

Half of ambulance callers say: 'I'm unwell'

Armando Neves

Macau's Fire Services Bureau (CB) announced yesterday that 11,515 ambulance call-outs were recorded in the first quarter of this year, of which half of the callers said: "I'm unwell" (唔舒服) when requesting the free service.

The bureau hosted a press conference at its headquarters next to Sai Van Lake, near Macau Tower, yesterday morning during which its senior officers announced their statistics on fire alerts, ambulance call-outs, and other rescue incidents for the first three months of the year.

According to a statement released during the press conference, the bureau attended to 13,923 incidents between January and March, an increase of 5.42 percent from the 13,207 recorded in the same period of last year. Among the 13,923 incidents, 11,515 involved ambulance call-outs, up by 106 calls, a slight increase of 0.93 percent year-on-year, the statement said.

Based on the official data, the daily average of ambulance deployments between January and March stood at 127, or around five every hour.



This photo taken on July 17, 2024 shows an ambulance and other vehicles parked at the Fire Services Bureau (CB) headquarters in Sai Van. - Photo: MPDG

The press conference pointed out that about 50 percent of the ambulance deployments involved the callers' claim that they were "unwell" ("m syu fuk" in Cantonese transliteration), citing conditions such as dizziness, abdominal pain,

fever, and contusions.

The 13,923 incidents recorded in first quarter included 248 fire alerts, an increase of 15.35 percent from the 215 in the same period of 2025. A total of 194 of the 248 fire alerts did not require firefighters

to extinguish the blaze with a fire hose after arriving at the scene, accounting for 78.23 percent of the total, according to the statement.

The main causes of fire alarms were unattended cooking stoves, careless disposal of ignition sources,

burning of incense, candles and joss paper, mechanical or equipment failure, and short circuits, the statement said, adding that these causes combined accounted for 166 cases, or 66.94 percent of all fire alarm responses. Among the fire-alert responses, incidents requiring hose deployment for firefighting totalled 54, a decrease of 10 percent year-on-year, the statement said.

Meanwhile, the statement also said that the bureau's special services recorded 1,775 cases, an increase of 55.16 percent year-on-year. According to a spokesman, the duties of the special services include patrolling, removing obstacles, clearing fallen trees and washing the ground.

This year, additional tasks involving construction site inspections and scaffolding checks were carried out, accounting for over 800 of the special services cases, the press conference said, pointing out that the increase was also the local response to last November's Wang Fuk Court estate inferno in Hong Kong's Tai Po district, which resulted in 168 deaths and 79 injured people. ■

Medical check up went 'perfectly' says Trump, nearly 80

BEHESDA, US - Donald Trump said an annual medical check-up had gone "perfectly" yesterday, as the health of the oldest US president ever to take the oath faces growing scrutiny with the approach of his 80th birthday.

It was Trump's third medical examination since returning to office last year and follows mounting speculation about issues including bruising on his hands and apparent sleepiness during meetings.

"Everything checked out PERFECTLY," Trump posted on his Truth Social network as he drove back to the White House from the Walter Reed Military Hospital near Washington.

But Trump has long been accused of a lack of transparency about his health - and the

chronology of his various check-ups during his second term has added to the confusion.

He referred to yesterday's checkup as a "six-month physical," despite the White House billing it as an annual dental and medical examination when it announced it earlier this month.

Trump's last scheduled annual check up was in April 2025. But it was followed by an unannounced hospital visit that October, which the White House then also described as an annual physical.

The Republican billionaire's claims about his health are all the more subject to scrutiny given his repeated boasts about his mental and physical vigour compared to Democratic predecessor Joe Biden.

Trump turns 80 on June 14 -

an event that will coincide with an Ultimate Fighting Championship (UFC) cage fight held on the White House lawn.

"I feel the same as I did 50 years ago," Trump said during an Oval Office event earlier this month.

Trump said that was despite his well-documented love of fast food, steak and Diet Coke, adding: "Maybe junk food is good."

Officially standing at 191 cm tall, Trump weighed 224 pounds (101.6 kilograms) as of his last full annual medical in April 2025, down from 243 pounds in 2019.

Trump has also spoken dozens of times about "acing" a cognitive test that he claims his presidential predecessors have not taken.

- AFP



A Brazilian exhibitor (left) interacts with a visitor at the booth of her country at ITB China 2026 in Shanghai yesterday. The three-day ITB China, a travel trade show focusing on the Chinese travel market, kicked off yesterday, with over 900 tourism institutions and enterprises from 85 countries and regions participating. - Xinhua

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The Macau Post Daily

Pakistani PM's visit consolidates, elevates China-Pakistan friendship - Serbian president's visit to China is of historic significance: FM spokesperson

- Stories on p. 7

Oil back at US\$100 as US strikes douse Iran war hopes

Oil prices rebounded back to US\$100 yesterday while stock markets were mixed and the US dollar firmed after US military strikes on Iran deflated hopes of an imminent deal to reopen the Strait of Hormuz.

- Story on p. 10

Cuba receives shipment of rice donated by China

A shipment of 15,000 tonnes of rice donated by the Chinese government to Cuba has arrived at the port of Havana, the island's president said on Sunday.

- Story on p. 12

Sam to attend Q&A session in legislature Jun 16

Tony Wong

Chief Executive Sam Hou Fai will attend a plenary session of the Legislative Assembly (AL) in its hemicycle on Tuesday, June 16, where he will review his government's administration and governance over the past six months, and present his government's key tasks and policy initiatives for the second half of this year, the Government Information Bureau (GCS) announced in a statement yesterday.

During the plenary session, which will start at 3 p.m., Sam will also answer questions from lawmakers about Macau's socio-economic issues and various other matters concerning residents' daily lives, according to the statement.

The statement underlined that the Q&A session to be held next month aims to foster better communication between the executive and legislative organs and enable members of the public to gain a better understanding of the government's administration and governance.

The statement noted that the Q&A session will be broadcast live on the TV and radio channels of public broadcaster TDM.

The public can also watch the proceedings online through various platforms: the Macao Special Administrative Region (MSAR) Government Portal at www.gov.mo; the Chief Executive Office's website at www.gce.gov.mo; the Legislative Assembly's website at www.al.gov.mo; and the Government Information Bureau's website at www.gcs.gov.mo.

The public can also choose to view the official YouTube channels of the Chief Executive Office at www.youtube.com/c/gcegovmo or the Government Information Bureau

at www.youtube.com/macagoacs, as well as the Government Information Bureau's Facebook page at www.facebook.com/macagoacs.

They can also choose to use the official mobile apps of the Chief Executive Office or the Government Information Bureau to watch the proceedings.

The proceedings will be simultaneously translated from Cantonese to Portuguese.

Sam changes customary schedules for Q&A sessions

The last time Sam attended a Q&A session in the legislature's hemicycle was in November last year, when he answered legislators' questions about his 2026 Policy Address on the day after delivering it.

In addition to the Q&A session following the presentation of the government's policy address, customarily scheduled for November, the MSAR's chief executive had customarily held two other Q&A sessions in the legislature's hemicycle every year, normally scheduled for April and August, over the years. However, Sam told reporters last month that he was planning to adjust the customary schedules, but with the total number of Q&A sessions each year to remain unchanged at three (including the policy address Q&A session).

Speaking to journalists last month, Sam noted that between December and April, Macau has quite a few public holidays, including the anniversary of Macau's return to the motherland, Christmas, the Chinese New Year, Ching Ming Festival, and Easter, apart from the nation's annual "two sessions" in March, based on which, Sam said, he concluded that

it would be "too soon" to attend a Q&A session in the legislature's hemicycle in April following the policy address one in November.

Consequently, Sam said at that time, he was planning to address a Q&A session in the legislature's hemicycle in the middle of, or in the second half of, June with the aim of reviewing his government's administration and governance over a period of about six months.

Sam also said at that time that he was planning to address another Q&A session with the aim of gathering opinions and suggestions from legislators concerning the government's drafting of his policy address for next year. He did not mention the exact schedule for this Q&A session.

The nation's two sessions refer to the annual sessions of the National People's Congress (NPC) and the National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC) in Beijing in March. Macau has 12 deputies to the NPC and 38 CPPCC National Committee members.

Macau's legislature has 33 members comprising, 14 directly elected by universal suffrage, 12 indirectly elected by association representatives, and seven appointed by the chief executive. The direct and indirect elections are held every four years. ■

Winners named for Macau Architectural Photography Competition 2026

Rui Pastorin

The Macau Architectural Photography Competition 2026 had garnered 306 entries from 143 participants, with winners across the Open Group and Student Group recently announced in a statement by the organiser, CURB – Center for Architecture and Urbanism.

Now in its fifth consecutive year and having garnered a total of 831 participants and 1,917 submissions since its inception in 2022, the 2026 edition was themed "People in Architecture", challenging participants to "explore the relationship between people and space, and to capture the moments where architecture comes alive".

Entries were collected from April through May 3.

According to the statement, the champion of the Open Group category was Nicholas Mok (莫加祺), with the second and third place going to Ip Man Hei (葉文熹) and Chan Peng Nam (陳炳南) respectively. Meanwhile, Yeung Hou Sam (楊皓森), Jonson Huang (黃宏迅) and Dong Liangyu (董良钰) respectively came first, second and third in the Student Category.

Each category also has 10 honourable mentions. One can view the full list of winners and their photos on <https://competition.curb-center.com/macau-photo-2026/>.

The total prize fund was 9,000 patacas, with the top prize for the

Open Group being 3,000 patacas, with the winner of the Student Group set to receive 1,500 patacas, according to the event website.

Winners will be recognised in an award ceremony set to take place at 5 p.m. at the Ponte 9 - Creative Platform on Rua das Lorchas this Saturday, while an exhibition of the winning works will also be open until June 20, being open from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. and 2:30 p.m. to 6:30 p.m. ■



This undated and unlocated photo recently provided by CURB – Center for Architecture and Urbanism shows the winning photograph of the Open Category taken by Nicholas Mok.



This undated and unlocated photo, taken by Yeung Hou Sam and provided by CURB, shows his winning photo for the Student Category.

Potential participants can sign up for 2026 Summer Activity from today

Tony Wong

The government yesterday announced the schedule for this year's annual summer activity.

The 2026 Summer Activity will provide a total of 46,000 places for local residents aged between 4 and 25, around the same as last year.

The online registration period, which starts at 10 a.m. today, is running until 10 p.m. next Tuesday. Those registering during this period will enter a draw, which will determine whether they will be allocated a place. The government will announce the results of the draw at 10 a.m. next Friday.

The government's annual summer activity is jointly organised by the Education and Youth Development Bureau (DSEDJ) and the Sports Bureau (ID). They announced details of this year's activity during a press conference at the latter's headquarters in Zape yesterday.

Those allocated a place by the draw will be required to choose and sign up for their class online between 10 a.m. on June 8 and 10 p.m. on June 12.

Potential participants can choose to register for the activity and sign up for their class either on the activity's official website or via the Macao One Account



Lou I Wan (left), who heads the Sports Bureau's (ID) Sports-For-All Division, and Chan Wan San, acting chief of the Education and Youth Development Bureau's (DSEDJ) Students Comprehensive Development Division, address yesterday's press conference at the Sports Bureau's headquarters in Zape. – Photo: Tony Wong

e-government app.

In the event of places still being available, the government will also run a period for those who do not register between today and Tuesday next week, or those who fail to obtain the activity of their choice in the upcoming draw, to register again between 10 a.m. on June 8 and 10 p.m. on June 11. Those registering during this period will enter another draw, the results of which will be released at 10 a.m. on June 14. Afterwards, those allocated a place by this draw will be required to choose and sign up for their class online between 10 a.m. on June 15 and 10 p.m. on June 17.

Each potential participant can

sign up for one activity during the first enrolment period, while they can sign up for two activities during the second enrolment period. Consequently, each participant can sign up for up to three activities.

This year's summer activity will provide 450 non-sport activities, with 1,400 classes and 25,000 places, and 100 sport activities, with 760 classes and 21,000 places.

According to yesterday's press conference, the government expects to spend 10.4 million on the non-sport activities and 5.98 million on the sporting activities.

As last year, some of the activities this year will be held in Hengqin. ■



This file photo taken earlier this month shows a car driving past the Legislative Assembly (AL) building, when the legislature held its Open Day. – Photo: Tony Wong

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Macau Weather

**VERY HOT.
CLOUDY APART FROM SUNNY
PERIODS.
FORCE 3 TO 4 SOUTH TO
SOUTHWESTERLY WINDS.
RELATIVE HUMIDITY WILL
RANGE BETWEEN 70% AND 95%.**



28°C~32°C

Source: SMG

No need for parents to compete with AI: scholar

Armindo Neves

The Macau General Union of Neighbourhood Associations (UGAMM), generally known as “Kai Fong,” hosted a conference at its Toi San headquarters recently to present survey findings showing that 99 percent of Macau students use AI chatbots.

The findings also revealed that high school students rank AI as one of their top priorities when seeking help, placing it ahead of traditional sources such as teachers.

Francis Lee Wai-lun, a PhD programme in Social Work graduate from Hong Kong Polytechnic University, told the *Post* last month that these results reflect AI’s role as an important support tool for young people. He pointed out that parents do not need to compete with AI; instead, they should redefine their parenting role and reduce the proportion from “problem-solving” to “emotional companionship and empathy.” Speaking to the *Post* at his office on Rua de Berlim in Nape, Lee, who was involved in the survey, explained that students’ preference for turning to AI was not due to a lack of courage to speak with teachers or parents.

Rather, as young people are going through



Francis Lee Wai-lun poses recently at his office on Rua de Berlim in Nape. – Photo: Armindo Neves

a stage of self-differentiation, they prefer to solve problems independently and fear that seeking advice from adults may lead to further questioning, criticism, or rejection, Lee said. In contrast, he noted that AI does not make emotional judgments but provides

smooth, pressure-free responses, making it more appealing.

Lee emphasised that parents and teachers should not compete with AI regarding the sheer volume of information it can provide, as the technology is capable of integrating

vast amounts of knowledge that may surpass the cognitive reach of adults. Instead, adults should focus on fulfilling roles that AI cannot replace, including offering care, companionship, and leading by example.

Additionally, Lee suggested that parents and teachers should foster an open culture of communication regarding their children’s use of AI. This involves not only encouraging children or students to share their experiences with using AI, but also having parents and teachers take the lead by actively engaging in exchanges with youngsters and reflecting on their own use of AI, thereby fostering a two-way dialogue, Lee said.

He also recommended that schools encourage students to share their practical experiences with AI from the primary and middle school levels.

