

Driver killing boy, 10, on zebra crossing faces negligent homicide: police

Tony Wong

The police announced yesterday that the car driver who killed a 10-year-old local boy after knocking him down and running him over on a zebra crossing on Wednesday night has been arrested for alleged homicide by negligence.

According to the Macau Penal Code, homicide by negligence is punishable by a prison term of up to three years. In the case of gross negligence, the offender faces a prison term of up to five years.

The police confirmed that the accident, which occurred in Toi San district, was caused by the car driver's failure to give way to the boy on the zebra crossing.

The police also said yesterday that the driver told the police that he did not notice anybody walking across the zebra crossing.

Public Security Police (PSP) spokesman Cheong Heon Fan announced further details on the fatal accident during a regular police press conference yesterday.

The *Post* published an article about and photo of the shocking case yesterday. (<https://www.macaupostdaily.com/news/28335>)

Locals' unprecedented reaction of grief and anger, floral tributes

The fatal case has unleashed an overwhelming wave of grief and



A woman yesterday leaves a floral tribute on the pavement next to the zebra crossing on Avenida do Conselheiro Borja near its junction with Avenida do Almirante Lacerda, where a boy died after being hit by a car on Wednesday night. — Photo: Tony Wong

anger across Macau's civil society. The public reaction can be regarded as being unprecedented in scale and intensity, unseen in Macau in living memory. Apart from widespread outrage among netizens on social media, many residents flocked to the pavement next to the zebra crossing

yesterday, leaving behind an ever-growing collection of tributes. Flowers in a wide range of colours blanket the concrete, while various toys, including dolls and teddy bears, snacks, drinks, and various other items have been carefully arranged by the grieving public.

Members across civil society have also slammed what they regard as poorly designed locations of some zebra crossings across the city.

The accident occurred on the easternmost section of Avenida do Conselheiro Borja (青洲大馬路), when the boy was walking



across the zebra crossing outside a PSP station situated next to the site where the now defunct greyhound racetrack (Yat Yuen Canidrome) is located.

The eastern section of the avenue serves as a dividing line between Toi San and Fai Chi Kei districts, with the Toi San residential neighbourhood in the northern side and the former Yat Yuen Canidrome in Fai Chi Kei in the south.

According to police announcements on Wednesday night, the police received a report at 8:18 p.m. on Wednesday about the accident. The boy was rushed to the private Kiang Wu Hospital where he was pronounced dead at 8:42 p.m. after emergency treatment to save his life had failed.

Continued on p.5



This photo taken yesterday shows a ceremony marking the roll-off of the 7 millionth vehicle produced by BMW Brilliance Automotive (BBA) in Shenyang, Liaoning Province. A BMW 3 Series Horse Edition rolled off the assembly line yesterday in Shenyang, the capital city of Liaoning Province, marking the 7 millionth car produced by BMW Group's joint venture in China, BBA. — Xinhua

Israel freezes out UN chief over sexual violence blacklist

UNITED NATIONS — Israel is breaking all contact with United Nations chief António Guterres, the country's ambassador announced yesterday, saying it is "outrageous" that Israel is being blacklisted over alleged sexual violence in conflict zones.

"We are done with this secretary-general," Ambassador Danny Danon said in a video posted on X.

"The decision to blacklist Israel and accuse us of using sexual violence as a weapon of war is an outrageous decision," he said,

referring to an upcoming report from Guterres' office.

"The secretary-general and his team continue to spread lies against Israel. To put us and Hamas terrorists on the same list, that's unacceptable."

Israel's foreign ministry called the country's inclusion on the UN sexual violence list "shameful and absurd."

The move "is further proof of the UN's true nature: a politicized and corrupt organisation that has abandoned its founding principles and systematically targets Israel as its

primary mission," ministry spokesman Oren Marmorstein said on X.

The Israeli mission to the UN said in a statement it will have no contact with the secretary-general's office as long as Guterres remains in the role.

A spokesman for Guterres, whose term as UN chief ends on December 31, said the office was aware of Danon's remarks.

"For our part, the secretary-general's door remains open," the spokesman, Stéphane Dujarric, said. — AFP

Serbia-China ironclad friendship unbreakable: Serbian president

In an exclusive interview with Xinhua in Beijing on Tuesday, Serbian President Aleksandar Vucic fondly spoke about President Xi Jinping awarding him the Friendship Medal, while also hailing the Serbia-China ironclad friendship. — Story on p. 7

UK risks 'lost generation' of jobless young people

Britain risks creating a "lost generation" as the number of young people out of work and education surges, a government-commissioned review warned yesterday.

— Story on p. 11

Wang Yi hopes Portugal to help promote China-EU ties

Foreign Minister Wang Yi on Wednesday expressed hope that Portugal would play an active role in promoting China-EU relations during his meeting with Portuguese Foreign Minister Paulo Rangel in New York. — Story on p. 12

Heat shelter extends opening hours amid orange hot weather alert



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



Mattresses and pillows are laid out at Macau's temporary heat shelter in Ilha Verde in this undated photo released by the Social Welfare Bureau (IAS).

Khalel Vallo

The Social Welfare Bureau (IAS) said in a statement yesterday that its heat shelter in Ilha Verde would extend operating hours after the Meteorological and Geophysical Bureau (SMG) issued an orange hot weather alert – the highest of a two-tier system.

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

The shelter offers free accommodation, snacks and beverages.

The orange alert signifies “extremely hot” weather, typically issued by the local observatory when maximum temperatures are forecast to surpass 34 or even 35 degrees Celsius. The yellow alert is issued by the observatory when the weather is forecast to be “very hot”. It is activated when temperatures are expected to reach or exceed 33 degrees in certain areas.

According to the statement, yesterday the heat shelter extended its opening hours from 6:00 p.m. to 8:00 a.m. the following day, allowing vulnerable individuals and those in need to stay overnight. The arrangement will remain in place

until the temperature drops.

In general, under the orange alert the shelter is open from 10:00 a.m. to 8:00 a.m. the following day.

When the lower-level yellow very hot weather warning is active, the shelter operates on shortened daytime hours from 11:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.

The government customarily opens up a temporary heat shelter (usually at the emergency shelter in Ilha Verde) to offer respite from the blazing heat and high UV indexes for vulnerable individuals. In the winter, the shelter provides protection from particularly cold weather. The centre is run by Caritas Macau on behalf of the government.

The bureau urged residents to pay attention to the physical condition of senior citizens, individuals living alone, chronically ill patients and physically weak individuals, while taking appropriate precautions to prevent heat-related health problems during the period of high temperatures, the statement said.

Residents seeking information about the heat shelter’s opening arrangements can contact the bureau during office hours on 2827 0939 or outside office hours on 6399 1963. ■

UM researchers analyse global optogenetics patent landscape to support clinical applications

Khalel Vallo

A research team led by Hu Yuanjia from the public University of Macau (UM) published a study in *Nature Biotechnology* analysing the global patent landscape of optogenetics, outlining technological developments, industrial challenges and future clinical prospects for the emerging biotechnology field, according to a UM statement on Wednesday.

The research was conducted by scientists from the university’s Institute of Chinese Medical Sciences and the State Key Laboratory of Mechanism and Quality of Chinese Medicine, in collaboration with Zhang Yanfei from the Tianjin Institute of Industrial Biotechnology, the statement said.

