years from 2022-24 before losing to Aryna Sabalenka in the semi-finals 12 months ago.

Swiatek will take on Czech Sara Bejlek for a place in the last 32 tomorrow.

The third seed is among the favourites for the title after finding some form by reaching the Italian Open semi-finals earlier this month.

"I'm really happy with the way I played. It was a solid match from the beginning to the end. I technically knew how to play," said Swiatek.

Rybakina also wasted little time in swatting aside Slovenian Veronika Erjavec 6-2, 6-2 on Court Philippe Chatrier.

Like Swiatek, the Kazakh was pleased to not spend too much time on court in the 32C heat.

"It's tough conditions but I'm happy things worked, and I'm looking forward to the next match," she said.

Rybakina, who won the Australian Open earlier this year, plays Ukraine's Yuliia Starodubtseva next.

Elena Svitolina survived a serious scare against Hungary's Anna Bondar on Court Suzanne Lenglen, fighting back from 3-1 down in a deciding set to win 3-6, 6-1, 7-6 (10/3).

The Ukrainian, who ended an eight-year wait for a fifth WTA 1000 title in Rome earlier this month, has still never lost in the French Open first round in 13 appearances.

She failed to serve out the match when leading 5-4 in the third, but rediscovered her composure in the tie-break.

Former runner-up Jasmine Paolini was a 7-5, 6-3 winner over Dayana Yastremska of Ukraine.

China's Zheng Qinwen, who won Olympic gold at Roland Garros two years ago, crashed out in the first round for the first time with a 6-4, 6-0 loss to Poland's Maja Chwalinska.

Zheng has slipped to 56<sup>th</sup> in the WTA rankings after a long injury absence, which forced her to miss last year's US Open and the Australian Open in January.

### Wawrinka waves goodbye to Roland Garros

Former champion Wawrinka's final Roland Garros ended in disappointment as the 41-year-old was beaten 6-3, 3-6, 6-3, 6-4 by Dutch lucky loser Jesper de Jong.

Wawrinka, who beat Novak Djokovic in the 2015 final, is retiring at the end of the season.

He enjoyed a fairytale run to the third round of his last Australian Open but could not repeat the feat in the Paris heat, despite being backed by a packed crowd on Court Simonne Mathieu.

The Swiss had originally been slated to meet Arthur Fils, but the in-form French number one pulled out of the tournament with injury and was replaced in the draw by De Jong.

After the match, Wawrinka was presented with a glass case containing a section of a clay court and two video tributes to his career were displayed on big screens around the stadium - the latter featuring messages from former champions Roger Federer, Rafael Nadal and Djokovic.

"Thanks to all your support, I wanted to go on as long as possible, to 41 years of age, to continue living moments like this," Wawrinka said.

Spanish teenager Rafael Jodar enjoyed a winning French Open debut with a 6-1, 6-0, 6-4 dismantling of American Aleksandar Kovacevic.

Jodar has quickly climbed the rankings this year, winning a clay-court title in Marrakesh, reaching the Barcelona Open semi-finals and then the quarter-finals in both Madrid and Rome. — AFP

## Delighted Hamilton rolls back years with vintage runner-up effort

### F1

MONTREAL – Delighted Lewis Hamilton rolled back the years on Sunday to finish second for Ferrari in the Canadian Grand Prix then declared Circuit Gilles Villeneuve his favourite track in the world.

The seven-time champion claimed his best result since joining Ferrari last year, his second podium of the season and the 104<sup>th</sup> podium of his career.

"I am so happy," he said. "I have to say a huge thank you to my team here. These guys have welcomed me with open arms.

"It has been really tough over the past year and a bit, so to finally find our sweet spot and have a good weekend... it's an amazing feeling.

"We've got an amazing crowd

here. I love this track and I can't wait to come back."

Hamilton, 41, claimed his maiden F1 victory in the 2007 Canadian Grand Prix and shares the record of seven wins at the circuit with Ferrari great Michael Schumacher.

Buoyed by his strong drive and result, he was optimistic for the future and encouraged Ferrari to believe they can chase down the pace-setting Mercedes team.

In Sunday's race, Italian teen Kimi Antonelli won for Mercedes to extend his lead ahead over team-mate George Russell to 43 points in the drivers' title race.