Establishing peer support networks can help transform the use of AI from a “private, personal activity” into a “public platform open to discussion, sharing, and collaborative learning”, Lee said, adding that this approach would help cultivate students’ interpersonal communication skills and critical thinking abilities in the AI age. ■

Macao 2026 Specialised World Stamp Exhibition to open next month



This poster provided by the Macao Post and Telecommunications Bureau (CTT) yesterday promotes the six-day “Macao 2026 Specialised World Stamp Exhibition” slated to be held next month at The Venetian Macao’s Cotai Expo.

Khalel Vallo

The Macao Post and Telecommunications Bureau (CTT) announced in a statement yesterday that the “Macao 2026 Specialised World Stamp Exhibition” will be held from June 26 to July 1 at The Venetian Macao’s Cotai Expo, striving to bring together philatelic collections and exhibitors from more than 40 countries and regions.

According to the statement, the exhibition, co-organised by the bureau and the Macau Philatelic Association, will serve as an international exchange platform for stamp collectors and philatelic professionals while promoting Macau’s role as “a base for exchange and cooperation where Chinese culture is the mainstream and diverse cultures coexist”.

The exhibition marks the first Fédération Internationale de Philatélie (FIP) Specialised World Stamp Exhibition ever held in Macau and coincides with the centenary of the Zürich-based Fédération Internationale de Philatélie, the statement said.

The event aims to reflect international recognition of Macau as a destination for conventions and exhibitions with cultural vitality, while also supporting economic diversification and sustainable development, the bureau said.

According to the statement, a total of 1,500 frames of competitive philatelic exhibits from over 40 countries and regions will be displayed, covering categories such as Traditional Philately, Postal History, Modern Philately and Youth Philately.

Meanwhile, the exhibition will also feature a Treasure Gallery presenting collections from the China National Post and Postage Stamp Museum, alongside a Macao Stamp Original Archives Exhibition showcasing original manuscripts and design drafts of Macau stamps, the statement noted.

Throughout the six-day event, visitors will be able to participate in themed seminars, workshops and lucky draws, while commemorative postmark cancellation services and free commemorative envelopes or postcards will be available daily, the statement said, adding that attendees can also create and mail personalised philatelic souvenirs through DIY postcard terminals, stamp vending machines and personalised stamp printing services.

The statement also said that admission to the exhibition will be free of charge.

More details can be found at the official “Macao 2026” website www.macao2026.org.mo. ■

Luso-Chinese music arts fest aims to unite Macau, Zhuhai & Hengqin

Khalel Vallo

The “Galaxy Entertainment Group Presents: Luso-Chinese Music Arts Festival Macau-Zhuhai-Hengqin 2026” was announced by the integrated resort operator (GEG) in a press conference at the Macau Tower Convention & Entertainment Centre in Sai Van yesterday, highlighting the festival’s cross-city cultural vision through music, competitions and heritage activities spanning Macau, Zhuhai and Hengqin.

Hengqin is a part of Xiangzhou, Zhuhai’s largest district. The Guangdong-Macao In-Depth Cooperation Zone in Hengqin is a part of the prefecture-level city of Zhuhai.

The festival will run from Saturday through June 8 at venues including Galaxy Macau and Zhuhai Art College.

According to a statement by GEG yesterday, the festival is co-organised by the Macao Association for Cultural Exchange and Friendship between China and Portuguese-speaking Countries, MMAS (Macao Music and Arts Space) and Zhuhai Art College, with local veteran musician Casimiro Wong Wai-lam serving as the music director.

The opening concert, titled “Sonic Alliance: Musical Battle”, is slated to start this Saturday at Galaxy Macau in Cotai, the statement said, adding that the concert is inspired by martial arts duels and contemporary street dance battles. The concert will feature young musicians from the Greater Bay Area (GBA), which comprises nine cities in Guangdong and the nation’s two special administrative regions of Hong Kong and Macau, combining Chinese and Western instruments, diverse vocal styles and artistic creativity in a live competition format judged by the audience.

Meanwhile, three major competitions will also headline the programme – The Tuna Macanese Singing Championship 2026, the 2nd Macao International Orchestral and Chamber Music Competition, and the GBA China-Chic Music Tournament.

Beyond performances and competitions, the festival will host a range of cultural workshops and heritage activities including a guqin exhibition which will feature rare agarwood guqin as well as Ming and Qing

dynasty instruments, and a guqin workshop where participants, according to the statement, can learn basic techniques and try playing classic passages from “The Laughing in the Vast Sea” and “Flowing Water”.

A guqin is a plucked seven-string Chinese musical instrument.

According to the statement, additional activities include a music marathon at the UNESCO World Heritage-listed Lou Kau Mansion at 7 Travessa da Sé, a Brazilian bossa nova concert as well as a Macanese music and culture campus tour in Hengqin.

Customarily, the term “Macanese” refers to Macau’s community of mixed Portuguese and Asian descent, and its diaspora.

According to the organisers, the festival aims to promote cultural exchange and artistic collaboration across the GBA by combining Chinese and Portuguese musical traditions through performances, workshops and immersive experiences. ■



Local musician Casimiro de Jesus Pinto, aka Wong Wai-lam, a retired senior civil servant, addresses yesterday’s “Galaxy Entertainment Group Presents: Luso-Chinese Music Arts Festival Macau-Zhuhai-Hengqin 2026” press conference at the Macau Tower Convention & Entertainment Centre in Sai Van yesterday. – Photo: Khalel Vallo

These pictures show the exhibition venue at Arsenale, Italy.



Resonating with the past: 3 Macau artists on 'Jacone's Polyphony' at Venice Biennale

Interview by William Chan

Following our discussion with curators Feng Yan and Ng Sio Ieng regarding Macau's participation in the 61st International Art Exhibition – La Biennale di Venezia*, we turn to the three artists whose works form the core of “Jacone’s Polyphony.”

Through their diverse styles of art, Fok Hoi Seng, O Chi Wai, and Lei Fung Ieng bridge the gap between the unfulfilled 17th-century journey of the Jesuit painter Wu Li and the contemporary identity of Macau.

The exhibition, titled after Wu Li’s** Portuguese name, Jacone, explores “polyphony” – the harmonious coexistence of multiple independent voices. The participating artists told the *Post* in an online interview that this project was a profound personal encounter with a historical figure whose life mirrors the complexities of their own city.

Eric Fok Hoi Seng: mapping unfinished dreams

Eric Fok Hoi Seng, known for his intricate pen-and-ink maps, found deep resonance in Wu Li’s arrival in 17th-century Macau. “I knew Wu Li as a pivotal painter, but discovering his specific journey to Macau, from a Jiangnan literatus to a Catholic, and his unfulfilled aspiration to study theology in Rome was a revelation”, Fok told the *Post*. He noted that Wu Li’s dedication to studying theology and learning Latin highlights the city’s historical role as a cultural gateway.

Fok’s contribution is a large-scale screen work tracing the unfulfilled journey Wu Li intended to take him to Rome. By following the actual travel routes of Shen Fuzong (沈福宗) – another early Chinese traveller – Fok’s work symbolically completes Wu Li’s 300-year-old wish. “The screen acts as a spatial divider and a connector, blending geographical coordinates with cultural identity”, he said. “It is an attempt to use art to fill the gaps left by history”. For Fok, presenting Macau in Venice is about finding the city’s place within global narratives while avoiding regional limitations.

O Chi Wai: persistence of spiritual seeking

Multimedia artist O Chi Wai approached the project through the lens of inner exploration. He was particularly moved by Wu Li’s intellectual courage. “Wu Li spent his life seeking meaning. At 50, he was willing to start from scratch in Macau, learning Latin to take teachings back to China”, O remarked.

This dedication prompted O to reflect on the speed of contemporary creation. “In an era of convenient technology, Wu Li’s persistence makes me ask: why do we create? What is the core message we wish to transmit?”

O’s work, Sanqu (A Cappella Reverie), is a three-screen multimedia installation combining 3D scanning animation, photography, and vocal music. It establishes a spiritual link between Wu Li’s era and the modern human condition. “The project allowed me to find an internal connection I hadn’t felt before”, he said, emphasising that Macau’s artistic strength often lies in quiet, dedicated cross-disciplinary collaborations.

Veronica Lei Fung Ieng: emotional texture of migration

Veronica Lei Fung Ieng describes Wu Li as a literatus who carried his faith with a sense of “regretful persistence”. Her work, Sigh of Migration, draws inspiration from Wu Li’s stay in Macau’s Liang Shui Jing Village (涼水街). “There is a 300-year-old echo between us. He waited in Macau for a journey that never happened; I am now taking the work inspired by his story to Venice. In a way, I am helping him complete that migration through time and space”, she noted.

Her artistic process mirrors Macau’s duality, using a rigid iron wire frame – representing historical structure – layered with tin and wax. “The wax is poured and dripped freely, representing the soft, fluid, and human side of our culture”, Lei said. Lei said she hopes international visitors will see her work as a window into a Macau that exists beyond surface-level stereotypes.

“Jacone’s Polyphony, Exhibition from Macao, China: 61st International Art Exhibition – La Biennale di Venezia” runs from May 9 to November 22. The exhibition hall is located in front of the Arsenale, the Biennale’s main building. Admission is free. For further information, visit the website of the Macao Museum of Art at www.MAM.gov.mo.

*www.macaupostdaily.com/news/28129

**Wu Li (1632–1718) was a prominent Chinese landscape painter, poet, and one of the “Six Masters of the early Qing period.” In the late 1600s, Wu Li travelled to Macau, where he encountered Jesuit missionaries and was introduced to Christianity. Afterwards, his art began blending traditional Chinese literati styles with subtle Christian symbolism, reflecting both his heritage and new faith. – Poe



This undated and unlocated photo shows Eric Fok Hoi Seng posing in front of his work “Silent Travelogues”.



This undated and unlocated photo shows O Chi Wai posing in front of digital screens displaying his work, Sanqu (A Cappella Reverie), a five-minute video footage.



This undated and unlocated photo shows Veronica Lei Fung Ieng posing next to her work “Sigh of Migration”. – Photos provided by the organisers

Macau Golf Masters garners record participants

Rui Pastorin

The three-day Macau Golf Masters was held from May 20 to 22 at the Macau International Golf Course, this year attracting over 200 participants from athletes to non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and corporate partners, and record community engagement.

The tournament is the “world’s largest and most prestigious inclusive golf tournament for athletes with intellectual and physical disabilities”, according to a statement on Sunday by organiser Charity Association of Macau Business Readers.

Having marked its 11th edition since its founding in 2012, it gathered 134 golfers from 23 countries and regions, among which were “65 athletes with intellectual and physical disabilities from 17 international delegations across Hong Kong, Macau, and the global

community”. Five competitive formats were featured.

The statement said that the “Galaxy Entertainment Contender League” was won by Challenge Golf Costa Rica, followed by Thailand and Zimbabwe. Securing the top prize in the “MGM Challenger League” meanwhile was Australia’s Lachlan Pearson, followed by Max Walsh and Kang Sunggon, who are from New Zealand and South Korea respectively.

The inaugural IGT Nations Cup saw a mixed team representing Australia, Costa Rica, and Macau coming out on top, while the “Melco World League” saw Australia’s Steven Alderson emerging as champion in a close match with Zion Wagner and defending champion Lachlan Smith.

Lastly, Grand Masters Final presented by WE CAN DREAM TOGETHER FOUNDATION saw Team RoadHouse Macau, featuring Warren Clark, who is the Special Olympics Global Golf Ambassador for the United Kingdom, Lachlan Smith, and Costa Rican coaches Kenneth Brogdon and Jose Quesada, emerging as champions.

Moreover, highlighting the record local community participation, the statement said that over 100 youngsters from schools, associations and NGOs participated in golf workshops and introductory sessions led by Clark, supported by an international coaching team from Costa Rica, New Zealand, Hong Kong, and Macau. ■



This image downloaded from the Macau Golf Masters Instagram page shows the logo of last week’s tournament.

This poster downloaded last night from the Macau Golf Masters Instagram page highlights the recently concluded three-day event.

S Korean rapes, holds ex-girlfriend after failing to reconcile: police

Tony Wong

A South Korean man who travelled to Macau in an unsuccessful attempt to win back his ex-girlfriend has been arrested for allegedly detaining, assaulting, and raping her three times in a Cotai hotel room, Judiciary Police (PJ) spokesman Cheong Un Hong said during a regular press conference yesterday.

The man also coerced the victim into telling her family over the phone that she was safe. However, her family sensed something was amiss and alerted the police, ultimately exposing the crime, according to Cheong.

The suspect is a 40-year-old surname Cho, who claims to be a businessman.

According to Cheong, the victim, a young non-local woman, arrived in Macau alone on Friday last week for a holiday and checked into a hotel in Cotai under her own name. Upon learning of her travel plans, her ex-boyfriend, Cho, travelled to Macau in an attempt to reconcile.

At 11 p.m. on Friday, Cho entered the victim’s hotel room under the pretext of “seeking a place

to stay” and wanting to “discuss their relationship”. When his request to get back together was rejected, he lost control of his emotions. He grabbed the victim and violently slammed her head against the wall.

According to Cheong, Cho then forced himself on the victim, raping her twice. He confiscated her mobile phone and barred her from leaving the room.

At around 7 a.m. on Saturday, Cho assaulted the victim again and raped her for a third time, Cheong said.

Over the period, the victim managed to make several phone calls to her family, sending vague distress signals through means such as interrupted voice messages and unusual background noises.

Unable to reach the victim, her family called her repeatedly, causing the phone to ring continuously, Cheong said. Cho forced the victim to tell them she was safe, but her family sensed something was wrong and alerted the police.

Public Security Police (PSP) officers arrived at the scene at around 10 a.m. to assess the situation and subsequently transferred the case to



Judiciary Police (PJ) spokesman Cheong Un Hong speaks during yesterday’s regular press conference. – Photo: Tony Wong

the Judiciary Police (PJ) for follow-up investigation.

A forensic examination confirmed multiple soft tissue contusions and abrasions on the victim’s head, face, neck, and limbs.

The suspect was transferred to the Public Prosecutions Office (MP), facing charges of rape, false imprisonment, and causing bodily harm. ■

Innovative response to choke-point chip tech

China Daily Editorial

Moore’s Law has been a cornerstone of the rapid advancement of digital technology over the past decades, although it is now confronting physical limits and diminishing economic returns.

For an industry conditioned to equate progress with nanometers, the Tau Scaling Law disclosed by Huawei on Monday is a challenge to the organizing logic of the semiconductor ecosystem.

Instead of continuing the increasingly expensive race to shrink transistors, Tau Scaling proposes that future chip performance gains can come from compressing the signal propagation time through architectural and timing innovations. Huawei has set a target of reaching a chip density equivalent to 1.4 nanometers by 2031.