According to the study, optogenetics is a biotechnology that uses photosensitive proteins to regulate cellular activity with high precision, enabling biological processes to be controlled at the millisecond and single-cell levels, the statement noted. Originally focused on neuroscience, the technology has expanded into synthetic biology, natural product biosynthesis and clinical medicine, the statement added.

The team analysed 332 patent families and found that global optogenetics patent applications

peaked in 2019 before declining significantly afterwards, the statement said, highlighting that blue light-activated optogenetic tools accounted for 41 percent of innovations and have been widely applied in clinical medicine and cell biology.

Researchers identified retinal disease treatment as the most advanced area of clinical translation, with 11 clinical trials registered by the end of 2023, according to the statement.

However, the study noted that no optogenetics-related products have yet received market approval, highlighting ongoing challenges in industrialisation and clinical application, the statement said.

The researchers said major technical limitations include restricted tissue penetration, limitations in photosensitive protein performance and long-term expression stability, as well as insufficient safety data for human applications, the statement said, pointing out the absence of adaptive regulatory frameworks and increasing ethical concerns.

According to the statement, the study suggested that future breakthroughs may depend on multidisciplinary integration, combining optogenetics with technologies such as calcium channel regula-

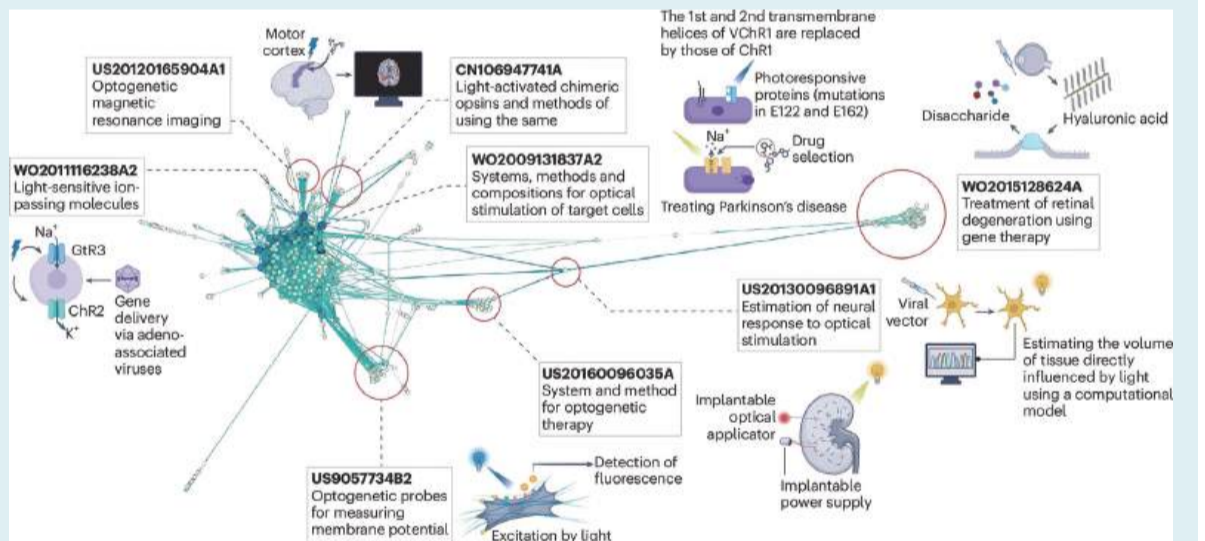
tion, upconversion luminescence* materials and organoid systems to develop more clinically feasible therapeutic models.

The researchers also noted renewed momentum in the sector, with optogenetics-related patent publications increasing again in 2024 and 2025 after a decline in 2023, the statement said, noting that new oncology-related patents involving light-controlled immune cell infiltration and near-infrared light-regulated immune pathways were highlighted as emerging areas of interest.

The study added that the number of related clinical trials has now increased to 16. Among them, MCO-010, developed by US company Nanoscope Therapeutics, has completed a Phase IIb clinical trial and has begun a rolling Biologics License Application submission to the US Food and Drug Administration.

The research was supported by multiple funding bodies including the Science and Technology Development Fund (FDCT) and UM. ■

*Upconversion luminescence is an optical process where a material absorbs two or more low-energy photons (such as near-infrared light) and emits a single, higher-energy photon (such as visible or ultraviolet light) - DeepSeek



This infographic provided by the public University of Macau (UM) yesterday shows the technology flow and cluster distribution of optogenetics.

CCAC busts public school quartet for faking attendance records

Armando Neves

The Commission Against Corruption (CCAC) announced in a statement yesterday that it has uncovered a case in which four staff members of a public school are suspected of falsifying their attendance records.

The statement noted that some of the suspects even attempted to destroy evidence during the CCAC officers’ investigation.

According to the statement, between 2019 and 2024, three teachers and an IT technician repeatedly helped each other clock in and out in order to conceal their late arrivals and early departures, thereby

falsifying attendance records.

During its investigation, the statement said, CCAC officers also discovered that the IT technician involved conspired with one of the teachers to alter some of the CCTV footage in order to avoid detection of their practice of clocking in on behalf of others.

According to the statement, the quartet has already been transferred to the Public Prosecutions Office (MP), each facing a computer forgery charge. The anti-graft body has also informed the Education and Youth Development Bureau (DSEDJ) for follow-up action, the statement said.

According to Article 10 of Law No. 11/2009, computer forgery is punishable by imprisonment of up to three years; however, if committed by a public servant in the exercise of his or her duties, the crime is punishable by one to five years behind bars. ■



This image downloaded from the Commission Against Corruption (CCAC) website yesterday shows its official logo.

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Macau Weather

VERY HOT.
FINE APART FROM CLOUDY PERIODS.
A FEW THUNDERY SHOWERS LATER.
FORCE 2 TO 4 SOUTH TO SOUTHWESTERLY WINDS WITH GUSTS.
RELATIVE HUMIDITY WILL RANGE BETWEEN 60% AND 95%.