"It's definitely encouraging, given that this weekend, Mercedes brought a big upgrade here," said Hamilton.

"A lot of people brought them

here - we brought our big one in Miami and the team are working really hard back at the factory so hopefully we've got some things on the way.

"Considering this is a really straight circuit and we just managed to hold on and get this result, it definitely gives me high hopes for what's ahead, but we've got to keep pushing and keep trying to extract more."

After saying he felt he had been unable to perform and experienced one of the worst weekends of his career, Charles Leclerc came home fourth for Ferrari, but admitted he had no confidence in his car.

"I just couldn't get the tyres working in the window and there is no one to blame for that except me," he said. "Lewis did a great job and showed the potential we have in our car." — AFP



Switzerland's Stan Wawrinka poses with a trophy during a ceremony honouring his career at the French Open tennis tournament on Court Simonne-Mathieu at the Roland-Garros Complex in Paris yesterday. — AFP

## ‘Spider-Noir’ brings a mature superhero to the small screen

Paula Ramon

LOS ANGELES - While stars of the Spider-Man franchise have trended younger over the years - from Tobey Maguire to Andrew Garfield to Tom Holland - the new series “Spider-Noir” starring Nicolas Cage explores a more mature version of the web-slinging superhero.

Premiering on Amazon’s streaming platform this week, the series follows Ben Reilly (Cage), a private investigator struggling to make ends meet in New York during the Great Depression.

This marks the first time the superhero, whom Cage voiced in the first Spider-Verse film, has appeared on screen in live-action.

Karen Rodriguez, who plays Janet, Riley’s loyal secretary, said that what sets “Spider-Noir” apart from other versions of the superhero is the era in which it is set.

“Normally, it’s a coming-of-age story, and we’re meeting Peter Parker in a youthful setting,” she told AFP. “But what happens when you’ve done it and life has happened to you and you suffered loss?”

Reilly, a World War I veteran who can’t even afford to pay his secretary, is burdened by personal tragedy.

“He’s lost the love of his life. He’s smack dab in the middle of the Great Depression. There’s a lot of suffering,” Rodriguez added.

For the actress, whose character

maintains a constant push and pull with Reilly, working with Cage “was like a dream come true.”

Rodriguez said she learnt a lot from the 62-year-old Oscar-winning actor, who has over a hundred films to his credit.

“It’s the type of job that you dream about because you want jobs that are going to make you better,” said Rodriguez, who describes her character as a strong-willed woman who doesn’t mince words.

“Spider-Noir,” produced by Phil Lord and Christopher Miller, among others, can be seen in color or black and white, in a nod to the film noir genre of the 1940s.

“It’s a wholly unique perspective,” said Rodriguez, who sees the style as an “exciting” alternative for telling a superhero story.

The genre is related to “what kind of danger is looking around the corner,” she said. “And even the visual elements of noir, I think are so evocative, the way that the camera is framed.”

“You understand that the world you’re never really safe, and we really see it in the black and white, because we’re seeing people in shadow or in light, and the shadow is always there.”

“Spider-Noir” also features performances by Lamorne Morris, Li Jun Li and Brendan Gleeson, who plays a mobster villain. —AFP

## ‘Party in the back’: Competitors vie for European mullet crown

AUDREGNIES, Belgium – Hundreds of distinctively coiffured participants gathered this weekend in southern Belgium for the annual European Mullet Championship to celebrate the once-maligned hairstyle.

Best captured by the tagline “business in the front, party in the back”, the mullet typically combines a closely cropped fringe and sides with flowing locks down the back of the neck.

Popularised in the 1980s, it fell dramatically out of fashion before making a somewhat subversive comeback in recent years.

This year’s European championship is the fourth to be held since a group of enthusiasts in Belgium borrowed the idea from Australia of staging a competition.

Would-be champions for this edition came from as far afield as France, Spain and England.

For many of those involved, the mullet is much more than a hairdo - it has become a way of life.

“The mullet is open - to others, to difference, to adventure. It has a wild side,” said event spokesman David Hubert, who goes by the pseudonym Edgar Funkel.

In the quest to be crowned with the title of best mullet in Europe, hopefuls first had to fill out a questionnaire explaining

more about themselves.