Washington’s export restrictions have attempted to cut China off from advanced lithography equipment, leading-edge foundries and portions of the global event-driven architecture software stack. Such measures were designed to slow China’s progress in advanced semiconductors.

That is where Tau Scaling enters the picture. Instead of shrinking transistor dimensions from 3 nm to 2 nm and beyond, Huawei is extracting more performance from mature process nodes such as 5 nm and 7 nm by means of architectural optimization, timing compression, logic folding and system-level coordination.

Much of the underlying research –including asynchronous computing

concepts, wave pipelining, and timing optimization techniques – can be traced back decades. What Huawei has done, under conditions where the traditional scaling route became inaccessible, is to revisit those ideas, combine them, enhance them and industrialize them.

In that sense, the emergence of Tau Scaling reflects a broader historical pattern in technology. Constraints often redirect innovation rather than stop it. So, if chip performance can be improved through architecture rather than lithography alone, then the balance of competition changes. The key question becomes not simply who owns the most advanced EUV machines, but who can design the most efficient systems using available manufacturing capabilities.

It would be premature, though, to declare that the arrival of Tau Scaling heralds the post-Moore era. Semiconductor history is filled with elegant concepts that struggled once they encountered manufacturing economics, ecosystem inertia, or commercial realities. Huawei’s proposal faces several important ceilings.

Architecture cannot completely replace physics. Timing optimization can reduce inefficiencies, but signals still obey physical propagation limits. As chips become larger and workloads more complex, interconnect delays and synchronization overhead remain major bottlenecks.

Logic folding and time-domain optimization introduce their own complexity penalties. The more aggressively a design compresses timing, the harder verification,

debugging and manufacturing become. Commercialization will determine whether Tau Scaling becomes an industry framework. For Huawei’s approach to become influential, other companies must adopt it, customers must validate it and developers must build around it. That process will take years, not conference announcements.

Even so, the broader lesson already stands. The semiconductor industry is entering a phase where innovation no longer relies exclusively on brute-force scaling and trillion-dollar capital expenditures. Architectural intelligence, software-hardware codesign, advanced packaging and system optimization are becoming increasingly important.

For China, that shift creates both an opportunity and a responsibility. The country still faces major gaps in lithography, materials, EDA tools and manufacturing equipment. But Tau Scaling demonstrates something equally important: when external pressure blocks one route, researchers will look for alternative routes and solutions can emerge through persistence, engineering discipline and targeted input.

The semiconductor race is no longer just about making things smaller. Increasingly, it is about making systems smarter. The challenge now is for more Chinese companies and engineers to push beyond incremental imitation and focus on resolving genuine choke-point technologies with the tools they already possess.

– Courtesy of China Daily

Why UN Day of Vesak makes its China debut in Jiangsu

Analysis

NANJING – The 21st Conference of the United Nations Day of Vesak opened yesterday in the city of Wuxi, Jiangsu Province, marking the first time China has hosted this global Buddhist gathering.

Observed by Buddhists worldwide, Vesak commemorates the birth, enlightenment and passing of the Buddha. The World Fellowship of Buddhists formally endorsed the celebration in 1950, while the United Nations General Assembly granted it international recognition in 1999.

Organized by the International Council for the Day of Vesak, this year's conference has gathered around 1,000 Buddhist leaders, scholars and delegates from 67 countries and regions under the theme of "Buddhist Wisdom in Promoting Global Sustainable Development and Building a Shared Future for Humanity."

More than two millennia after Buddhism first entered China, the religion has given rise to the Han, Tibetan and Theravada traditions that together form the country's uniquely diverse Buddhist landscape.

The organizers said that China's hosting

of the event reflects deepening exchanges between Chinese Buddhism and the global Buddhist community, while also underscoring the country's efforts to draw upon Buddhist wisdom in support of sustainable development and world peace.

Among Chinese provinces, Jiangsu occupies a particularly revered place in this history. Long celebrated for its cultural refinement and intellectual vitality, the region became one of the earliest gateways for Buddhism's arrival, localization and flourishing in China.

In 247 A.D., Sun Quan, ruler of the Eastern Wu Kingdom during the Three Kingdoms period (220-280), ordered the construction of Jianchu Temple, which is regarded as the first Buddhist temple in the Wu cultural region and a milestone in Buddhism's spread south of the Yangtze River.

From the Eastern Wu through the Southern Dynasties (420-589), Jiangsu's Nanjing emerged as one of the spiritual and scholarly centers of Buddhism in China. Generations of eminent monks translated both Mahayana and Theravada scriptures there, transforming the city into one of the ancient world's major

hubs for Buddhist translation and doctrinal studies.

During the Sui (581-618) and Tang (618-907) dynasties and the subsequent Five Dynasties and Ten Kingdoms (907-979) era, several influential Buddhist schools, including the Sanlun, Niutou and Fayen traditions, were founded within Jiangsu. The province also nurtured many towering figures in Chinese Buddhist history in both ancient and modern times.

Jiangsu's Buddhist ties have long extended across Asia and beyond.

The world's only known sacred cranial relic of the Buddha is enshrined at Nanjing's Niushou Mountain, where it has become a focal point of international pilgrimage. The relic was transported to the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region and the Macao Special Administrative Region for public veneration in 2012.

During the Tang Dynasty, eminent monk Jianzhen departed from Daming Temple in the city of Yangzhou on his famed voyages to Japan, eventually succeeding on his sixth attempt and profoundly shaping the spread of Buddhism there.

Centuries later, Buddhist exchanges continued in new forms. In the early 20th century, Japanese monks helped raise funds to cast a bronze bell for Hanshan Temple in the city of Suzhou, a symbol of enduring Sino-Japanese Buddhist connections.

Another prominent figure, Master Hsing Yun, born and ordained in Jiangsu before later founding the globally influential Buddha's Light International Association, helped pioneer modern approaches to Buddhist outreach and cultural engagement.

Against this backdrop, Wuxi stands out as both an ancient Buddhist stronghold and a modern center for religious tourism and international cultural exchange, where centuries-old Zen traditions coexist with contemporary vitality.

On the Wuxi shores of Taihu Lake lies the expansive Lingshan Scenic Area. Having twice hosted the World Buddhist Forum, the site has evolved into one of the world's foremost gathering places for Buddhist dialogue, equipped with both the institutional experience and modern infrastructure needed to stage the Day of Vesak conference.

– Xinhua

Ministry to expand access to public rental housing

BEIJING – The Ministry of Housing and Urban-Rural Development said yesterday that it will guide local governments across the country to optimize their public rental housing policies, thereby helping ensure access to urban housing for a broader range of residents.

Specifically, local housing authorities will move to set eligibility criteria for households that have a permanent residence but lack local household registration to apply for public rental housing, Xu Liang, a ministry official, said at a press conference.

Once a household meets the requirements, it will be promptly added to the waiting list for public rental housing, Xu noted. The ministry will bring in professional organizations to operate and manage public rental housing, and continue improving public infrastructure, to help residents better integrate into urban life, Xu added.

Safeguarding housing security is a key part of guidelines recently issued by the State

Council, which aim to ensure that residents without local household registration enjoy the same access to basic public services as those with local household registration, known as hukou in Chinese.

These guidelines also outline measures to strengthen educational support for migrant children, lift household registration restrictions on participation in employee social insurance, and widen access to basic medical coverage and employment services.

On the employment front, relevant local departments will set up employment service stations near residents' homes and ensure that all workers can access employment services on an equal footing with local residents where they live, said Zhang Lixin, an official with the Ministry of Human Resources and Social Security.

Efforts will also be made to encourage regions nationwide to organize targeted job fairs by industry, position and demographic group, Zhang added.

– AFP

Researchers design fresh strategy to boost solar cell performance

BEIJING – A team of Chinese researchers has developed a new passivation strategy that significantly improves both the efficiency and operational stability of perovskite/silicon tandem solar cells, according to a recent research article published in the journal *Matter*.

Perovskite/silicon tandem solar cells combine a top perovskite layer, which efficiently converts sunlight into electricity, with a silicon bottom substrate. These solar cells hold great potential for lightweight, high-efficiency applications in the photovoltaic field.

However, the pyramid-textured surface of industrial silicon substrates makes it difficult to deposit a uniform perovskite top layer, which often leads to localized electrical leakage and thus limits the commercial prospects of these tandem cells.

The researchers from Ningbo Institute of Materials Technology and Engineering (NIMTE) of the Chinese Academy of Sciences, in collaboration with Soochow University and Taizhou University, both in

east China's Jiangsu Province, have designed the innovative peak-selective passivation strategy to suppress electrical leakage.

Their method uses polystyrene nanospheres as a template to precisely deposit a thin insulating layer of aluminum oxide onto the pyramid peaks, thereby blocking leakage pathways.

The team achieved an impressive power conversion efficiency of around 33 percent, in a perovskite/silicon tandem solar cell with an active area of approximately one square centimeter.

The device also retained about 90 percent of its initial efficiency after 1,000 hours of continuous operation, demonstrating excellent long-term stability.

"This strategy is simple and compatible with existing industrial production lines, bringing perovskite/silicon tandem solar cells a step closer to commercial applications," noted Ye Jichun, a corresponding author of the study.

– Xinhua



A staff member of the 2026 World Intelligent Industry Expo arranges exhibits at the National Convention and Exhibition Center (Tianjin) in Tianjin Municipality yesterday. The 2026 World Intelligent Industry Expo will be held in Tianjin from tomorrow to Sunday.

– Xinhua

Senior CPC official sends congratulatory letter to 21st Conference of UN Day of Vesak

NANJING – Wang Huning, a senior official of the Communist Party of China (CPC), sent a congratulatory letter to the 21st Conference of the United Nations Day of Vesak, which opened yesterday in the city of Wuxi, Jiangsu Province.

Wang, a member of the Standing Committee of the Political Bureau of the CPC Central Committee and chairman of the National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC), extended warm congratulations and greetings to all participants at the conference.

In the letter, Wang stressed that the Chinese government firmly upholds the UN-centered international system and the basic

norms of international relations based on the purposes and principles of the UN Charter.

He said that China will continue to support its Buddhist community in strengthening friendly exchanges with Buddhist circles from various countries and regions on the basis of independence, equality and mutual respect.

Wang expressed hope that the participants and Buddhist communities from around the world would carry forward the fine traditions of Buddhism, engage in in-depth exchanges, and contribute wisdom and strength to safeguarding world peace, promoting people's well-being, and building a community with a shared future for humanity.

– Xinhua

Pakistani PM's visit consolidates, elevates China-Pakistan friendship: FM spokesperson

BEIJING – Pakistani Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's recent visit to China is an important high-level exchange that consolidates and elevates the special friendship between the two countries, Chinese foreign ministry spokesperson Mao Ning said yesterday summarizing highlights of the visit.

Mao said head-of-state diplomacy steers the course, underscoring the strategic significance of China-Pakistan relations.

During the visit, President Xi Jinping and Prime Minister Sharif agreed to deepen the China-Pakistan all-weather strategic cooperative partnership, accelerate the building of an even closer China-Pakistan community with a shared future, and firmly support each other in safeguarding core interests, providing political guidance and

strong impetus for bilateral relations, she said.

Mao noted that the pragmatic cooperation underpins the bond, demonstrating the mutually beneficial nature of China-Pakistan relations. She said the two leaders agreed to steadily advance the Action Plan to Foster an Even Closer China-Pakistan Community with a Shared Future in the New Era and accelerate the development of the upgraded Version 2.0 of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor.

The two leaders also agreed to forge an upgraded bilateral free trade agreement and explore cooperation in artificial intelligence, digital economy, agriculture and other fields, Mao said. The two sides have signed multiple cooperation documents covering economy and trade, science and technology, agriculture and food,

human resources and other areas, she noted.

The spokesperson stressed that international coordination has enriched the ties, showcasing the leading role of China-Pakistan relations.

She said the Pakistani side expressed support for Xi's four propositions on the situation in the Middle East, while the Chinese side commended Pakistan for demonstrating a proactive spirit and mediating for peace in the Middle East.

The two sides agreed to firmly defend the outcomes of World War II victory, oppose any attempt to revitalize fascism and militarism, and jointly uphold the postwar international order, world peace and security, as well as historical truth and international justice, Mao said.

– Xinhua



Vice President Han Zheng (right) and Pakistani Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif pose during a reception celebrating the 75th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between China and Pakistan in Beijing on Monday. – Xinhua

Serbian president's visit to China is of historic significance: FM spokesperson

BEIJING – Serbian President Aleksandar Vucic's state visit to China is of historic significance, as this year marks the 10th anniversary of the China-Serbia comprehensive strategic partnership, Chinese foreign ministry spokesperson Mao Ning yesterday at a regular press briefing.

Talking about China's expectation for future development of China-Serbia relations, Mao said the two heads of state spoke highly of the achievements made in building a China-Serbia community with a shared future in the new era and reiterated firm support for each other's core interests.

They agreed to seek synergy between China's 15th Five-Year Plan (2026-2030) and the Serbia 2030 development strategy and deepen political cooperation as well as cooperation in such areas as economy, science and technology, culture, tourism and education, Mao said.

Mao said that the two presidents share the view that in a fluid world with century-defining changes, China and Serbia need to strengthen strategic communication, practice true multilateralism, oppose hegemonism and power politics, and uphold international fairness and justice.

According to Mao, Vucic's visit also includes trips to Shanghai and other places. This state visit, featuring a full itinerary and fruitful outcomes, reflects the two sides' high-degree political mutual trust, high-quality practical cooperation, and high-level relations and coordination in multilateral affairs, she said.

"It will surely inject fresh vitality into the two countries' comprehensive strategic cooperation and give a strong boost to building a China-Serbia community with a shared future in the new era," Mao said.

– Xinhua

Feature: Hybrid rice grows China-Africa ties as Yuan Longping's legacy benefits millions across continent

Analysis

CHANGSHA/NAIROBI – In late May, before the fifth anniversary of the passing of China's prestigious agronomist Yuan Longping, his wife Deng Ze received a special gift – a bag of hybrid rice produced in the West African country of Guinea.

Printed on the front of the rice bag were the national flags of China and Guinea. On the back, Guinean Prime Minister Amadou Oury Bah handwrote a message in French: "This bag of rice is a symbol of cooperation between Guinea and China."

In late April, the prime minister met with Fang Zhihui and other members of an agricultural team from the Hunan Academy of Agricultural Sciences at his office in the Guinean capital, Conakry.

He highly praised the achievements in promoting hybrid rice cultivation in the African country, before carefully penning the message on the rice bag and asking Fang to deliver it to Deng after returning to China.