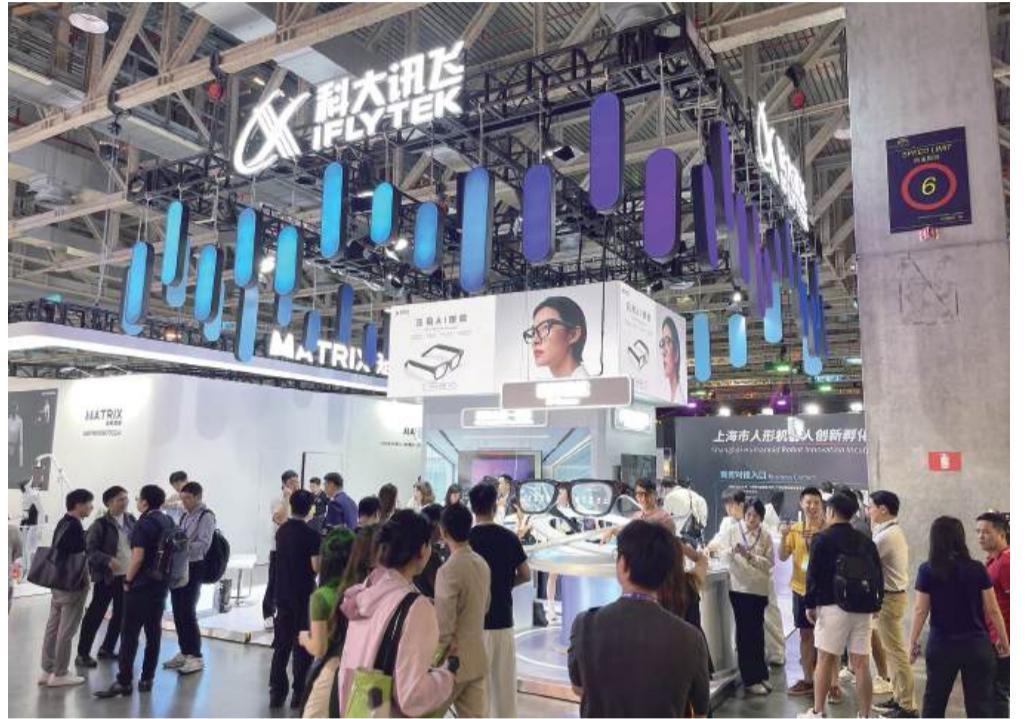
27°C~34°C

Source: SMG

Real-time translation in 122 languages: iFLY AI Glasses go on sale mid-June



Lin Huijie, general manager of Iflytek Co., Ltd Consumer Business Wearables Division, introduces the company's new AI glasses at yesterday's press conference.



High-tech product enthusiasts walk past the stand of Iflytek Co., Ltd at The Venetian Macao's Cotai Expo yesterday. – Photos: Armindo Neves

Armindo Neves

Anhui-based Iflytek Co., Ltd launched its new AI glasses at BEYOND Expo 2026 yesterday at Cotai Expo at The Venetian Macao, announcing that pre-orders will open on June 15.

According to Lin Huijie, general manager of the company's Consumer Business Wearables Division, because glasses are a natural point of entry to the human body and AI serves as an "awakened brain", the combination allows the device to become the user's "second brain" and a "super AI assistant right before their eyes".

In order to achieve comfortable all-day wear, iFLYTEK has reduced the weight of the glasses to just 40 grams – about 20 per cent

lighter than similar products – and they have passed a 1.70-metre drop test, Lin said.

In terms of AI capabilities, the glasses support real-time translation of 122 languages across four main modes: simultaneous interpretation, face-to-face translation, online synchronous translation, and call translation. The glasses' "lip-motion recognition noise reduction" technology uses a front-facing camera to capture lip movements, allowing the device to accurately lock onto the speaker's voice even in noisy environments, Lin added.

An AI assistant paired with the glasses, GlassClaw, is capable of independently carrying out complex tasks such as gathering information, generating plans,

and sending emails. The smart prompting function can scroll through a script in sync with the user's speaking speed, and the glasses also come with a physical remote control, according to Lin.

The glasses are priced at 4,299 yuan (5,125 patacas) for the standard model and 4,699 yuan for the extended-battery model.

70 technology innovation companies to showcase at BEYOND Expo 2026

The three-day BEYOND Expo 2026 officially opened on Wednesday at Cotai Expo.

According to an official statement, the expo is themed "AI: Digital-Physical

Symbiosis" and brings together more than 200 global media outlets. It also features key opinion leaders (KOLs) and content creators with a combined following of 26 million, of whom 50 per cent are overseas.

The statement added that the expo features 70 high-quality exhibitors, 42 of which are from Shenzhen's Nanshan District.

The expo covers a wide range of fields, including artificial intelligence (AI), robotics, smart hardware, wearable devices, life sciences, and sustainability, featuring products such as AI glasses, health and beauty technology, and smart mobility solutions.

The expo's General Pass for admission today and tomorrow costs 499 yuan (593 patacas). ■

Campaign to boost local coffee culture enters final stretch

Armindo Neves

A two-month-long event, called "Enjoy Macao with Coffee – Macao Coffee Festival", held in the heart-shaped "Praça da Árvore" ("Tree Square") in front of the Macao Science Centre (MSC) in Nape, comes to an end this coming Monday, coinciding with International Children's Day.

The festival is co-hosted by the Macao Youth Development Service Centre (MYDS) and the MSC.

One of the event organisers, surnamed Wong, told the *Post* last Sunday that the festival aims to expand public awareness of Macao's coffee culture.

According to Wong, between 1,500 and 2,000 people took part each day over the past weekends, while weekdays saw around 300 to 400 attendees. She added that the total number of participants is expected to reach around 40,000.

Wong noted that this year's festival features five new stalls for cultural and creative products and pet brands, alongside eight additional theatre performances, themed "China's First Cup of Coffee in Macau".

She underlined that a new segment, "Coffee Omakase"*, has invited local coffee roasters to introduce their brands and share speciality coffees.

Wong also said that this year's event is being held in collaboration with the Macao Science Centre, adding that customers who spend 30 patacas or more can exchange their receipts for a stamp-collecting postcard, which doubles as a free entry ticket to the centre.

An exhibition titled "China's First Cup of Coffee in Macau" has also been set up at the Nautical Science Gallery to promote coffee culture, she said.

Owen Choi, owner of "Gas Coffee", told the *Post* that his booth focuses on creating a relaxed atmosphere and serving coffee tailored to individual tastes.

His booth's speciality series includes melon, jasmine, and alcoholic elements, developed especially for the event. Choi praised the event's "great atmosphere" and confirmed he intends to participate again in the future.

Sandra Lun, owner of "Bread Station", told the *Post* that her booth specialises in cream cheese garlic bread and guava dirty coffee** – the latter mixed with plum powder to create a sweet and sour flavour profile.



Sandra Lun (left) poses with her team at her booth "Bread Station" last Sunday.

Coffee aficionados flock to the "Enjoy Macao with Coffee – Macao Coffee Festival" in the heart-shaped "Tree Square" in front of the Macao Science Centre last Sunday.

– Photos: Armindo Neves

She also praised the event's vibrant atmosphere and expressed her hope to introduce more new products in the future, such as pork floss cakes, to attract customers. ■

*Coffee Omakase is an immersive, multi-course specialty coffee tasting experience where customers leave the entire selection and preparation process up to the expertise of the barista. The Japanese word "omakase" (お任せ) translates directly to "I leave it up to you". – Gemini

**Dirty coffee is a specialty coffee drink that relies on a stark contrast of temperature, texture, and density. It consists of a hot, concentrated shot of espresso poured directly over a glass of intensely chilled, rich milk. The name comes from the visual effect: as the dark espresso is pulled on top of the pristine white milk, it slowly bleeds downward, making the milk look beautifully "dirty." – Gemini



Premiere showcases 5 microfilms from Sands China-sponsored programme

Rui Pastorin

A premiere was held at The Londoner Macao in Cotai on Saturday for the 3rd New Art Studies in Filming - Micro Movie Support Programme's cohort of five Macao-made microfilms.

Sponsored by Sands China for the third consecutive year, the programme is organised by the Creative Industries Promotion Association of St. Lazarus Church District (CIPA), aiming to "broaden the development platform for Macau's young filmmakers through funding and training", the integrated resort operator said in a statement on Saturday.