“Of course, we choose a great hairstyle, but what we really want is to choose a wonderful person,” said jury member Lolita Demoustiez, 39 - known as Dalita.

“What matters is that the person carrying the mullet truly embodies values such as tolerance, kindness and the freedom to be oneself.”

Belgian competitor Christine, 60, said her striking new haircut had helped her get through a recent difficult period in her life.

“It feels absolutely brilliant, and I still haven’t taken any antidepressants,” she said, showing off her silver grey do.

“Long live the mullet!”

Around 50 finalists were selected to show off their mullets before the cheering crowds.

Winners were selected in a range of categories, including junior mullet, traditional mullet, unusual mullet and veteran mullet.

Eventually, the overall champions for 2026 were selected: the duo of Berenice, 44, and Samuel, 46 - better known to their fans as BesaMullet. —AFP



A man poses as he takes part in the annual European Mullet Cup in Audregnies, southern Belgium, on Saturday. This year’s European championship is the fourth to be held since a group of enthusiasts in Belgium borrowed the idea of a staging a competition from Australia. Wannabe champions for this edition had come from as far a field as France, Spain and England. —AFP

## Bad Bunny kicks off European leg of tour in Barcelona

BARCELONA - Hundreds of Bad Bunny fans braved long queues and the heat of Barcelona on Friday as the Puerto Rican superstar kicks off the 29-concert European leg of his world tour.

Bad Bunny devotees, some holding umbrellas to guard against the sun, lined up outside the Spanish city’s Olympic stadium hours ahead of the show on Friday night to try to secure a spot close to the stage.

“We’ve been here for two hours waiting, but really, how long have we been waiting for Bad Bunny here in Catalonia, in Barcelona?” journalist Adria Capdevila, 22, told AFP.

“We don’t know if we’ll ever get to see him again... since it might be the last time, you live it with maximum energy, maximum enthusiasm,” he said.

Bad Bunny’s world tour began last year with a 31-concert residency in San Juan in support of his latest album, “Debi Tirar Mas Fotos” (“I Should Have Taken More Photos”), which blends traditional Puerto Rican

music with reggaeton and trap.

The European tour includes two nights in Barcelona and two in Lisbon before moving to Madrid for 10 concerts at Atletico Madrid’s Metropolitan Stadium.

The tour will then continue through Germany, the Netherlands, Britain, France, Sweden, Poland and Italy before concluding in Brussels on July 22.

It has already taken in Latin America, Australia and Japan but he did not play in the United States to shield fans from potential raids by immigration authorities.

Bad Bunny appeared in the Super Bowl halftime show in February, but supporters of US President Donald Trump criticised him for performing only in Spanish.

The 32-year-old rose from the Puerto Rican underground music scene to become one of the world’s biggest acts, helping push reggaeton and Latin trap into the global mainstream.

He took home three Grammy awards in February including for album of the year. —AFP



Organ grinders perform during an event in Mexico City on Sunday. The traditional instrument, weighing between 24 and 38 kilos, is a wooden box with an internal cylinder, metal pegs which pluck metal teeth to create the music, and a crank that drives it. The instrument has been played by Mexican operators since the late 1800s and is commonly seen in Mexico City’s centre with donations asked by those playing it. —AFP

## Mandalorian and Grogu blast to first place in weekend box office

LOS ANGELES – Disney’s “Star Wars: The Mandalorian and Grogu” saw the much-adored Baby Yoda and his adoptive guardian sweep the North American box office with an estimated US\$102 million take through yesterday, industry estimates showed.

The film is a jump to the big screen for the hit streaming series, and the first Star Wars film to be released in theaters since 2019’s “The Rise of Skywalker.”

It appeared on some 4,300 screens in its opening weekend, Exhibitor Relations estimated.

The takings are “not on the level of the primary Star Wars films,” said industry analyst David Gross. “But these are big numbers and this is how spinoffs perform.”

“The movie is a piece of the story, and it’s earning a piece of the business,” he added.

Jumping to second place, Focus Features’ original horror film “Obsession” drew US\$28.5 million in sales on its second weekend, bringing its total earnings to an estimated US\$59 million.