The bag of rice grains embodies the tangible results of China's hybrid rice technology and agricultural assistance programs in Africa. Behind it lies the trust and appreciation the African people have shown toward China's hybrid rice expertise.

"With our technical assistance, Guinea has established the largest hybrid rice demonstration park in Africa so far," Fang told Xinhua. "Rice yields in the park have reached six tonnes per hectare per season, three times higher than those of traditional local varieties."

Guinea is far from the sole African country benefiting from China's hybrid rice expertise.

He Qiaosheng, head of the eighth Chinese agricultural expert team assisting Chad, said the team has selected more than 10 rice varieties suitable for local conditions.

"Chinese rice varieties have increased yields by more than 35

percent on average compared with local strains," He said. "Over the past two decades, they have helped produce an additional 1.2 million tonnes of grain. We have also trained nearly 3,000 local agricultural officials, technicians, and farmers."

In Ambela Village in Douguia District of Chad's Hadjer-Lamis Region, farmer Uthman adopted standardized high-yield rice farming methods after receiving training from Chinese experts.

Despite severe flooding in 2024, he harvested 7.84 tonnes of rice from one hectare of farmland, compared with just seven tonnes previously harvested from two hectares. The increased production brought him an additional income of 720,000 CFA francs (about US\$ 1,278).

At a harvest festival held in Midekin Village in Douguia District in October 2025, Mahamat Ahmad Alhabet, secretary-general of the Chadian Presidency, said the high-yield rice cultivation technologies introduced by Chinese experts demonstrate that Chad can produce enough rice not only to feed its own people and improve diets, but also to generate export revenue.

With support from a Chinese agricultural assistance team from Yuan Longping High-tech Agriculture Co., Ltd., a Chinese agricultural company named after Yuan, young Gambian farmer Musa Darboe systematically learned hybrid rice cultivation techniques.

Within just seven years, the rice yields on the farm he inherited from his father rose to seven tonnes per hectare, which was two to three times the local average. The farm's core planting area has now expanded to 100 hectares, while Musa also provides technical support and mechanized farming services to nearby farmers.

In June 2025, Musa traveled about 12,000 km to Changsha, the capital of central China's Hunan

Province, where he laid rice he had personally grown at Yuan's tomb.

"It was Yuan Longping's research achievements that gave us hope of escaping hunger and achieving food self-sufficiency," he said.

In July 2025, the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations inspected the China-Madagascar Belt and Road Joint Hybrid Rice Laboratory, jointly established by the Hunan Hybrid Rice Research Center and the University of Antananarivo.

"The FAO attaches great importance to China's support for the development of hybrid rice in African countries," said Xiao Gui, a researcher at the Hunan Hybrid Rice Research Center, noting that cooperation is now moving toward deeper partnerships.

The joint laboratory was inaugurated in December 2024 at the Mahitsy hybrid rice demonstration center in Madagascar.

Tiana Randriamihanta, the Malagasy project leader of the joint laboratory, said the facility currently has seven researchers and will focus on promoting hybrid rice research and education, increasing yields, and training more technical professionals to support Madagascar's hybrid rice industry.

Xiao said the joint laboratory will serve as a platform for at least three major areas of cooperation between China and Madagascar, including inviting Malagasy technicians to undergo systematic theoretical and practical training in China.

"Currently, hybrid rice seeds in Africa cost around US\$ 5.5 per kg. Through localized seed production, we hope to reduce the price to four dollars or even lower," Xiao said. "In the future, we will apply the successful experience accumulated in Madagascar to cooperation projects with other African countries such as Ghana and Mozambique."

– Xinhua



Serbian President Aleksandar Vucic delivers a speech while visiting Tsinghua University in Beijing yesterday. Vucic is on a state visit to China from Sunday to tomorrow. – Xinhua

Philippine museum brings deadly, lucrative galleon trade to life

Cecil Morella

MANILA – A full-size replica of a Spanish galleon stares out into Manila Bay, the centrepiece of a museum that will transport visitors back to the 17th century, when conscripted Philippine mariners hastened the era of globalisation.

The Museo del Galeon, which focuses on the hulking Espiritu Santo, aims to tell the story of Spain's 250-year-long Pacific galleon trade from the perspective of the Filipinos who built and crewed the towering vessels.

"This is a land with a great tradition of seafaring, but often under inhumane and degrading conditions," the museum's executive director Manuel Quezon told AFP, noting Filipinos still make up a quarter of the world's sailors.

"And it is one that we don't flinch from telling."

Built with forced labour in 1603, the Espiritu Santo was one of 181 treasure ships that made hundreds of trips between Manila and the Mexican port of Acapulco between 1565 and 1815 under harrowing conditions that historians say killed one in three crewmen.

"It was the first global trade, connecting three continents," said Francis Navarro, director of archives at the Ateneo de Manila University.

"It made the world smaller."

Ravaged forests, families

Sailing west across the Pacific for three months, the ships brought silver coins from Spain's American colonies to Manila, where they would be exchanged for luxury goods like silk, porcelain and jade from China.

The return voyage lasted as long as a year, with cargo then transported across Mexico by mule before heading to Spain, completing a trade loop between the old and new worlds.

The galleons brought more than silver to the Philippines. They brought ideas, disease, food, religion, fashion and more – the things that "made us who we are", Quezon said.

The colonial trade also ravaged the archipelago's forests and wrecked communities, with able-bodied men required to offer 40 days of unpaid



This photo taken last month shows visitors under the Galeon Espiritu Santo, a full-scale representation of a 17th century galleon, on display at the Museo del Galeon in Manila. – AFP

service to fell trees and build ships under Spanish foremen.

Others were forced into service as sailors for up to 10 years at a time.

Cramped inside vessels overladen with precious cargo, crewmembers subsisted on a miserable diet of hardtack, an unleavened bread, and salted meat and fish that routinely spoiled and left many gravely ill.

"You had an astounding mortality rate of about 30 percent per voyage," Quezon said.

Deadly rebellions were sparked in some areas where galleons were built, Navarro added, including on the Cavite coast along Manila Bay.

The multi-continent trade would only end with Mexico's fight for independence from Spain.

'Filling in the blanks'

Fourteen years after its conception, museumgoers since May 1 have been able to walk the replica ship's decks, immersed in a giant, wrap-around LED display of star-studded night skies.

Artefacts from voyages line exhibits surrounding the vessel, including part of a Chinese tomb that once served as ballast in the hold of a galleon.

"We're filling the blanks in with this museum," Quezon told AFP on a tour ahead of its opening.

"The child who comes through, we want them to realise that many of the things that they take for granted have absolutely amazing stories behind them."

Funding for the "billion-peso" (US\$16.5 million) project came from the Philippines' wealthiest families after bids to secure financing from the government and a Mexican billionaire faltered.

But while the Espiritu Santo is a physical marvel, it will never set sail.

Early in the process, Quezon, a historian and grandson of a former Philippine president, learnt to his dismay that the local hardwood and water-resistant species used to build the galleons had long been wiped out.

A wooden galleon of Espiritu Santo's size would have required 800 trees that could now only be found in the forests of Myanmar, said Quezon.

While the museum representation is scrupulously faithful to what is known of the original vessel's design and dimensions, it was built largely with fibreglass and other man-made materials.

"In those days, you would have levelled entire forests just to be able to produce a single galleon," he said.

"That would have been irresponsible, particularly because it wasn't meant to float." – AFP

2 wild porcupines released into natural forests of Cambodia's famed Angkor Park

PHNOM PENH – The APSARA National Authority (ANA) and Cambodia Wildlife Care (CWC) have jointly freed two wild porcupines into the natural forest of the UNESCO-listed Angkor Archaeological Park in northwest Cambodia's Siem Reap province, said an ANA's news release yesterday.

The CWC transferred the two wild porcupines to the ANA on Monday afternoon for temporary care before being released into the Angkor forest.

CWC's president Try Sitheng said the two porcupines were received from a military commander in Oddar Meanchey province, who had raised three porcupines for many years, but one had died of old age.

"The decision to bring the porcupines to the Angkor area is intended to enhance visitors' experiences, allowing national and international tourists visiting Angkor not only to admire the ancient temples, but also to appreciate the natural landscape and wildlife of the region," he said.

Nick Marx, an expert from CWC and biodiversity advisor to the ANA, said the two porcupines could not be released into the wild immediately.

"Specialists must first help them acclimate to their new environment

before they can survive independently in the Angkor forest," he said. "This is the first time CWC has transferred porcupines to the ANA for release into the Angkor forest."

Chou Radina, deputy director of the ANA's department of water, forestry and infrastructure management, said various wildlife species are already living in the Angkor region.

"The addition of the two porcupines will help increase the local porcupine population in the Angkor forest," he said.

He expressed hope that the newly released porcupines will eventually integrate with existing wild populations and potentially reproduce in the future.

Under the Angkor Wildlife Release Project, since 2013, the ANA has released many wildlife species into the natural forests of Angkor Park, including pileated gibbons, red muntjacs, silvered langurs, common palm civets, smooth-coated otters, leopard cats, oriental pied hornbills, great hornbills, wreathed hornbills, peafowls, common water monitors, and Sunda pangolins.

The 401-square-km Angkor Archaeological Park, the kingdom's most popular tourist destination, is home to 91 ancient temples, which were built from the ninth to the 13th centuries. – Xinhua



This photo taken on Monday shows two wild porcupines being transferred to the natural forest of the Angkor Archaeological Park in Siem Reap province, Cambodia. – AFP

Cambodia rejects claims of airport closures, border checkpoint restrictions

PHNOM PENH – Cambodia yesterday rejected claims that it had temporarily closed airports and placed land border checkpoints under restrictions.

In a statement, the Ministry of Interior said that on Monday, information circulated on social media claimed that Cambodia's international airports had been temporarily closed to all incoming travelers and that land border checkpoints would be placed under tightened restrictions starting from May 26, 2026. The post further alleged that all foreign nationals under the age of 40, regardless of gender, would be prohibited from entering Cambodia, even if they possess valid

visas or business documents.

The Ministry of Interior "categorically rejects these fabricated claims and considers such dissemination to be false and misleading information intended to distort the truth, create confusion among the international public, and damage Cambodia's reputation as a country that does not discriminate against any nationality in its international relations", the statement said.

"The Ministry would like to clarify that the Cambodian Immigration Police have no policy restricting or prohibiting legally documented foreign nationals under the age of 40 from entering

Cambodia," the statement added.

It said all foreign nationals who meet the legal entry requirements continue to be warmly welcomed to Cambodia, particularly foreign tourists, investors, businesspeople, traders, and other foreign workers.

The statement said all major international border checkpoints across Cambodia, including both air and land entry points, are operating normally and continue to process arrivals and departures in accordance with standard procedures.

"There have been no changes or restrictions affecting the travel of foreign nationals entering or leaving Cambodia," it said. – Xinhua

Japan approves US\$3 billion spending to help with energy bills

TOKYO – The Japanese government approved US\$3 billion in spending yesterday to help households pay their electricity and gas bills as utility costs rise due to the Middle East war.

Like many Asian economies, Japan relies heavily on imported fuel from the Middle East, and has moved to counter the impact of the Strait of Hormuz blockade on supplies and prices.

The decision to help cover bills for three months from July comes a day after Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi announced a plan to compile a US\$19 billion extra budget to help tackle soaring prices of everyday goods.

"We approved the spending of 513.5 billion yen at the Cabinet

meeting today" to support electricity and gas bills between July and September, Masanao Ozaki, deputy chief cabinet secretary, told reporters yesterday.

The subsidies come from reserves included in this fiscal year's budget.

Ozaki said electricity and gas bills are unlikely to rise significantly this month or next, but rising fuel import prices would be a factor after that.

"Even as the situation in the Middle East remains uncertain, we will do our utmost to ensure there is no disruption to people's daily lives or economic activity," he said.

On Monday, Takaichi said the government expected to be able to secure a stable supply of oil until next spring. – AFP

Starbucks Korea reveals series of mishaps leading to 'Tank Day' campaign

Kang Jin-kyu

SEOUL – Starbucks Korea revealed yesterday a series of mishaps leading to its heavily criticised “Tank Day” promotion, including the use of AI to develop the campaign, which it said lacked “social and historical sensitivity”.

The company has faced outrage in South Korea for promoting a line of coffee cups with a campaign that evoked a deadly crackdown on a 1980 pro-democracy uprising.

The furore led to a “sharp decline in sales”, and the dismissal of Son Jung-hyun, head of Starbucks Korea, according to the Shinsaege Group – which operates the coffee chain in South Korea under a licensing agreement.

In a packed news conference in Seoul yesterday, Shinsegae executive Jeon Sang-jin said “priority was given to the speed and immediacy” of the campaign and “not a single objection was raised during either the planning or approval stages”.

The campaign for “tank tumbler” cups was branded as “Tank Day” and launched on May 18, the anniversary of the Gwangju uprising.

Official figures record the crackdown on the revolt killed 165 civilians, with 65 listed as missing and 376 others later dying of injuries. Many believe the true toll was higher.

The Gwangju uprising forms the haunting backdrop to Nobel laureate Han Kang’s novel *Human Acts*.

The employees involved said they had “asked AI for suggestions and that the May 18 anniversary had never even crossed their minds”, he said of the findings from the internal probe.

It was unclear whether the team went ahead with the AI suggestions. Jeon said those involved “denied any intentional wrongdoing, saying they only realised the campaign could be problematic after the issue drew public backlash”.

The investigation also found that some of the seven officials who approved the campaign “had signed off on it, as a matter of routine,

without even opening the attached design file contained in the email”, Jeon said.

He added that “the legal team’s review process, which had been conducted in the past, was also skipped”.

“This incident went beyond the question of whether individual employees were at fault and exposed a lack of social and historical sensitivity within Starbucks Korea,” he said.

‘No excuses’

The internal investigation did not determine whether employees had intentionally planned to make light of the uprising.

Three of the five marketing team members also refused to hand over their mobile devices for forensic investigation, citing privacy concerns.

Police have launched a separate investigation which could see anyone found intentionally mocking the uprising dismissed from the company and legal action pursued against them, Jeon said.

Shinsegae chairman Chung



Shinsegae Chairman Chung Yong-jin bows in apology during a press conference in Seoul yesterday. The South Korean operator of the Starbucks coffee chain said yesterday it had been unable to determine whether a controversial marketing campaign accused of mocking a pro-democracy uprising had been intentional or not. – AFP

Yong-jin bowed in apology over the incident during the news briefing yesterday and asked for forgiveness from bereaved families of the victims

of the May 18 Democratic Uprising.