This year's programme saw 16 teams submitting scripts, with five chosen after a judging process to receive funding, the statement said. Lasting around 15 to 30 minutes, they are: "Takeaway Nightmare" directed by Devin Ip; "Reincarnated Station" directed by Jacky Lao; "Same as the Light" directed by Achilles Lei; "Rootless Guide" directed by Leong Hoi Hong; and "Only in the Dream" directed by Chiang Kun Ieong, with the teams spending 6 months on filming and post production.



This photo provided by integrated resort operator Sands China on Saturday shows guests and the creative teams of the five films posing for a group photo at the premiere of The 3rd New Art Studies in Filming - Micro Movie Support Program at The Londoner Macao in Cotai.

CIPA President Patrick Wong was quoted by the statement as saying: "This initiative represents a vital milestone in our commitment to nurturing talent. Our aim is to ignite the 'cinematic dreams' of aspiring individuals, empowering passionate youth in Macau to boldly create, express themselves, and tell the story of Macau through micro films".

Sands China Executive Vice Chairman Wilfred Wong Ying-wai highlighted in the statement the range of topics, creativity and international vision showcased. He added:

"Since the launch of the programme, it has successfully cultivated a new wave of local filmmaking talent, with some of their works earning recognition in micro film competitions in the Chinese mainland, a testament to the programme's encouraging achievements".

The statement said that the programme launched in 2022, with over 400 people having participated in its productions, including Lei Kin Fong, who directed "Memento of Parents" that won an award in a micro film competition in the Chinese mainland.

MGM calls on applications for 12th MGM Junior Lion Dance Summer Class



This photo recently provided by integrated resort operator MGM shows participants in a previous MGM Junior Lion Dance Summer Class performing.

Rui Pastorin

Integrated resort operator MGM kicked off "The 12th MGM Junior Lion Dance Summer Class" last week, with applications to be open until June 4.

According to the recent statement, the programme, which this year targets 175 admissions, is aimed at children aged five to eight and is held in collaboration with the Wushu General Association of Macau, a partnership that was established in 2010.

The statement said that the programme has trained over 740 participants and reached around 70 percent of local schools since launching in 2015. The statement added that it provides its young participants structured introductory training, also enabling them to "experience lion dance in a relaxed environment while developing basic techniques, rhythm, and teamwork". The statement added that those joining also build confidence, cooperation skills and a sense of cultural identity through the activity.

The statement said that this year's programme has been "incorporated into an upgraded development framework", adding that there are "further upgrades" to the initiative, with the collaboration expanding beyond competitions to "encompass talent development systems and community-wide engagement, moving towards a more comprehensive cultural development model".

The statement added that through the integration of the two entities strengths and expertise, the initiative will gradually establish a complete development pathway encompassing "Junior Lion Dance Training - Youth Advancement - Professional Development - Citywide Sport".

The statement said that successful applicants to the programme will be notified on June 9, with a lucky draw to be held if the number exceeds the admission limit. One can find more details on the MGM website, or by calling 8802 3833, or emailing liondance@mgm.mo.

SJM continues to support Feast of the Drunken Dragon, launches interactive games

Rui Pastorin

SJM Resorts again supported "The Feast of the Drunken Dragon", being the main sponsor and introducing initiatives including the ongoing "Intangible Cultural Heritage Flash Fun" interactive games.

According to a statement from the integrated resort operator earlier this week, the company has continued its long-standing, decades-long support for the "The Feast of the Drunken Dragon", organised by the "Macao Fish Trade General Association", which was held on Buddha's Birthday on May 24.

The day featured a worship ceremony, drunken dragon and lion dance performances in Largo do Senado, and a parade across the peninsula that also included Grand Lisboa Macau, Hotel Lisboa Macau, Kam Pek Market, and Ponte 16 Resort Macau on its route, drawing large crowds, the statement said. SJM Mascot "Sam" also joined performances, while the company's volunteer team visited Sam Kai Vui Kun and Iao Hon Market to

assist in distributing "Longevity Rice", the statement added.

The interactive games, meanwhile, will continue to be held in June in Hong Kung Temple (康公廟) Square during the weekends of June 6-7, 13-14 and 19-21. The games are themed around the festival and the upcoming Dragon Boat Festival, for which races will start on June 3, 14 and 19, inviting participants to "experience intangible cultural heritage in an immersive way".

One can also redeem offers or use food and beverage vouchers won from the games at the nearby Kam Pek Market, a key project under the resort operator's San Ma Lo district revitalisation plan, the statement said.

"In alignment with the Macau SAR Government's "Tourism+" strategy, SJM also helps channel festival crowds into the city's old districts and historic neighbourhoods, fostering a win-win outcome between cultural preservation and community economic development", the statement said.



This photo provided by integrated resort operator SJM Resorts earlier this week shows a performance of "The Feast of the Drunken Dragon" organised by the Macao Fish Trade General Association taking place outside Kam Pek Market.

Driver killing boy, 10, on zebra crossing faces negligent homicide: police

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Driver did not slow down, no skid marks: police

During yesterday afternoon's regular police press conference, Cheong said that the driver is a local man surnamed Chao who is in his forties. He told the police that he works as a computer engineer.

The boy was crossing the avenue from the Da Ming Court residential estate (大明閣) in Toi San district to the PSP station when he was hit by the car, Cheong said.

After gathering evidence while assessing the citywide CCTV camera system and the footage of the car's dashboard camera, Cheong said, the police confirmed that the car driver, when approaching the zebra crossing, did not slow down at all and did not give way to the boy, eventually knocking him down and running him over before coming to a stop. Neither did the police detect any skid marks on the road surface.

The seven-seater was travelling westbound in the direction of Ilha Verde district.

According to Cheong, the driver told the police that he did not notice anybody walking across the zebra crossing when he approached it.

The driver, a permanent local resident, passed a breathalyser test, Cheong said.

Cheong said that following an investigation into the accident, the police arrested the driver on Wednesday night for suspected



Public Security Police (PSP) spokesman Cheong Heon Fan looks on during yesterday's regular police press conference. — Photo: Tony Wong

homicide by negligence, while also seizing his car. He was transferred to the Public Prosecutions Office (MP) yesterday morning for further investigation and questioning.

Cheong pointed out that according to the Road Traffic Law, drivers are obliged to always slow down when approaching a zebra crossing, and to give way to any pedestrian walking across it. The police have meanwhile fined this driver for his failure to give way to a pedestrian on a zebra crossing, he said.

Cheong noted that according to the law, violators face a fine of between 600 and 2,500 patacas. Repeat offenders face a fine of 1,200 and 5,000 patacas and are banned from driving for between

two and six months.

Cheong pointed out that according to Article 134 of the Macau Penal Code, homicide by negligence is punishable by a prison term of up to three years. In the case of gross negligence, the offender faces a prison term of up to five years.

Cheong stressed that the driver has no criminal record.

When asked by the *Post* during yesterday's press conference, Cheong said that it will be up to the court to determine whether the case amounts to homicide by gross negligence.

Govt's response

Meanwhile, the Education and Youth Development Bureau (DSEDJ) and the Social Welfare

Bureau (IAS) said in a joint statement yesterday that they are profoundly saddened by the tragic death of the student in the accident, and offered their deepest condolences and most sincere sympathies to the student's family, relatives, and friends.

The joint statement said that the DSEDJ immediately activated its school crisis management mechanism, coordinating with the boy's school and counselling agencies to initiate follow-up counselling support. Working in close communication with the IAS, the DSEDJ is providing the necessary assistance to the student's family, making every effort to support them through this difficult time, the statement said.