Trade magazine *Variety* credits some of its popularity to an exceptional performance by star Inde Navarrette that “demands awards attention.”

Lionsgate brought home the box office’s weekend bronze medal as “Michael” and took home US\$25.7 million this weekend for a total of US\$319.9 million. The biopic based on pop icon Michael Jackson was still thrilling fans but dropped out of

the top spot in its fifth weekend on the silver screen.

The fashionable fan favorite, “The Devil Wears Prada 2,” dropped to fourth place but still earned another US\$16.5 million this weekend for a total of US\$200 million.

MGM’s “The Sheep Detectives,” a farmyard whodunnit, took in US\$12.5 million over the weekend for a total of US\$47 million - marking a fifth-place finish.

Rounding out the top 10: “Passenger” (US\$10.5 million) “Mortal Kombat II” (US\$7.9 million)

“I Love Boosters” (US\$4.6 million) “The Super Mario Galaxy Movie” (US\$4.2 million) “Project Hail Mary” (US\$3.5 million) —AFP

### World Weather

CHINA	ASIA-PACIFIC	WORLD	LUSOPHONE
Beijing 16°C~25°C	Manila 25°C~35°C	New York 17°C~26°C	Lisbon 18°C~32°C
Shanghai 23°C~31°C	Bangkok 27°C~37°C	London 15°C~34°C	Rio de Janeiro 19°C~25°C
Hong Kong 25°C~30°C	Tokyo 17°C~27°C	Frankfurt 17°C~32°C	Luanda 22°C~26°C
Taipei 25°C~38°C	Singapore 25°C~33°C	Vancouver 10°C~18°C	Maputo 15°C~27°C
Guangzhou 25°C~35°C	Kuala Lumpur 24°C~35°C	Paris 17°C~32°C	Dili 21°C~31°C
Nanjing 21°C~29°C	Jakarta 23°C~33°C	Moscow 6°C~13°C	São Tomé 25°C~33°C
Guilin 24°C~35°C	Seoul 20°C~28°C	Las Vegas 15°C~32°C	Praia 21°C~29°C
Xi’an 19°C~25°C	Sydney 15°C~21°C	Monte Carlo 19°C~28°C	Bissau 24°C~34°C



**1. Cool for cats**

This photo taken on Sunday shows a cat mural in Zelenogradsk, Russia. Zelenogradsk is a tourist destination known as the “Cat City” thanks to ubiquitous cat graffiti, cat-patterned manhole covers, cat-decorated buildings, and cat-themed traffic lights. – Xinhua

**2. Who are you??**

A cosplayer speaks with an official after leaving the train, as they arrive for the MCM Comic Con at ExCeL exhibition centre in London on Friday. – AFP

**3. Heart-shaped spring**

An aerial view of visitors walking around Grand Prismatic Spring in the Midway Geyser Basin on Sunday in Yellowstone National Park, Wyoming. Grand Prismatic Spring is the largest hot spring in the United States at more than 300 feet wide at its widest point and over 120 feet deep. The colours outside the pool’s blue centre are created by “thermophiles – heat-loving microscopic organisms which flourish in many of Yellowstone’s hot springs. Yellowstone National Park became the nation’s first national park on March 1, 1872, when President Ulysses S. Grant signed a congressional act protecting the land “for the benefit and enjoyment of the people.” – AFP



**4. Wrong times table!**

A scarecrow is displayed during a “Scarecrows Fair” in Castellar, near Cuneo, northern Italy on Thursday. During the annual fair, citizens prepare their own scarecrow and put them in the gardens, courtyards, fields and streets. – AFP

**5. Cheese chasing**

Competitors in the third men’s race tumble down the hill in pursuit of a round Double Gloucester cheese during the annual Cooper’s Hill cheese rolling competition near the village of Brockworth, Gloucester, in western England yesterday. The annual Cooper’s Hill Cheese Rolling involves competitors chasing an eight pound (3.63 kg) Double Gloucester cheese down a steep hill. – AFP

**6. Walking with dinosaurs**

People visit the National Museum of Geology during the 2026 edition of the European Night of Museums event in Bucharest, Romania, on Saturday. More than 300 institutions from across Romania participate in the 2026 edition of the European Night of Museums event held on Saturday. – Xinhua