“I will make no excuses. I take full responsibility for this matter.”

He did not take questions from the media.

Broken mugs

Protests over the “Tank Promotion” have sparked a broader backlash from government bodies and public figures, including President Lee Jae Myung.

“I am outraged by this inhumane and disgraceful conduct, a profiteering stunt that denies the values of the South Korean community,” Lee wrote on X last week.

The defence ministry said it had suspended a partnership project with Starbucks that had provided beverages to soldiers.

The controversy has also spread to the entertainment industry, with some celebrities facing criticism for being seen holding Starbucks coffee.

Others have posted videos and photos on social media of themselves breaking Starbucks mugs. – AFP

Laos intensifies forest restoration nationwide

VIENTIANE – The Lao government has set a target to plant trees across 50,000 hectares nationwide in 2026 as part of efforts to restore degraded forests and strengthen environmental protection.

Speaking at a press conference on Monday ahead of the upcoming Laos’ National Arbor Day, Lao Minister of Agriculture and Environment Linkham Douangsavanh, said the government is intensifying reforestation and forest restoration programs to promote environmental sustainability, biodiversity conservation, and climate resilience.

To mark National Arbor Day 2026, around 4.5 million seedlings and saplings are expected to be planted across approximately 7,300 hectares nationwide, according to the ministry’s report yesterday.

Observed annually on June 1, Laos’ National Arbor Day aims to raise public awareness, particularly among young people, about the importance of forests and the sustainable management of natural resources.

To support this year’s

planting target, authorities plan to collect 121,000 kilograms of seeds and produce more than 25 million saplings for distribution across provinces and districts.

Linkham emphasized the importance of forests to Laos’ socio-economic development, highlighting their role in protecting watersheds, preserving biodiversity, reducing soil erosion, and mitigating the impacts of climate change.

Quoting former Lao president Kaysone Phomvihane, he described forests as the nation’s “green gold” and reaffirmed the government’s commitment to sustainable forest management.

Linkham called on all Lao people to value and protect the country’s forest resources by supporting tree planting and forest restoration efforts. He also urged government agencies, the private sector, communities, and families to take part in tree-planting activities based on local conditions.

The Lao government has consistently prioritized forestry. The Forestry Strategy to 2035 and Vision to 2050 set clear targets, including increasing forest cover to 70 percent of the country. – *Xinhua*



Residents show buckets of sewage-contaminated municipal tap water during a protest demanding restoration of clean and regular drinking water supply in Amritsar, India yesterday. – AFP

N Korea fires ballistic missile into Yellow Sea: Seoul

SEOUL – North Korea launched several projectiles including a ballistic missile into the Yellow Sea yesterday, South Korea’s military said, the latest in a flurry of tests this year.

Analysts have said that by conducting a series of missile tests in recent months, Pyongyang may be trying to take advantage of eroding international norms to cement its nuclear status.

The diplomatically isolated North has also repeatedly shunned efforts by the South Korean government to improve relations, calling Seoul its most “hostile” adversary.

South Korea’s Joint Chiefs of Staff said they had detected the launches of “several projectiles” at around 1 p.m. [local time] from the North Korean city of Chongju into the Yellow Sea, the body of water separating the Korean peninsula from China.

The launches included a short-range ballistic missile, Seoul’s military said.

The missiles flew about 80 kilometres, the military said, adding that it was analysing their specifications and flight range, and had “strengthened surveillance and vigilance in preparation for possible additional launches”.

Seoul’s foreign ministry spokesperson Park Il said at a regular news briefing that the government once again urges North Korea to respond to their peace policy and efforts to ease tensions.

“As we firmly support nuclear non-proliferation, we will continue our efforts to achieve substantive progress in resolving the North Korean nuclear issue through a step-by-step and pragmatic approach, while adhering to the goal of complete denuclearisation,” he said.

North Korea is subject to multiple United Nations sanctions banning its nuclear weapons development and use of ballistic missile technology, restrictions it has repeatedly flouted.

South Korea, along with its main security partner the United States and Japan, were “maintaining a state of full readiness” and closely sharing intelligence, Seoul’s military said.

Yesterday’s launches were North Korea’s first in 37 days and its eighth test this year.

In April, Pyongyang conducted a ballistic missile test to “verify the characteristics and power of a cluster bomb warhead”, its state media said at the time.

South Korea’s Yonhap news agency reported last week, citing unnamed government sources, that Chinese President Xi Jinping would likely visit North Korea this week.

China is North Korea’s main economic and political backer, though Pyongyang has drawn closer to Russia in recent years.

Neither Beijing nor Pyongyang have confirmed Xi’s visit. – AFP

2 arrested in Vietnam over shooting of Australians

HANOI – Two men were arrested in Vietnam over the murder of an Australian reportedly linked to organised crime, police said yesterday.

Lorenzo Lemalu was shot dead on Thursday outside a seafood restaurant in Ho Chi Minh City, police said in a statement, adding that another Australian was seriously wounded in the same incident.

Lemalu was suspected by Australian

police of being a senior member of a Sydney organised crime group, according to Australian media reports.

Vietnamese police arrested two suspects in the shooting, both of Samoan nationality.

They “were apprehended while hiding in the border area between Vietnam and Cambodia less than 72 hours after committing the crime”, according to the police statement.

Police said the two suspects confessed, admitting they carried out the shooting under the direction of an individual abroad.

Eight Vietnamese were arrested in the same case for helping in the escape and failing to report the crime.

Shootings are rare in communist Vietnam, where ownership of guns is illegal and people are encouraged to surrender weapons to authorities. – AFP

Sydney light show called off after malfunctioning drones crash into water

SYDNEY – A show featuring dozens of drones in dazzling displays above Sydney’s Darling Harbour has been called off, organisers said yesterday, after the flying gadgets malfunctioned and fell into the water.

Vivid Sydney takes place every year and features drones, fireworks and art shows across the Australian city’s central business district.

But a nightly drone show went

terribly wrong on Monday evening as the airborne objects glitched out and plunged into the harbour.

“Are they meant to do that?” an onlooker asks in one video shared by local news.

“I don’t think so,” someone replies. SkyMagic – the company behind the drone performance – blamed a change in radio frequency for the disaster that saw 89 of the devices

fall into Cockle Bay.

And organisers told AFP that “unforeseen technical difficulties” had forced them to call off performances planned for yesterday and today.

“We apologise for the disappointment and inconvenience caused to attendees.”

No one was hurt and no drones fell outside of a “designated exclusion zone”, organisers said. – AFP

Iran accuses US of breaking truce after new strikes

TEHRAN – Iran accused the United States of breaching their ceasefire yesterday and warned it was ready to retaliate after overnight US strikes targeting Iranian missile sites and mine-laying boats threatened a deal to end the war.

The Brent benchmark oil price jumped up by more than four percent after US Central Command announced the new wave of bombings, and China urged both sides to respect the truce and to resolve their dispute peacefully.

According to the maritime safety monitor UKMTO, a blast damaged a tanker on the waterline off Oman – although the crew and vessel were reportedly safe after what was described as an “external explosion”.

Iranian state media reported yesterday overnight blasts in the southern port city of Bandar Abbas, near the Strait of Hormuz, and the country’s Revolutionary Guards said its forces had downed a US drone entering its airspace and had fired at an F-35 fighter jet.

“The US terrorist army, continuing its illegal and unjustified actions since the ceasefire ... has, in the past 48 hours, committed a gross violation of the ceasefire in the Hormozgan region,” the Iranian foreign ministry said yesterday.

It added that Tehran “will not leave any evil unanswered and will not hesitate to defend the Iranian nation,” without elaborating.

In a statement marking the start of the Eid al-Adha holiday, Tehran’s supreme leader Ayatollah Mojtaba Khamenei declared that Washington was losing its influence in the Middle East and warned countries in the region to stop hosting bases from which the US could launch attacks.

The United States, he said in a written statement, “in addition to no longer having any safe haven in the region for aggression



Motorists drive their vehicles near a large political billboard along Enghelab Square in central Tehran yesterday. – AFP

and the establishment of military bases, is moving further and further away from its former position with each passing day”.

Tim Hawkins, a spokesman for US Central Command, said: “US forces conducted self-defence strikes in southern Iran today to protect our troops from threats posed by Iranian forces.”

‘We’ll see’

He gave few details of the attacks and said only that the targets included missile launch sites and boats trying to “emplace mines.”

Despite the strikes, Secretary of State Marco Rubio said yesterday that a deal remained within reach.

But he remained firm on the Strait of Hormuz, the key oil and gas shipping route which Iran is seeking to control.

“There were some talks going on in Qatar today, so we’ll see if we can make progress.

I think it’s a lot of talking back and forth going on about specific language in the initial document, so it’ll take a few days,” Rubio told reporters yesterday, during a visit to India.

He said the strait was “going to be open one way or the other,” adding: “What’s happening there is unlawful, it’s illegal, it’s unsustainable for the world, it’s unacceptable.”

Iran’s Tasnim news agency said Tehran’s negotiators are seeking the release of frozen assets, with half to be made available once an initial memorandum of understanding (MoU) is signed.

Iranian state broadcaster IRIB said a top delegation returned from a two-day visit to Qatar yesterday and Tehran said it was finalising a 14-point framework for a deal on ending the war, which began with US-Israeli airstrikes on February 28.

“Iran’s frozen assets are to be released

during the course of the negotiations, and this amount is estimated at US\$24 billion in accordance with the 14-point memorandum of understanding,” Tasnim said.

Internet partially restored

The new US strikes threaten the ceasefire that began on April 8 as the US and Iran struggle to reach an accord.

China, a major energy importer, expressed concern.

“We urge the parties concerned to fulfil their ceasefire commitments, resolve disputes through peaceful means... and promote the early restoration of peace,” foreign ministry spokeswoman Mao Ning told reporters.

Hopes of an accord took another blow when Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu vowed to “crush” Hezbollah in Lebanon on Monday.

Iran has demanded that any peace accord apply to the fighting in Lebanon as well.

An Israeli military official told AFP yesterday they were expanding their ground operations inside Lebanon, sending forces beyond their self-declared ‘Yellow Line’, already 10 kilometres deep into the country.

In better news for Iranians, internet connectivity saw a “partial restoration” after nearly three months of blackout, monitor NetBlocks said yesterday, calling it the “longest nationwide internet shutdown in modern history”.

Iran’s vice president later confirmed the “first step” had been taken towards restoring the internet for Iranians, adding that the demands of Iranians “will be fulfilled”.

“Since a few minutes ago I could open international websites using my home internet provider,” said a 22-year-old woman from the western city of Kermanshah who declined to be named, but she said she still needed VPNs for social media. – AFP

Pilgrims pray on Mount Arafat as hajj reaches peak

MOUNT ARAFAT, Saudi Arabia – Huge numbers of Muslims prayed on Mount Arafat yesterday at the climax of the hajj pilgrimage, defying searing temperatures under the desert sun as they fulfilled a lifelong dream.

From daybreak, thousands of white-robed worshippers recited Quranic verses on the 70-metre rocky hill near Mecca, where the Prophet Mohammed is believed to have delivered his last sermon.

Volunteers handed out bottles of water, parasols and food packages to the tens of thousands of pilgrims as they made their way toward Mount Arafat, as helicopters buzzed overhead regularly.

“It is an indescribable feeling,” said Ahmed Abu al-Ezz, a 35-year-old Egyptian engineer, as he approached Mount Arafat for the first time.

More than 1.5 million people have joined the hajj this year under the shadow of the Middle East war sparked by US-Israeli strikes on Iran.

During the fighting, Tehran retaliated with waves of drone and ballistic missile strikes, hitting major infrastructure and energy installations across the Gulf, including in Saudi Arabia.

More than 30,000 Iranians have made the journey, about a third of the 86,000 originally expected. Iran’s IRNA state news agency said the “wartime situation” explained the drop.

Despite the war, Saudi officials said over the weekend that more pilgrims had travelled from abroad this year than in 2025.

Blistering sun

The hajj, one of the five pillars of Islam, must be performed at least once by all Muslims with the means to do so.

With temperatures hitting 44 degrees in Mecca in recent days, Saudi authorities have urged pilgrims to drink plenty of water and protect themselves from the sun during the mostly outdoor rituals, which can take five days or more to complete.

Since men are prohibited from wearing hats during hajj, many carry umbrellas to try to keep the blistering sun at bay.

After more than 1,300 people died in 2024, when temperatures soared above 50 degrees Celsius, Saudi authorities introduced a range of heat-mitigation measures including more shaded areas and thousands of extra health workers.

More than 50,000 healthcare staff and 3,000 ambulances were deployed to help pilgrims in need, the Saudi health ministry said.

After Mount Arafat, pilgrims will spend the night in Muzdalifah, where they will collect pebbles for the symbolic “stoning of the devil” ritual in Mina, starting today.

The hajj is said to follow the path of the Prophet Mohammed’s final pilgrimage, about 1,400 years ago.

It has long been an important source of legitimacy for the Al Saud dynasty, whose monarch has the title “Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques”, in Mecca and Medina.

– Xinhua

Oil back at US\$100 as US strikes douse Iran war hopes

LONDON – Oil prices rebounded back to US\$100 yesterday while stock markets were mixed and the US dollar firmed after US military strikes on Iran deflated hopes of an imminent deal to reopen the Strait of Hormuz.

The United States and Iran have been working on an agreement to end the Middle East war and reopen the crucial waterway to tanker and cargo traffic since a fragile ceasefire on April 8.

But the fresh strikes had Tehran warning it was ready to retaliate after it accused Washington of breaching their truce with what US Central Command described as “self-defence strikes”.

Stock markets had rallied on Monday and crude futures dropped below US\$100 a barrel after reports that a deal might come within days.

That was before US forces said they had attacked missile sites in southern Iran and boats trying to lay mines.

Brent North Sea crude, the international benchmark, jumped almost 4.5 percent yesterday to edge back above US\$100 a barrel.

Oil price increases had been modest beforehand, “underlining the market’s strong belief that the Strait of Hormuz will reopen” said Arne Lohmann Rasmussen, a commodities analyst at Global Risk Management.

Equity markets were mixed with the Dow just off but the tech-heavy Nasdaq and the S&P 500 in the green two hours into trading.

In Europe, Frankfurt and Paris closed off

around one percent with London ending just 0.2 percent ahead as traders returned after a long holiday weekend in Britain.

British oil giant BP topped the losers’ chart, off more than four percent after it unexpectedly removed Albert Manifold as chairman only months into his tenure, citing “serious concerns” about governance standards, oversight and conduct at the company.

Kathleen Brooks, research director at XTB, warned that Manifold’s departure, coming barely three years after former CEO Bernard Looney was replaced over allegations of misconduct, “suggests a lack of stability at the firm, which is bad news for shareholders”.