School's obituary notice

The boy studied at Lin Fong Pou Chai School, located just a stone's throw from the zebra crossing. The school is run by the adjacent Lin Fong Temple.

The school issued an obituary notice on its website yesterday, which said that "the sudden loss of such a young life has left our entire school community deeply heartbroken and grieving".

The notice said that the school immediately activated its crisis management team, which is dedicated to providing emotional support and counselling to teachers and other staff, students, and the affected family. As a mark of deep

mourning for the student, the school has changed its website to black and white.

Informed sources told the *Post* last night that the student was the school's lion dance team leader.

Residents' aggrieved and indignant remarks

Meanwhile, the *Post* spoke to three passers-by when they were looking at the floral tributes on the pavement yesterday. A female resident said that drivers should always slow down when approaching a zebra crossing and should be ready to give way to the pedestrians crossing the road. She also slammed the "poorly designed" locations of some zebra crossings in the city.

A male resident noted that the zebra crossing where the accident occurred is very close to a flyover because of which drivers travelling along Avenida do Conselheiro Borja might be affected by low brightness levels there during the night. He suggested that the government install special and extra lighting for road areas underneath and around flyovers.

Another male resident said that many drivers in Macau often fail to slow down and give way to pedestrians walking across zebra crossings, because of which, he urged the government to study the feasibility of replacing more zebra crossings with traffic-light controlled crossings. ■

Rongzhu secures 1st round win over Martinez at Road to UFC - Day 1

Rui Pastorin

Sichuan's Rongzhu secured a first-round victory last night on day one of Road To UFC Season 5 at Galaxy Arena in Cotai, beating Victor Martinez from Texas via TKO (strikes) in 1 minute 10 seconds.

A TKO is a technical knockout.

This brings UFC lightweight Rongzhu's fight record to 28 wins and six losses. During the post-fight interview, Rongzhu, 26, called out Australian Quillan Salkilld, wanting to fight him next.

Meanwhile, co-headliner Xie Bin from Hunan won his bout against Yudi Cahyadi from Bandung, Indonesia, via TKO (right hand) at 2:05 of Round 1.

Yesterday marked the launch of the featherweight and bantamweight tournaments at Macau's largest indoor arena. The action continues today with ROAD TO UFC Season 5 - Day 2, headlined by female fighters Shi Ming (17-6), a UFC strawweight fighting out of Kunming and marking her return to Macau since 2024, and UFC light heavyweight. Puja Tomar (17-6-1) from India.

UFC FIGHT NIGHT will meanwhile take place tomorrow, with Brazil's Deiveson Figueiredo, No.7 UFC Bantamweight, going head-to-head with Heilongjiang's Song Yadong, No.5 UFC (Ultimate Fighting Championship) Bantamweight as the main event. ■



Sichuan's Rongzhu (left) celebrates his win over Victor Martinez (right) at Galaxy Arena last night. — Photo: UFC

LRT, Macau Artist Society jointly call for submissions for painting, drawing contest

Rui Pastorin

Macao Light Rapid Transit Corporation, Limited (MLM) is encouraging Macau's primary to secondary school students, as well as other members of the public, to create artworks depicting scenes featuring a "vibrant and friendly" light-rail commuting environment, with a chance to win cash prizes and an exhibition opportunity.

Organised by MLM in conjunction with the Macau Artist Society (MAS), the competition is themed "Travelling Together on the LRT". It is split into two categories for those studying from P1 to P6, as well as a secondary school category for those studying from Form 1 to Form 3, and the public category, which is open to those aged 16 and over, according to the contest guidelines.

Participants are encouraged to "unleash their imagination through painting, contributing to a more vibrant and welcoming travel environment", the guidelines said. The primary school categories feature a template for participants to paint and add their own touches of creativity. The secondary and public categories, meanwhile, must be hand drawn while watercolours, acrylics, coloured pencils, or pastels, among others, are also allowed.

Works must be original, with no computer generated, digital or AI works allowed, the statement said.

Cash prizes and certificates are up for grabs, along with an exhibition opportunity for the winning works. The top prize is 1,200 patacas, with second and third place winners to receive 800 patacas and 500 patacas respectively. The guidelines note that there will be three first prizes, five second prizes, eight third prizes, and merit awards per category.

Submissions, which can be made online or in person, are accepted until June 30, with more details, including the selection criteria and requirements per work are, available on <https://www.mlm.com.mo/en/paintContest.html>. ■



This poster downloaded from the Macao Light Rapid Transit Corporation, Limited's website promotes the painting and drawing contest co-organised with the Macau Artist Society.

Police nab shop manager for embezzling 35 luxury handbags worth over HK\$16 million

Bags retailed from HK\$60,000 to HK\$2 million

Tony Wong

The Judiciary Police (PJ) announced yesterday that a female shop manager employed at a luxury handbag boutique in the central district has been arrested for allegedly using her position to steal from the company.

The police said that over the past six months, she reportedly stole 35 luxury handbags from the shop. Furthermore, she fraudulently used the company's name to scam three industry peers outside Macau out of deposits for pre-ordered bags. The total amount involved in both cases reached HK\$21.82 million.

PJ spokesman Cheong Siu Keong announced the case's details during a special press conference yesterday.

The suspect is a 27-year-old local woman surnamed Choi.

Starting from November last year, Choi used her position to steal luxury handbags from the boutique on at least 20 occasions, accumulating a total of 35 stolen bags with a total value of HK\$16.67 million.



Judiciary Police (PJ) officers escort the hooded embezzlement suspect to a PJ car outside the PJ headquarters in Zape yesterday. — Photo: Tony Wong

Choi sold the stolen goods to local industry peers and those outside Macau at a 10 percent discount, making an illicit profit of HK\$15 million.

Each of the stolen bags is worth between HK\$60,000 to HK\$2 million. The police managed to recover two of the stolen bags, worth HK\$400,000 in total, from a luxury second-hand consignment shop in Taipa.

Early this month, Choi further exploited her position by falsely

telling three industry peers outside Macau that she could pre-order highly sought-after designer handbags on behalf of the shop for them. She issued forged receipts stamped with the shop's official chop, enticing the victims to transfer deposits in instalments totalling HK\$5.15 million.

Upon verification, the shop confirmed there were no records of such orders, and none of the funds had ever entered the company's



The two stolen bags recovered by the police are displayed at the pressroom of the PJ headquarters yesterday. — Photo: PJ

accounts, meaning that the entire sum had been pocketed by Choi.

The three shops outside Macau, in Hong Kong and the Chinese mainland, fell into the trap because they trusted Choi's position as the shop manager and believed the shop receipts were authentic.

According to Cheong, the scheme came to light on Wednesday when the shop owner noticed anomalies in the inventory and financial accounts. Following an

internal investigation that exposed the wrongdoing, the owner took Choi to the PJ headquarters to report the crime later that day.

Under questioning, Choi told the police that most of the illicit gains had been invested in cryptocurrency, all of which was ultimately lost in trading.

Choi has been transferred to the Public Prosecutions Office (MP), facing theft and fraud charges. ■

World Intelligence Expo highlights AI-industry integration, global collaboration

Analysis

TIANJIN — The World Intelligence Expo 2026 kicked off yesterday in Tianjin Municipality, bringing together over 700 exhibitors to showcase cutting-edge technologies, products and application scenarios in the field of artificial intelligence (AI).

Co-hosted by the municipal governments of Tianjin and Chongqing Municipality, this four-day event is themed "Intelligence: Extensive Development Space, Sustainable Growth Driver." It features seven exhibition zones covering embodied AI, core AI technologies, low-altitude economy and commercial space exploration, with a total area of 130,000 square meters.

The event has attracted leading companies, including Fortune Global 500 firms and top domestic enterprises in the AI sector.

Industrial integration of AI is accelerating, driving efficiency improvement in traditional sectors and fostering new business models, said industry insiders attending the expo.

Vice minister of industry and information technology Ke Jixin said the ministry will work with all parties to promote high-quality development of the AI industry, advance the "AI+ manufacturing" initiative, strengthen innovation capabilities and improve the industrial environment.

Liu Liehong, head of the National Data Administration,



Fairgoers watch a show staged by robots in Tianjin yesterday. The robot carnival, a session of the World Intelligence Expo 2026, was held at the Tianjin Cultural Center yesterday. A series of events, including a robot exhibition, a robotics competition and a robot stage show, are giving the fairgoers a glimpse of technology and smart living. — Xinhua

noted that high-quality datasets serve as both a technical resource and an innovation engine for the intelligent upgrading of advanced manufacturing.

"We support industry leaders and pilot entities in industrial manufacturing to build high-quality industry datasets in key areas, including automobile manufacturing, shipbuilding, rail transit, non-ferrous metals and petrochemicals," Liu added.

As many countries seek to empower industries via AI, China is actively promoting international cooperation in this field.

"We are making AI a priority in bilateral and multilateral tech cooperation. We will deepen international collaboration on AI and strengthen both technological innovation and capacity building," said Chen Jiachang, vice minister of science and technology.

Hussain bin Ibrahim Al

Hammadi, ambassador of the United Arab Emirates to China, expressed his expectation for cooperation. China's approach of using technology to improve people's lives is well aligned with the UAE's vision of building an innovative and knowledge-based economy that focuses on the future, he said.

The ambassador also emphasized vast opportunities for deeper cooperation between China and the

UAE in AI, advanced technology and the digital economy.

Despite competition in the AI sector, Wan Gang, president of the China Association for Science and Technology, said that win-win cooperation remains the mainstream aspiration. China is sharing its experience in AI applications, including smart cities, manufacturing and agriculture, with developing countries, providing inclusive products and services to help address common challenges.

Kazakhstan is one of the guest countries of honor at the expo this year. Zhuldyz Serik, senior manager of Astana Hub, an innovation cluster for IT startups based in Kazakhstan, engaged in enthusiastic talks with Chinese tech companies at the expo.

"I am amazed by China's rapid advancements, particularly in electric vehicles and AI. Chinese companies are highly capable, and technology here evolves at an impressive pace. We cordially invite Chinese tech companies, especially those in internet of things, fintech, medical technology and software, to explore cooperation opportunities in Kazakhstan," she said.

The expo runs through Sunday. During the event, more than 200 new products, technologies, achievements and research reports will be released, covering embodied AI, intelligent connected vehicles, low-altitude economy, smart manufacturing and smart living. — Xinhua

Serbia-China ironclad friendship unbreakable: Serbian president

Interview

BEIJING – In an exclusive interview with Xinhua in Beijing on Tuesday, Serbian President Aleksandar Vucic fondly spoke about President Xi Jinping awarding him the Friendship Medal, while also hailing the Serbia-China ironclad friendship and sharing the impressions on his China visit and his expectations for bilateral ties.

At the invitation of President Xi, Vucic paid a state visit to China from Sunday through yesterday. On Monday evening, Xi awarded him the Friendship Medal, the highest honorary medal of the People's Republic of China bestowed on foreign nationals.

"It was really an honor and privilege to get the medal, to get it from President Xi. That was a very special moment for myself and for my country as well," said Vucic, calling it "a real praise" for something that he was working on.

On Tuesday, Vucic visited Tsinghua University, the Museum of the Communist Party of China and Xiaomi's automobile factory, all in Beijing.

"Speaking of the museum and the car factory, one is very modern – one of the top-notch EV factories in the world, and that museum goes to the past," Vucic said in explaining the arrangement of his itinerary, adding that it demonstrates how China dreams big and aims high, enabling it to reach the level where it is today.

At Tsinghua University, Vucic shared his thoughts with the students.

"I said to them, nothing will come out of the blue, you have to work hard. What made this country is people's dedication, devotion and hard work," the president noted. "If they keep on working like they used to, I have no doubt about China's future."

Vucic also recalled Xi's first state visit to Serbia back in 2016.

"The words of President Xi meant everything to us. He promised that the steel mill in a small place of Smederevo would work, and it still works."

During Vucic's latest visit to China, the two sides issued a joint statement on continuously promoting the building of a China-Serbia community with a shared future in the new era.

"Now we are elevating our relationship to another level, and we opened our discussions with new topics, new fields, and new spheres of possible cooperation in the future, like AI, robotics and high-tech innovations," said Vucic, adding that this means the two sides are starting new chapters, sector by sector and field by field, in future development plans.

This year marks the start of China's 15th Five-Year Plan period, and Vucic spoke highly of China's long-term planning philosophy.

"Without planning, there is nothing that one can do. This is why I am a big admirer of China. Apart from hard work, determination

and a devoted approach, it's planning, planning, planning," he said.

"I am absolutely certain that we'll be able to reach new heights in our relationship," he said, adding that this is for the sake of both countries and of both peoples.

Vucic also highlighted how China and Serbia have always stood by each other in times of adversity.

When the Wenchuan earthquake struck in 2008, the Serbian government rushed emergency tent supplies to China; and when the COVID-19 pandemic hit, China provided Serbia with multiple batches of medical protective equipment.

The two countries have always supported each other on issues concerning their core interests and coordinated closely in international affairs.

"I'll tell you an example. If you ask me something about Taiwan, I'll say to you, the one-China principle is the only principle that exists. Full stop," he said.

"I can remember that China was very supportive to us when some big Western powers were going after us in the United Nations General Assembly. And I will never forget it. This is what I call friendship," he added.

Calling Serbia and China "ironclad friends," Vucic said once the friendship is "proven in difficult times, then no one can break it in easy times."

The world today longs for stability and



Serbian President Aleksandar Vucic speaks during an exclusive interview with Xinhua in Beijing on Tuesday. – Xinhua

peace, and China represents just that, said Vucic, noting that people across the Global South, not only in Serbia, see China as a vital source of stability. He expressed confidence that China will play an even greater role in global governance.

At the close of the Xinhua interview, he extended greetings to the Chinese people, inviting them to visit Serbia.

"Long live the friendship between China and Serbia!" Vucic said. – Xinhua

Why EU's protectionist moves will only backfire

Commentary by Xinhua writer Peng Tianxiao

BEIJING – As European commissioners prepare to discuss the bloc's trade ties with China, they should recognize that resorting to protectionist measures will ultimately prove counterproductive, while mutually beneficial cooperation remains the most effective path forward.

Since the start of the year, the European Union (EU) has been constantly updating its "trade defence arsenal," introducing multiple restrictive measures targeting Chinese enterprises and products.