AJ Bell investment director Russ Mould focused on the Iran situation as he noted that “continued doubts about the potential for a deal and an overnight pre-emptive US strike on Iran mean any euphoria is being kept in check,” his concerns echoed by Brooks.

The US strikes came as top Iranian negotiators arrived in Doha for another round of talks to end three months of conflict, and as the Israeli military stepped up hostilities with Iran-backed Hezbollah in southern Lebanon.

In Asia, Seoul’s stock market hit a new record high above 8,000 points as chipmakers, carmakers and shipbuilders continued to outperform.

In Europe, investors were quick to express disappointment at Ferrari’s unveiling of its first electric model, with shares in the Italian luxury carmaker skidding six percent.

– AFP

Ex-husband of German star in faked porn case faces new probe

BERLIN – A German actor accused of spreading AI-generated pornography of his TV star ex-wife is now under investigation for alleged domestic violence, prosecutors said yesterday, the latest twist in the headline-grabbing case.

Claims that Christian Ulmen spread fake explicit images of his former spouse Collien Fernandes sparked a national outcry and brought thousands of protesters demanding better protections for women to the streets.

Prosecutors in the city of Potsdam, outside Berlin, said they had now opened a probe into Ulmen on suspicion of bodily harm.

It relates to several incidents that allegedly took place in Spain in 2022 and 2023, said a spokeswoman for the prosecutors' office.

The couple – both actors and TV personalities – previously lived

on the Spanish holiday island of Mallorca.

The allegations concerning “digital violence” – the spreading of faked pornographic images – are still being examined, the spokeswoman added.

Ulmen has denied any wrongdoing.

Officials in Potsdam, where the couple used to live, have taken over the investigation from prosecutors in the northern city of Itzehoe.

Fernandes also filed a complaint in Mallorca, but a court there ruled last month that it could not investigate the case as it falls under German jurisdiction.

After the case hit the headlines and sparked protests in several German cities, the government pledged to swiftly introduce new measures to deal with AI-generated deepfakes targeting women. – AFP

Bosnian Serbs ask UN to scrap powers of int'l envoy

SARAJEVO, Bosnia and Herzegovina – Bosnia's Serb entity asked the UN yesterday to scrap or curtail the powers held by the international envoy tasked with overseeing the peace agreement that has held the country together since its 1990s war.

The previous envoy, Christian Schmidt, resigned earlier this month after five years in the posting, with reports that he'd left under pressure from the White House following years of tensions with Serb leaders.

Schmidt's replacement is expected to be appointed by an international panel next month, but Bosnian Serb lawmakers have already flagged that they would oppose any candidate if the powers of the position remained unchanged.

The declaration to the UN Security Council yesterday warned against retaining the broad powers of the Office of the High

Representative, including the authority to impose or amend laws and to dismiss elected officials.

It comes after years of escalating clashes with Republika Srpska leaders and Schmidt, which eventually led to strongman Milorad Dodik being ousted from the presidency for flouting the envoy's rulings.

Bosnia has remained split between Serb and Bosniak-Croat entities, held together by weak central institutions, since the end of its civil war in 1995.

Dodik, although now out of office, remains the de facto leader of the statelet and has increasingly sought to build relations with the US President Donald Trump's administration through intensive lobbying.

Dodik had faced US sanctions over his separatist policies since 2017, but the measures were lifted last year without explanation. – AFP

Mexico captures US-wanted nephew of drug lord 'El Chapo'

MEXICO CITY – Mexican security forces captured the US-wanted nephew of drug lord Joaquín “El Chapo” Guzmán in the border state of Sonora, authorities said yesterday.

Omar García Harfuch, secretary of security, said on X that the suspect is the “nephew of ‘El Chapo,’” the former leader of the Sinaloa cartel now serving a life sentence in US prison.

He said the nephew is also wanted by the United States.

Though authorities identified the suspect only as Isai “N,” Mexican media identified the suspect as Isai Martínez Zepeda.

The press contact for the secretary of security told AFP they didn't have further details on Mexican media reports that the suspect was captured in 2008 in possession of high calibre weapons. It was not immediately clear when he had gotten out of captivity.

El Chapo was extradited in 2017 after escaping twice from Mexican prisons. He is imprisoned at a maximum-security facility in Colorado on multiple charges including drug trafficking and money laundering.

Two of the sons of El Chapo, Ovidio and Joaquín, are also imprisoned in the United States on narco-trafficking charges. – AFP

'Curious' dolphin charms French town but experts concerned

SAINT-JEAN-DE-LUZ, France – A young bottlenose dolphin has taken up residence in the waters of the French beach town of Saint-Jean-de-Luz, delighting locals and tourists while raising concerns about the animal's safety.

The female cetacean has been lingering just off the southwestern town's central beach since mid-October.

On a recent morning, with the heat already intense and the beach crowded, a dolphin's fin was seen regularly rising above the water just a few metres from the shore, weaving among the swimmers.

Pascale Fossecave, an oceanographer and the city's deputy for environmental affairs who has been observing the animal, said she had apparently been expelled from her pod.

The dolphin has been seeking “social interaction”, readily approaching the shore and displaying a marked “curiosity

toward humans”, Fossecave said.

Measuring over two metres in length and weighing between 200 and 250 kilograms, the dolphin is believed to be between six and eight years old and has not yet reached maturity, she added.

“The reason why she came here escapes us,” Fossecave said.

“These animals do not get lost. They can communicate over distances of up to 20 kilometres,” she added. “We know she can hear the other animals.”

While the dolphin has thrilled locals, her presence has also raised concerns about her safety, as well as that of swimmers, as the summer season approaches and France endures scorching temperatures this week.

Authorities have called on beachgoers to behave responsibly, warning that inappropriate conduct could result in a 750-euro fine, said Bixente Luberriaga, head of beach safety.

“Unfortunately, we end up managing humans more than the dolphin, because it's human behaviour that causes problems,” said Fossecave.

“We see gatherings and attempts to surround her, which can create risky situations.”

Experts caution that frequent close contact with humans can be harmful to dolphins, increasing the risk of injury or death. Once they become fully accustomed to human presence, they may lose their natural wariness of people, boats, and jet skis, and most do not survive for long under such conditions.

Fossecave expressed hope that the dolphin would eventually return to open sea.

Across the border in Spain, a dolphin nicknamed Pakito settled in the waters off San Sebastián in the 1990s, where he lived for several years and became both a local celebrity and a symbol of the city.

– AFP

King Charles visits grey squirrel contraceptive project



A grey squirrel climbs on a fence in St James's Park in central London on May 14, 2021. King Charles III, waging war against the proliferation of grey squirrels, visited a government centre yesterday, for a briefing on the administration of oral contraceptives to these rodents that threaten the national species, which is reddish-brown in colour. – AFP

LONDON – King Charles III yesterday met conservationists seeking to reduce Britain's booming population of non-native grey squirrels humanely by feeding them oral contraceptives.

Grey squirrels, introduced from the United States in the 19th century, are considered an invasive species. They are now far more common than native red squirrels, which are endangered in Britain.

The larger grey animals outcompete the reds for food and living space and also carry a virus to which they are immune but that is deadly to reds.

The king met scientists and researchers from The Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA) in Yorkshire in northern England,

who are working on a new oral contraceptive project aimed at slowing grey squirrels' population growth.

The king “has long supported efforts to restore the red squirrel population,” the royal family said on X.

Charles told *Country Life* magazine in 2018 that he allowed red squirrels to run around his house on the Balmoral estate in Scotland.

The monarch is patron of The Red Squirrel Survival Trust and *The Times* reported in April that he had given the national charity a “very generous” donation.

“You've been championing our red squirrels for decades now, which is why we've been so keen to show you the work we've been

doing here,” Julie Lane, head of the National Wildlife Management Centre at APHA, told Charles.

“Without you, this work would not be happening at all.”

Plans for the squirrel contraception project were first announced in 2022 and the first tests of contraceptives have just begun.

The project involves hiding contraceptives in tasty bait in special feeders in woodland, designed so only grey squirrels can access them.

According to government estimates, the grey squirrel population has grown to around 2.7 million in Great Britain while there are only between 120,000 and 160,000 red squirrels, most of them in Scotland. – AFP

Cuba receives shipment of rice donated by China

HAVANA – A shipment of 15,000 tonnes of rice donated by the Chinese government to Cuba has arrived at the port of Havana, the island's president said on Sunday.

The shipment is the first batch of a promised 60,000 tonnes that China says it will donate to Cuba, which is grappling with dire shortages.

“That noble gesture of solidarity will reach millions of consumers throughout all the provinces and the special municipality of Isla de la Juventud, in addition to our health and education institutions,”

President Miguel Díaz-Canel wrote on X.

The communist Caribbean country has been under a US trade embargo since 1962, which is often blamed for shortages of food and medicine. In January, Cuba stopped receiving oil from its ally Venezuela, when the United States overthrew Venezuelan leader Nicolás Maduro and began directing energy policy. Meanwhile, the US has threatened sanctions on anyone selling oil to the country.

The effective energy blockade has significantly worsened blackouts

that have long plagued the country.

“The heartfelt ties of friendship and cooperation that unite us are strengthened in crucial moments,” Díaz-Canel wrote on X about the rice shipment.

Chinese ambassador Hua Xin said on Cuban television that the 60,000 tonnes of rice represent, “the largest food aid” from China to Cuba “in recent years.”

Earlier last week, China denounced a US decision to indict former Cuban president Raúl Castro over the gunning down of planes in 1996.

– AFP

Cuba hits back at EU top diplomat's comments over crisis

HAVANA – Cuba on Monday criticized EU top diplomat Kaja Kallas for a lack of “objectivity” in her comments about the economic and energy crises on the US-blockaded island.

Kallas, the European Union's foreign policy chief, told reporters in Mexico last Thursday that Cuba's current hardship had followed “decades of mismanagement and political repression.”

“Cuban people deserve opportunity and freedom, and no more control and isolation,” she said.

Washington imposed an energy blockade on Cuba in January as part of its bid to exert maximum pressure on the communist-run island.

The move has worsened living conditions for Cubans, with frequent blackouts and supply shortages becoming a daily reality.

US President Donald Trump has also openly mused about taking over the island.

Cuban Foreign Minister Bruno Rodríguez said Kallas's comment “reveals a marked double standard.”

“Failing to acknowledge that the illegal, cruel and unjust collective

punishment the US government is imposing on the Cuban people – with an unprecedented tightening of the blockade, the oil embargo and the military threat – are the main causes of the difficult situation Cubans are facing today undermines objectivity,” he said on X.

Government policy over the last decade had “broad popular consensus” and was part of “internal affairs,” he added.

Trump on May 1 issued an executive order that imposed a further wave of sanctions on Cuba and threatened secondary sanctions on the operations of foreign companies there, including several European companies.

Rodríguez asked why Kallas had not voiced “concern or support” for these affected businesses and individuals.

In 2017, the EU and Cuba entered an agreement calling for political dialogue and cooperation.

Earlier this month, Washington ramped up tensions by indicting former Cuban president Raúl Castro in a case dating back to 1996, which Havana warns could serve as a pretext to justify US military intervention on the island.

– AFP

Bolivian leader vows to slash own salary by 50 pct in gesture to protesters



Indigenous demonstrators march during a rally against Bolivia's centrist President Rodrigo Paz in La Paz on Monday. Paz's presidency has been rocked by entrenched protests centred on Bolivia's administrative capital, La Paz, which have seen protestors block roads, leading to food, fuel and medicine shortages.

– AFP

LA PAZ – Bolivian President Rodrigo Paz said on Monday he would slash his salary and that of his ministers by 50 percent to try to end weeks of anti-government protests.

The centre-right leader is struggling to end a popular revolt just six months into his presidency.

The demonstrations began in early May over the government's handling of the worst economic crisis in four decades but have since snowballed into calls for the US-backed Paz to resign.

Supplies to the administrative capital La Paz have for weeks been cut off by road blockades, causing acute shortages of food, fuel and medicine.

“This president has made the decision, as part of his efforts and commitment to the country, to reduce his salary by 50 percent,”

Paz announced in the southeastern city of Sucre.

The president's monthly salary is currently set at around 24,000 bolivianos (US\$3,500).

It was unclear whether the gesture would appease the protesters.

Paz's previous attempts at outreach, including his firing of an unpopular labour minister and promises to give trade unions and indigenous groups more of a say in government policy, didn't seem to satisfy them.

On Saturday, police attempting to clear roads leading to La Paz clashed for hours with demonstrators.

In an interview with Argentine broadcaster TN on Saturday, Paz said he would make “all possible efforts” to ensure dialogue with protesters.

“But everything has a limit,” he cautioned, refusing to rule out imposing a state of emergency if the standoff continued.

Paz, an economist by profession, comes from a family with a long history in politics.

His election marked an end to two decades of socialism launched in the mid-2000s by Evo Morales, Bolivia's first indigenous leader.

Since coming to power, 58-year-old Paz has attempted to tackle the root cause of the economic crisis – a shortage of currency caused by generous fuel subsidies – but has failed to stabilise fuel supplies or end surging inflation.

Morales, who made a failed comeback bid last year despite being wanted by police on charges of trafficking a minor, on Sunday called for Paz to resign and hold new elections.

– AFP

Mango founder's son says accusation he killed his father 'unfounded'

BARCELONA – Jonathan Andic, son of the founder of the Mango clothing empire, who has been arrested in Spain as part of an investigation into his father's 2024 death, has denied the accusation of murder.

Andic called the allegation “serious, unjust and unfounded”, in an open letter to staff published yesterday, announcing that he will step down as vice president of the fashion giant's board to focus on his legal defence.

“A public narrative has been created based on a view that is biased, distorted and taken out of context, which has created a perception of guilt that has nothing to do with reality,” Andic, 45, said in the letter, his first public comment on the case.

“I make this decision sadly, but convinced that it is what's best for the company and for me... I need to concentrate all my energy on demonstrating my innocence.”

Andic was hiking with his 71-year-old billionaire father, Isak Andic, in the Montserrat mountains near Barcelona when the Mango founder plunged to his death on December 14, 2024.

Investigators initially treated the death as an accident, but prosecutors reopened the investigation in October 2025,

zeroing in on Jonathan Andic.

He was arrested a week ago, then released after posting bail of one million euros (US\$1.2 million).

‘Bad relationship’

The presiding judge said in her bail decision that the allegedly “bad relationship” between father and son, driven by Jonathan Andic's “obsession... with money”, was part of the evidence presented by investigators.