Most recently, by planning to force European companies to diversify suppliers, the bloc is steadily piling up investment barriers and institutional discrimination, with China bearing the brunt.

Such protectionist moves by Brussels continue to disrupt trade and economic cooperation between the two trading partners, further clouding the prospects of the overall bilateral partnership.

In fact, the EU's decisions will do little to alleviate its concerns or solve any problem. As 99 percent of European businesses are small and medium-sized enterprises, any move that could raise production costs threatens to undermine the continent's industrial competitiveness.

Moreover, given the structural complexity of global supply chains, especially in advanced manufacturing, attempts to "de-risk" or decouple will only result in significant costs and disruptions.

Europe's trade concerns also stem from the declining competitiveness of its manufacturing sector. Yet rather than cultivating new engines of growth to revitalize its industrial base, the bloc appears to be taking the wrong approach by increasingly framing economic issues through a security lens.

China has firmly reiterated that the EU's unilateral actions are suspected of violating World Trade Organization (WTO) rules and would cause substantive harm to China-EU economic and trade relations, disrupt global industrial and supply chains, and ultimately weigh on Europe itself.

Beijing does not want a trade war with the EU, yet it will take resolute countermeasures should the EU further target Chinese companies or products.

Still, China has consistently maintained that, given the broad economic complementarities between the two sides, mutually beneficial cooperation offers the best path out of Europe's current economic malaise.

Actions speak louder than words. A recent survey of the European Union Chamber of Commerce in China showed that European companies are doubling down on manufacturing in China despite the EU's de-risking push. Nearly one-third of respondents reported further onshoring in China, while 68 percent said they were either maintaining or expanding operations there.

China is also ready to solve trade issues with the EU through talks. Beijing is currently engaged in WTO negotiations with the bloc over the EU's plan to implement new steel tariffs from July 1 this year.

Beijing has consistently viewed the EU as a key partner. Cooperation between the two sides is not the source of Europe's current difficulties; rather, it represents an important opportunity for the continent to regain economic momentum.

The EU may believe that adopting a tougher stance on China will help arrest its industrial decline and safeguard its global standing. In reality, however, such a course would amount to a costly strategic miscalculation – one whose ultimate consequences Europe itself will have to bear. – Xinhua

Senior CPC official meets delegation of British MPs

BEIJING – Wang Huning, a senior official of the Communist Party of China (CPC), yesterday met with a British delegation of cross-party members of parliament (MPs), who have come to China to attend the 14th China-UK Senior Leadership Forum.

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), said the leaders of both sides agreed to develop a long-term, stable comprehensive strategic partnership when British Prime Minister Keir Starmer visited China in January this year.

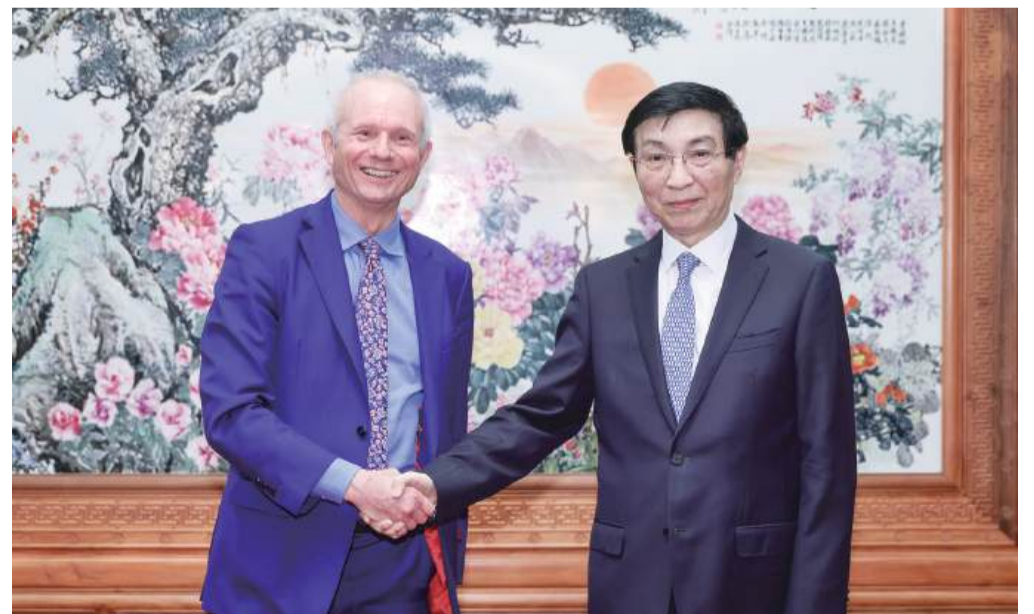
Wang said China is willing to work with Britain to implement the important consensus reached by the leaders of the two countries,

strengthen exchanges between political parties, enhance political mutual trust, and promote more achievements in mutually beneficial cooperation between the two countries.

The CPPCC National Committee is ready to contribute to this endeavor, he added.

David Lidington, honorary president of the Great Britain-China Centre and former British minister for the Cabinet Office, said a prosperous and stable China is in the interests of all parties.

Noting that Britain attaches great importance to opportunities for cooperation with China and appreciates China's contributions to global governance, Lidington said Britain stands ready to strengthen mutually beneficial cooperation and multilateral coordination with China to promote common development and world peace and stability. – Xinhua



Wang Huning (right), a member of the Standing Committee of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of China Central (CPC) Committee and chairman of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC) National Committee, shakes hands with David Lidington, honorary president of the Great Britain-China Centre and former British minister for the Cabinet Office, in Beijing yesterday. Wang met with a British delegation of cross-party members of parliament (MPs), who have come to China to attend the 14th China-UK Senior Leadership Forum. – Xinhua

Rescuers race to drain flooded Laos cave, extract trapped men

VIENTIANE – Rescuers rushed yesterday to pump water from a flooded cave in Laos, where seven Laotians have been trapped for more than a week, with the fate of two of them unknown.

Specialist divers found five men alive and huddled in a narrow passage around 300 metres from the exit of the cave on Wednesday, but they have yet to be pulled out due to flooding, collapse risks and other hazards underground.

The seven have been stuck inside the cave in central Xaysomboun province, northeast of the capital Vientiane, since May 20, according to state media.

They were searching for gold but got trapped after heavy rain triggered flash flooding, blocking their exit, the reports said.

With more rainfall expected, Thai rescuer Kengkad Bongkawong said yesterday that teams were racing to remove water from the cave.

“If we are able to pump out a

lot of water tonight, we will begin the extraction tonight,” he wrote on social media.

“But if it is deemed too risky after an assessment, we will reconsider.”

Foreign rescuers – including two divers involved in the dramatic 2018 retrieval of a youth football team from a flooded cave in Thailand – joined Laotian volunteers this week after local groups requested specialist personnel and equipment to aid efforts.

Kengkad said a Malaysian cave diver was one of the latest foreigners to join the rescue operation.

Additional divers from Japan, France, Indonesia and Thailand were expected to arrive today “to prevent emergencies, including the risk from additional rainwater expected to flow in tomorrow (today)”.

Finnish diver Mikko Paasi, part of the team that saved the “Wild Boars” football team in Thailand, said on Wednesday that rescuers

were “racing against time” inside the cave, which he called an “abandoned gold mine”.