In his letter, Andic said the “deeply painful” death of his father had been made worse by having to deal with “the most serious, unjust and unfounded accusation a person can face”.

“I have always deeply loved my family, and especially my father,” he said.

“We also had difficult and complicated moments, which we overcame with great effort, generosity and help.”

Born in Istanbul, Isak Andic moved with his family to Barcelona from Turkey as a teenager in the late 1960s.

He opened his first Mango shop in 1984 with the help of his older brother Nahman, and quickly built the company into one of the world's leading fashion groups.

– AFP

Miserly Arsenal face PSG firepower in Champions League style clash

Rik Sharma



BARCELONA – Arsenal's immovable object meets the unstoppable force of Paris Saint-Germain in Saturday's Champions League final offering a pronounced clash of styles.

Holder PSG's flowing attack is arguably the continent's most exhilarating, while Mikel Arteta's Arsenal are wedded to a pragmatic approach which ended their 22-year wait to win the Premier League.

The Gunners' football this season has not won over many neutrals but after years of nearlys and almosts, Arteta's strategy has paid dividends.

Arsenal's consistency beat out Pep Guardiola's Manchester City to be crowned champions of England and led them back to Europe's summit two decades after reaching the 2006 final.

In the Champions League Arsenal have conceded only six goals in 14 matches and are unbeaten - by contrast PSG let in 22 through the tournament.

"Without the ball, they are the best team in the world," said PSG coach Luis Enrique of the north London side.

Arteta's side depends on structure and discipline, seeking to control opponents by stopping them reaching dangerous areas, limiting their shots in the box - no Premier League team has conceded fewer.

The Gunners aggressively press opponents high, seeking to dominate territory, and hate giving the ball away themselves, avoiding risk in their passing.

They possess imposing, physical players, from impressive centre-back pairing Gabriel and William Saliba, through the spine of the team, in Declan Rice and imposing strikers Viktor Gyokeres and Kai Havertz.

That aids their dead ball mastery, under the cunning eye of set piece coach Nicolas Jover, whom they signed from Manchester City in 2021.

Swiss newspaper *Blick* pondered whether Jover was "ruining football", with the Frenchman reportedly paid a bonus per goal scored via a set piece.

"We want to be the best and the most dominant team in every aspect of the game," said Arteta, imploring his team to score even more from dead balls.

With 27 Premier League goals scored this season from dead ball situations, 38 percent of their total, some have labelled Arsenal 'Set Piece FC'.

"Every time they get a corner, my head is in my hands," former Liverpool defender Jamie Carragher told Sky Sports.

"I've never seen anything like this before in football."

After three consecutive second place finishes, Arsenal recognise winning ugly is better than not winning at all.

"I don't know how you celebrate one goal different to another - maybe for YouTube one

is nicer than another," said Arteta unperturbed by criticism.

Arsenal won seven games 1-0 this season in the Premier League, keeping 19 clean sheets.

If teams do penetrate the backline, they must beat David Raya, enjoying a superb season in goal.

The Spaniard has matched the record of nine clean sheets in the Champions League. A 10th could secure the trophy.

Their struggles from open play, particularly when star winger Bukayo Saka was out injured, frustrated even their own supporters at times.

Yet as tens of thousands turned up to celebrate the Premier League title, nobody was complaining.

Those joyous scenes outside the Emirates stadium, with some players joining the fans until past five in the morning, allow Arsenal to double down on their approach, particularly against a team as lethal as PSG.

Thriving in chaos

While Arsenal have sometimes lacked star power in attack, opponents PSG boast several electric forwards who thrive in organised chaos and will back themselves to break down the competition's toughest defence.

Coach Luis Enrique may have weeded his team of superstars but Ousmane Dembele, Khvicha Kvaratskhelia and Desire Doue are some of the most dynamic attackers on the planet.

The French champions demolish teams in transition with searing pace, helping top scorers PSG net 44 goals in the Champions League, one short of the all-time record of 45.

PSG showed their attacking prowess in the first leg of their semi-final tussle with Bayern Munich, edging the German giants 5-4 in an all-timer. Arsenal seek to reduce risk, PSG encourage it.

"When we can keep the ball and create space, it makes the match easier," said Luis Enrique after his team put five past Chelsea in the last 16 first leg.

"We showed that we are a real team, unpredictable."

They racked up eight goals against the Blues on aggregate, plus six against Bayern Munich and four against Liverpool in the other knockout games.

If the final does not follow the script, it will be because Luis Enrique tears it up.

In the second leg against Bayern he shifted strategy and denied Vincent Kompany the end-to-end contest he expected in a 1-1 draw.

"We can't always win with magic or extraordinary play," said Doue.

However, for the most part PSG, who put five goals past Inter Milan in last season's final, have done just that.

Whichever style emerges triumphant will determine who leaves Budapest with the European crown. – AFP

Iran says FIFA promised players will get World Cup visas: local media



TEHRAN – Iran's sports minister said FIFA has promised the country's men's football team will receive visas to play in the United States at the World Cup this summer despite the ongoing Middle East war, local media reported on Monday.

Iran's participation at the global spectacle has been in question for months because it is being co-hosted by the US, which along with Israel began bombing Iran on February 28, sparking a wider regional war.

"The FIFA president promised us that all our players would receive visas. There is no reason why our players should not receive visas," said minister Ahmad Donyamali, quoted by local news agency ISNA.

"I hope that all the conditions

will be met so that the national team can participate in the tournament in a calm and orderly manner."

The Iranian squad will now be based in Tijuana on the Mexican border with the United States during the tournament, according to the Islamic republic's football federation.

Mexican President Claudia Sheinbaum on Monday said the country will allow Iran to be based there to avoid US visa restrictions.

Sports minister Donyamali said the World Cup hosts had an obligation to provide visas to all participating countries, including for players and backroom staff.

"In Mexico, the Iranian national team is expected to obtain multiple-entry visas issued by the United States," he said.

At the global football body's

Congress in Vancouver last month, president Gianni Infantino said Iran would play their World Cup games in the US as scheduled.

The Iran team are currently preparing in Antalya, southern Turkey, and some of the squad went to the US embassy in Ankara last Thursday to submit visa applications for the World Cup.

The tournament, jointly hosted by the US, Mexico and Canada, kicks off on June 11.

Iran have been drawn in Group G and will play their first two matches in Los Angeles.

They open their campaign against New Zealand on June 15 and will then face Belgium on June 21 before rounding off their group games against Egypt in Seattle on June 26. – AFP



AC Milan's Italian coach Massimiliano Allegri reacts during the Italian Serie A match against Cagliari at the San Siro Stadium in Milan on Sunday. AC Milan announced on Monday they had sacked coach Allegri and a host of senior club management after missing out on next season's Champions League. The 19-time Serie A winners lost 2-1 at home to Cagliari on Sunday in the final game of the season denying them a return to European football's leading competition. Allegri, 58, was appointed last May, returning to the northern club 11 years following his first tenure ended, after they also failed to qualify for the Champions League. – AFP

Glasner seeks 'perfect ending' to Palace mini golden age with European glory

Daniel Wighton



LEIPZIG, Germany – Crystal Palace manager Oliver Glasner wants to secure a "perfect ending" to his successful two-year reign with victory over Rayo Vallecano in the Europa Conference League final in Leipzig, Germany today.

The Austrian will be in the Palace dugout for the last time having overseen an era of unprecedented success at Selhurst Park since arriving in 2024.

He took the club to a first trophy in their 120-year history by winning the FA Cup in his first full campaign.

After beating Liverpool in the Community Shield to start this season, Glasner can sign off by helping the south London club to a maiden European title.

Victory will also take Palace to next season's Europa League, a year after their right to take part in the competition by winning the FA Cup was stripped by UEFA due to multi-club ownership rules.

'Perfect ending'

The 51-year-old announced in January he would leave when his contract expired at the end of the campaign in what seemed to be a protest against the club's transfer policy.

The departure followed a

similar pattern in Glasner's career which played out at Bundesliga clubs Wolfsburg and Eintracht Frankfurt.

Sudden success followed by fallout with club bosses and a swift exit.

Despite a run of 12 games without a win until February, Palace resisted the urge to sack Glasner.

Even as supporter sentiment turned on the Austrian - which was not helped by him urging fans to "stay humble. Never forget where you're coming from" - Palace chairman Steve Parish kept the faith.

Glasner has rewarded Parish and Palace by taking the club to a first European final.

Having guided Frankfurt to a Europa League crown in 2022 and a German Cup final a year later, Glasner seems particularly adept in knockout football.

Speaking with UEFA on Monday, Glasner said victory over Rayo would give his time at Palace a storybook ending.

"I would always feel I had failed if the team had dropped off (after his announcement), because I told them 'you don't need to play for a manager'..."

"It would be a perfect ending. When you watch a movie, when you read a book, you always hope that there is a happy ending.

"To end this more than two-year journey with another trophy, with the first European trophy in Crystal Palace's history, that would be incredible."

Rayo 'deserve' their spot

Rayo finished the La Liga season a point behind Getafe, who pipped them to Europa Conference qualification. But Rayo can go one better than their Madrid neighbours by beating Palace, to reach the Europa League for just a second time.

Also playing a European final for the first time, Rayo moved past the better resourced Strasbourg - part of the multi-club BlueCo group alongside Chelsea - to book their ticket to Leipzig.

While underdogs Rayo beat Strasbourg in both legs, Palace fell 2-1 to the Ligue 1 side in the group stages.

"All four teams who play the semi-finals deserve to play the final because they have done so well in the competition, and Vallecano are the same," Glasner said.

"(Rayo are) very quick, playing in transition, with quick wingers, always able to score goals.

"They don't concede many," he added.

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

– AFP/MPD

DeChambeau 'didn't see it coming' when Saudis pulled LIV funding



Bryson DeChambeau of the United States catches a club on the tenth hole during a practice round prior to the PGA Championship at Aronimink Golf Club on May 11 in Newtown, Pennsylvania.

– AFP

Golf

SEOUL – Bryson DeChambeau admitted yesterday he had been caught unawares when LIV Golf's Saudi backers pulled their funding of the breakaway circuit, saying "we didn't really see that coming".

Saudi Arabia's Public Investment Fund (PIF) announced this month that it would cease bankrolling LIV after the 2026 season.

PIF had reportedly ploughed more than US\$5 billion dollars into the breakaway circuit since it was founded in 2021.

Two-time major champion DeChambeau remains one of LIV's biggest drawcards along with Jon Rahm, with both teeing up in this week's LIV Korea.

"We were surprised that they pulled out as quickly as they did," DeChambeau told reporters at Asiad Country Club in Busan.

"We didn't really see that coming. But that's OK. One door closes, another opens. I think that's the way a lot of us are looking at it."

PIF's abrupt withdrawal, announced on May 1, plunged LIV into uncertainty, with executives scrambling to create a new business plan to attract investors and sponsors.

CEO Scott O'Neil is reportedly seeking US\$250 million to keep the league afloat.

"I think we all have optimism that there is a business plan that makes sense for team golf," DeChambeau said.

"I'm very optimistic with the business plan of team golf compared to other models, in my opinion," he said.

"We'll see if investors like it or not. I'm giving all I can to make it happen, and if it doesn't, it doesn't happen."

There have also been reports that LIV was laying the groundwork for potential bankruptcy in the United States.

"In the background, yeah, we're trying to help where we can, but ultimately it's up to executives and everybody banding together," DeChambeau said.

"If we all band together, there's an opportunity here.

"If not, it's going to be a different day for all of us." – AFP

Sabalenka thrives in French Open heat

Neil Fulton

PARIS – Aryna Sabalenka began her French Open campaign with a comfortable win yesterday.

The Belarusian top seed hurried through a 6-4, 6-2 win against Spanish world number 50 Jessica Bouzas Maneiro as temperatures continued to soar through the first week of the tournament.

The only real blip for Sabalenka as she returned to winning ways on clay after a surprise early exit from the Italian Open was her failure to serve out the match on Court Philippe Chatrier.

But the four-time major winner broke in the next game to book her spot in the second round after just 75 minutes on court.

"I'm super happy to be through. I feel like it was a tricky first-round opponent," Sabalenka said.

"I'd say that for me always not easy, the first rounds. And then, as I get further in the tournament, as I get more comfortable, my level becomes better."

Sabalenka will face France's Elsa Jacquemot in the round of 64.

Following a wet and cold

Italian Open earlier in May and similar conditions during the practice week at Roland Garros, the big-hitting 28-year-old said the scorching conditions played somewhat in her favour.

"I'd say that it was a bit warm," she joked.

"Especially compared to the first days when I first got here, it was like 14C, like, freezing.

"Now it's boiling hot and balls are flying, everything is much faster. But physically I feel strong, so I feel like it can benefit me."

Gauff 'glad'

Women's defending champion Coco Gauff made short work of fellow American Taylor Townsend, kicking off her tournament with a clinical 6-4, 6-0 performance.

The fourth seed joked the heat was "nothing" as she grew up in Florida, but added: "Honestly I felt more bad for the fans. Dang you're watching in the heat and I hoped no one passed out. So I'm glad I finished quickly."

Gauff will next meet Egyptian qualifier Mayar Sherif.

Russian sixth seed Daniil

Medvedev went down in five sets to Australian wildcard Adam Walton.

It was the seventh time in 10 French Open appearances that the former world number one has fallen in the first round.

"I know that I am in good shape and I can play well in Roland Garros. I can," Medvedev said.

"It's just tougher for me, and first rounds are usually tougher for me, but I will always come here."

Rising US star Iva Jovic, 18, further confirmed her potential as she strolled past [the Philippines] Alexandra Eala 6-4, 6-2 to book a clash with compatriot and former world number eight Emma Navarro, who defeated Indonesian Janice Tjen in straight sets.

Stefanos Tsitsipas, the 2021 runner-up, moved past the round of 128 as his French opponent Alexandre Muller retired injured when trailing 6-2, 3-0.

French 17-year-old Moise Kouame won his first match at his home major, an impressive 7-6 (7/4), 6-2, 6-1 victory over 2014 US Open winner Marin Cilic of Croatia.

– AFP

Vingegaard climbs to his 4th stage win to tighten grip on Giro

Cycling

CARI, Switzerland – Jonas Vingegaard soloed to victory in the 16th stage of the Giro d'Italia yesterday in the Swiss resort of Cari to tighten his grip on the overall race lead.

The Dane launched his attack 6.5km from the finish line at the end of 113km stage raced entirely within Switzerland to claim his fourth win in as many summit finishes.

Vingegaard finished more than a minute ahead of Austria's Felix Gall and Australia's Jay Hindley to consolidate his pink jersey with a lead of more than four minutes with five stages left until the final stage in Rome on Sunday.

"My teammates and I were very motivated, we wanted to try to win while wearing the pink jersey," said Vingegaard.

"We decided to go for it at the first opportunity because if it hadn't worked out we would still have had another chance later on."

The 29-year-old Visma Lease a Bike rider is bidding to become just the eighth man to complete the clean sweep of the three Grand Tours.

Having won the Tour de France in 2022 and 2023, and the Vuelta a Espana last year, he is now well-placed in the Giro's pink jersey.

Yesterday, Vingegaard secured his tenth win of the season, more than any other rider in the peloton including Slovenian Tadej Pogacar, who has nine.

Before the Giro, the stage race specialist had won the Paris-Nice and the Tour of Catalonia, each time with two stage wins.

And he has continued his momentum in the Italian race deprived of big stars including Pogacar, who won six stages on his way to overall victory in the 2024 edition, before also triumphing in

the Tour de France two months later.

"I'm taking it day by day. There are still four stages left and we'll see what we can do between now and the end of the race," added Vingegaard.

Testy in the heat

Vingegaard ensured his team worked hard to limit the breakaway riders to no more than two minutes.

That group included Italian Giulio Ciccone, chasing mountain points, and unfortunately for Paul Magnier, Jhonatan Narvaez, eyeing the points jersey.

The Ecuadorian took full advantage at the intermediate sprint to close the gap to just two points on Frenchman Magnier in the points classification.

Meanwhile the antics of Narvaez and Ciccone, so nervous that he snapped at one of his assistants for giving him the wrong water bottle, livened proceedings under the blazing sun.

Riders began to drop off immediately on the final climb to Cari including Giulio Pellizzari, Afonso Eulalio and Ben O'Connor, followed then by Mathys Rondel and Michael Storer.

Only six riders remained when Vingegaard's right-hand man Davide Piganzoli pulled aside to let his team leader go.

Gall was the only one to react before waiting for the other podium contenders to try to limit the damage together. But Vingegaard could not be caught.

"Once again he showed who's the boss, he's just doing his thing," said Gall, who finished second for the fourth time behind Vingegaard.

Today's 17th stage is a hilly 202km ride from Cassoano d'Adda north-east of Milan to Andalo in the Dolomites.

– AFP



France's Gael Monfils smashes the ball to win the fourth set during his men's singles match against France's Hugo Gaston at the French Open tennis tournament on Court Philippe-Chatrier at the Roland-Garros Complex in Paris on Monday.

Monfils bade adieu to Roland Garros on Monday as the Frenchman fell just short of pulling off a stunning comeback to lose in five sets to compatriot Gaston.

The 39-year-old former world number six has been a hugely entertaining and popular character with both fans and his fellow pros alike for the last two decades.

But like his longtime friend and rival Stan Wawrinka, who also lost in Paris earlier Monday, he too shall hang up his racquet at the end of the current season.

A first-round 6-2, 6-3, 3-6, 2-6, 6-0 loss to 25-year-old Gaston ended Monfils' emotional farewell to his home Grand Slam.

"I love you so much," Monfils told Court Philippe Chatrier, before thanking his family, entourage and wife Elina Svitolina.

"Every year I come to play at Roland Garros I have goosebumps... I'm going to miss you all, thank you from the bottom of my heart."

– AFP

Sonny Rollins, last jazz 'colossus,' dies at 95

Shaun Tandon

NEW YORK — Sonny Rollins, the "Saxophone Colossus" whose hard-charging yet flowingly meditative works made him the last in a golden era of jazz greats, died on Monday. He was 95.

"It is with deep sorrow and profound love that we announce the passing of Sonny Rollins," a post to his social media page said, adding that he "died this afternoon at his home in Woodstock, NY."

A constantly evolving creative force, Rollins found in jazz a means of social and spiritual commentary, with his tenor sax expressing the hopes of African Americans in the civil rights movement, the grief of the United States after the September 11 attacks, and the mystical path he found on extended retreats in India and Japan.

The Harlem-born Rollins — recognisable in his later years for a shock of white hair — was one of a handful of saxophone players who defined the instrument, a pantheon that includes Charlie Parker, Coleman Hawkins and John Coltrane, with whom he had an affectionate but complicated relationship.

But unlike so many artists from jazz's defining post-World War II period, Rollins lived a long life, remastering his work well into his 80s even as respiratory issues limited his performances.

In an interview with AFP, Rollins credited his longevity to yoga — which helped him to concentrate and stay off drugs and alcohol — but mostly to his creative thirst.

"I'm still alive because I'm still learning," Rollins said in the 2016 interview.

Among major saxophonists, Rollins' style was among the most biting — a heavy delivery that often struck rather than soothed the listener — yet he paradoxically was intricate and holistic about composing, describing music as a path to find universal truths.

He was dubbed the "Saxophone Colossus" after the title of his seminal 1956 album, in which he brought a new power to the instrument as he came to define hard bop* — a jazz that was intense and stripped back the genre's structural confines.

The most enduring image of Rollins comes from the early 1960s when, needing a break from his rising fame, he would practise on the Williamsburg Bridge that connects Brooklyn and Manhattan's bustling Lower East Side, playing for nearly every waking hour over three years, even in the cold.

The very public sabbatical produced one of his best-known albums, 1962's "The Bridge," and has led to proposals to rename the Williamsburg Bridge in Rollins' honour.

Rollins also crossed over to a non-jazz audience with occasional forays into rock,



US jazz tenor saxophonist Sonny Rollins performs on the stage of Nice Jazz Fest on July 25, 2009 in Nice, southeastern France. — AFP

most notably his appearances on The Rolling Stones' 1981 album "Tattoo You."

Childhood of discovery

Born to parents who moved to New York from the US Virgin Islands, Rollins incorporated some of the inflections of his heritage into his jazz.

"St. Thomas," which appeared on "Saxophone Colossus" and became his best-known song, incorporated Caribbean calypso that he had heard as a child.

Raised in Harlem, the epicentre of African American culture, Rollins recalled that his early musical education came from the Apollo Theatre where he would watch its celebrated amateur nights.

By his 20s, Rollins had already managed to play with jazz legends including Parker, Miles Davis and especially Thelonious Monk.

The young Rollins would hang out at Monk's apartment and played on the pianist's classic 1957 album "Brilliant Corners."

Coltrane's relationship with Rollins has often been described as one of rivalry. Both

explored new directions in jazz and became fascinated with Indian spirituality.

Whereas Coltrane brought grace and a gentle texture, Rollins arguably delivered a firmer sense of music's ebbs and flows, crafting jazz in the manner of a classical composer.

Coltrane, who died of cancer in 1967, is only known to have recorded once with his contemporary, on the title track of Rollins' 1956 album "Tenor Madness."

Rollins, reflecting on his nearly seven-decade career in the 2016 interview with AFP, said he had perhaps been too brash with the legends around him.

"I look back on my relationship with Coltrane, and my relationship with Monk — a lot of stupid things I did with those people that I would not have done if I was more mature," said Rollins, who called Coltrane "a beautiful, beautiful human being."

Rollins' manager and wife of nearly 40 years, Lucille, died in 2004.

Sax 'from subconscious'

Rollins followed "Saxophone Colossus" with 1957's "Way Out West," in which he introduced his technique of "strolling" — saxophone solos that would flow over drum and bass, without the piano chords that traditionally kept jazz ensembles in key.

"When I play and I improvise, I don't think, because music comes from the subconscious, someplace else," Rollins told news site The Root.

"I'm just a human, so when I play my horn, I get into a state where the music plays me. I'm just standing up there and fingering my horn and blowing," he said.

Rollins embraced yoga, finding that the breathing techniques and especially the concentration gave him a new fluency with his instrument.

In a sequel to his Williamsburg Bridge years, Rollins took a second sabbatical starting in 1966, learning Zen meditation in Japan before spending several years in an ashram in India, where he arrived with just a bag and his saxophone.

Under the guidance of Swami Chinmayananda on the outskirts of Mumbai, Rollins devoted his days to reading and discussing sacred Vedic texts. He rarely performed, although he later brought his spiritual quest into his music in compositions such as "Patanjali," named for the great yoga master.

Jazz artists "were trying to find a way to express life through our improvisations. The music has got to mean something," Rollins later told National Public Radio.

Bold civil rights statement

Rollins found a new purpose to music with

"Freedom Suite," his 1958 work that spoke to the rising struggle of African Americans for equal rights.

If musically the 20-minute instrumental piece reflected Rollins' artistic freedom in the abstract, he made no secret of its political bent, penning a message in the liner notes that was strikingly bold for an artist of the era.

"America is deeply rooted in Negro culture: its colloquialisms; its humour; its music. How ironic that the Negro, who more than any other people can claim America's culture as his own, is being persecuted and repressed; that the Negro, who has exemplified the humanities in his very existence, is being rewarded with inhumanity," he wrote.

"Freedom Suite," led by Rollins' confident sax and also notable for Max Roach's drumming, proved controversial enough that a reissue chose another title for the album. Rollins recalled that he was confronted about the piece when he performed in the US South.

Rollins similarly championed black pride on "Airegin," another of his best-known pieces which is rigorously quick-paced — and whose title is an anagram for Nigeria.

Rollins found another purpose to his art after the September 11, 2001 attacks, when he was living just six blocks from the doomed World Trade Center. He had to walk down 40 flights of stairs to evacuate his building and felt ill from the fumes.

Nonetheless, Rollins played four days later in Boston — driving there as flights were grounded — for a concert that became a live album of remembrance to victims of the attack.

Rollins recalled feeling a sort of serenity as he returned to New York, finding a new empathy in the metropolis.

But Rollins, who later moved to a farm in upstate New York where he had space to meditate, would grow pessimistic at humanity's prospects.

Rollins said that, in the 1960s, he and other artists felt that music could bring peace to the world.

"But then I learned, and I lived a little longer," he told AFP.

"I realised that this world will never change. This world is meant to be a place of war, killing, everything — sickness, illness, death. That's this world." — AFP

*Bop — more formally known as bebop — is a style of jazz that developed in the early-to-mid 1940s in the United States. It marked a massive, revolutionary shift in music history, effectively transforming jazz from popular, danceable big-band entertainment into a highly sophisticated, challenging art form meant for listening. If swing music (the dominant jazz style before bop) was a well-oiled machine designed to keep people moving on the dance floor, bebop was a high-speed musical laboratory. — Gemini

'Fjord' by Romania's Cristian Mungiu wins Cannes best film prize

CANNES — "Fjord", a thought-provoking drama about a Christian family in Norway from Romanian director Cristian Mungiu, won the best film prize at the Cannes Film Festival on Saturday at a star-packed closing ceremony.

Winning his second Palme d'Or at the festival, Mungiu explores anxieties and left-wing prejudices in the movie which stars Norway's Renate Reinsve ("Sentimental Value") and Sebastian Stan who played Donald Trump in "The Apprentice".

"This is a message about tolerance, inclusion, and empathy.

These are wonderful values that we all cherish, but we need to put them into practice more often," Mungiu told the audience.

The movie is based on true events and is notable for how it questions the supposedly progressive values of the Norwegians depicted in the film, as well as the child welfare system.

Russian war drama "Minotaur" by Andrey Zvyagintsev, which depicts a callous businessman caught up in the war in Ukraine, won the Grand Prix second prize.

Belgium's Virginie Efira and Japanese actor Tao Okamoto

shared the best female performance award for their roles in nursing home drama "All of a Sudden" by Japan's Ryusuke Hamaguchi.

Belgian duo Emmanuel Macchia and Valentin Campagne from gay World War I drama "Coward" also shared the male best actor award for their roles in the Lukas Dhont-directed movie.

Rwandan filmmaker Marie-Clementine Dusabejamba won the Camera d'Or for best first film for her genocide drama "Ben'Imana" which she dedicated to "the women of my country". — AFP, MPD

World Weather			
CHINA	ASIA-PACIFIC	WORLD	LUSOPHONE
☀️ Beijing 18°C~28°C	☁️ Manila 26°C~35°C	☁️ New York 19°C~28°C	☀️ Lisbon 17°C~31°C
☁️ Shanghai 22°C~30°C	☁️ Bangkok 26°C~37°C	☀️ London 13°C~25°C	☁️ Rio de Janeiro 21°C~27°C
☀️ Hong Kong 24°C~31°C	☀️ Tokyo 19°C~28°C	☀️ Frankfurt 13°C~31°C	☁️ Luanda 21°C~26°C
☀️ Taipei 25°C~37°C	☀️ Singapore 25°C~33°C	☀️ Vancouver 13°C~22°C	☀️ Maputo 15°C~28°C
☀️ Guangzhou 25°C~35°C	☁️ Kuala Lumpur 25°C~35°C	☀️ Paris 17°C~32°C	☁️ Dili 21°C~30°C
☁️ Nanjing 20°C~27°C	☀️ Jakarta 22°C~33°C	☁️ Moscow 5°C~14°C	☁️ São Tomé 26°C~31°C
☀️ Guilin 23°C~35°C	☁️ Seoul 19°C~25°C	☀️ Las Vegas 13°C~26°C	☀️ Praia 20°C~30°C
☀️ Xi'an 18°C~24°C	☁️ Sydney 16°C~21°C	☀️ Monte Carlo 19°C~27°C	☀️ Bissau 23°C~36°C



Truly delicate

This photo taken on Monday shows a model of a sailing ship made of amber at the Amber Museum in Kaliningrad, Russia. Kaliningrad is a major amber-producing region in the world. The Amber Museum here houses a large number of exquisite pieces that comprehensively showcase the unique charm of amber. — Xinhua



Dog napping

Dog 'Aiko' attends the worship service for people and dogs with an animal blessing in the Parochialkirche Protestant church on Whit Monday in Berlin, on Monday. — AFP



Football through the ages

A man stands in front of a hand-painted mural featuring 2026 World Cup motifs in Mexico City on Monday, this work covers over 200 square metres and was painted by the artists Josa Cruz Pacheco, Andreee Orozco, Francisco Thomas Arriaga, Vivian Velazquez Ventura, and Christian Zuniga Lazcano. — AFP



Strong maybe?

A bee approaches a blooming ornamental onion flower in Warsaw, Poland on Monday. Residents enjoyed warm weather outdoors in early summer. — Xinhua



Hopes on a card

A man attaches name cards with wishes of Buddhist followers to lotus lanterns displayed at the Jogye Temple after a service to celebrate Buddha's birthday in Seoul on Sunday. — AFP



Playing with fire

Participants strike each other with lit torches made of dried coconut leaves during the traditional Perang Obor (Torch War) ritual, held to celebrate a rich harvest, in Tegalsambi, Central Java, Indonesia on Sunday. — AFP