The cave system, located in a remote mountainous area, extends deep underground, with multiple levels and tight tunnels.

Yesterday morning, rain sent more soil and water into the cave, according to a Laotian logistics staffer for a firm supplying vehicles to support the rescue operation.

“If there isn’t too much more rain, they may be able to bring them out today (yesterday). But if heavier rain comes, it could take a few more days,” said the man, who requested anonymity due to fears of reprisal from his employer.

Local villagers, rescue groups and logistics workers were also supporting the operation, with more than 20 people standing by at the cave entrance, he said.

“Morale improved yesterday (Wednesday). People are happy and hopeful today (yesterday) after the five people were found.” – AFP

Philippine senator charged over flood control scandal

MANILA – Philippine prosecutors filed criminal charges yesterday against a senator allegedly involved in a massive corruption scandal over bogus flood control projects.

The charges came almost a year after President Ferdinand Marcos put the so-called “ghost” infrastructure projects, believed to have cost Filipino taxpayers billions of dollars, centre stage during a July speech.

Several construction firm owners, government officials and politicians have been accused of pocketing funds from the projects, but this is the first time a criminal case has been filed against a sitting lawmaker over the scandal.

Yesterday, Assistant Ombudsman Mico Clavano said the charges against Jose “Jinggoy” Estrada, a senator and son of former Philippine president Joseph Estrada, stemmed from “an intricate mechanism involving illegal budgetary insertions and project

allocations” for fiscal year 2025 that allowed him to amass a kickback of over 573 million pesos (US\$9.2 million).

The charges include graft and plunder, a non-bailable offence referring to massive corruption punishable by life imprisonment.

Estrada’s co-respondents include former Department of Public Works and Highways secretary Manuel Bonoan, as well as local engineering officials.

Estrada did not immediately respond to an AFP request for comment.

“Our case is built on solid, immovable evidence,” Clavano told reporters, adding that arrest warrants will be issued once the court finds probable cause.

“The Office of the Ombudsman is determined to pursue all cases still pending. We have one shot to get these cases right. The Filipino people need to see justice.”

On Tuesday, Ombudsman

Jesus Crispin Remulla said around eight more senators were being investigated and that three of them could also face charges. He did not provide their names.

Remulla said the president’s congressman cousin Martin Romualdez, who resigned as a House Speaker in September after being implicated in the scandal, is also being investigated.

Last year, former congressman Elizaldy Co, public works officials and members of a construction firm were charged in connection to the scheme.

Corruption has long been a problem in the Philippines’ brand of free-wheeling democracy, and accounts for much of the massive poverty in the Southeast Asian nation of 112 million people.

Estrada was charged in 2014 with plundering millions of dollars meant for government development projects, but the court acquitted him a decade later. – AFP

Thai court dismisses royal insult case against ex-opposition leader

BANGKOK – A Thai court yesterday dismissed a royal defamation case against a former opposition leader over comments he made during the COVID-19 pandemic, in a rare ruling in favour of a prominent government critic.

Thailand’s strict lese majeste law protects the royal family from criticism and carries jail terms of up to 15 years per offence.

Thanathorn Juangroongruangkit, former leader of the now-defunct Future Forward Party, was charged over a Facebook live broadcast in 2021 criticising the government’s procurement of COVID-19 vaccines, linked to a company owned by the king.

Bangkok’s Criminal Court ruled

the comments were aimed at then-prime minister Prayut Chan-O-Cha’s vaccine administration and did not amount to royal defamation, according to Thai Lawyers for Human Rights.

“The evidence brought by the plaintiff was not sufficient,” the group wrote on social media.

The verdict is a rare success for a major opposition figure, many of whom rights advocates say have been targeted by judicial processes because they are perceived as challenging to the nation’s conservative establishment.

At least three former MPs from the opposition Move Forward Party, a successor of Future Forward, have previously been sentenced under the lese majeste

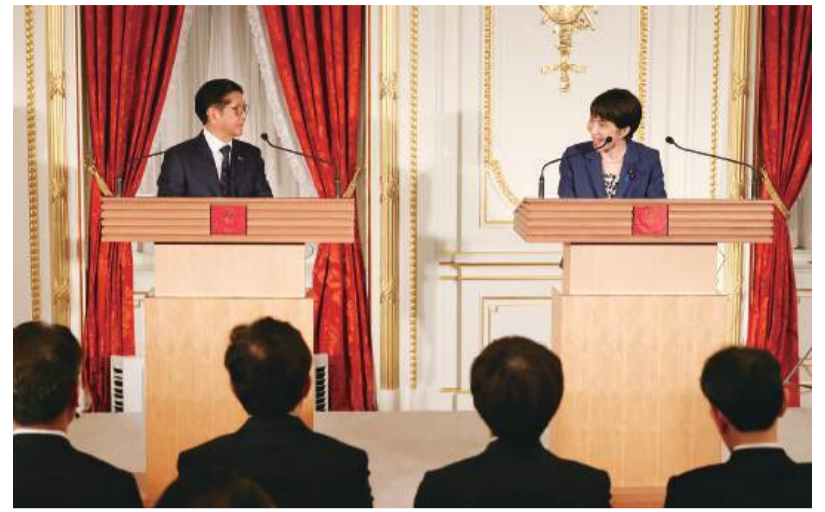
law over their political activities.

Another 10 MPs, including the current opposition leader, Natthaphong Ruengpanyawut, are under court investigation over their support to reform the strict law.

If found guilty, they could face lifetime bans on holding political office and be stripped of their right to vote for 10 years.

The 47-year-old heir to one of Thailand’s largest auto parts manufacturers, Thanathorn was banned from holding office in a separate case in 2020.

But he remains active in politics and helped campaign for the People’s Party, the latest iteration of Future Forward, in the last election in February. – AFP



Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos (left) and Japanese Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi take part in a joint press conference at the Akasaka Palace State Guest House in Tokyo yesterday.

– AFP

Cambodian, Thai FM's discuss border issue

PHNOM PENH – Cambodia’s Foreign Minister Prak Sokhonn and his Thai counterpart Sihasak Phuanketkeow have discussed the border situation between the two ASEAN member states on the margins of the United Nations Security Council High-Level Open Debate in New York, said a Cambodian foreign ministry’s press release issued late on Wednesday.

Both ministers met on Tuesday, following up on the Trilateral Meeting between Cambodia, Thailand, and the Philippines, held on the sidelines of the 48th ASEAN Summit in Cebu, the Philippines on May 7, during which the leaders tasked the foreign ministers of Cambodia and Thailand to discuss confidence-building measures and explore ways forward.

“During the meeting, both sides had a frank and open exchange of views on the border situation between the two countries,” the press release said.

Sokhonn reiterated Cambodia’s position regarding the initiation of compulsory conciliation under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) and called for the full and effective implementation, in good faith and with sincerity, of the Joint Statement of December 27, 2025 in its entirety, it added.

Sokhonn also informed his counterpart that Cambodia stands ready to work with Thailand to implement the measures agreed upon by the two prime ministers in Cebu in order to rebuild trust and work toward a just and lasting solution.

“In this spirit, both sides reaffirmed their commitment to maintain close and regular communication,” the press release said.

Cambodia and Thailand agreed to an immediate ceasefire on December 27, 2025, after three weeks of armed conflict, which caused casualties on both sides.

– Xinhua

Indonesian researchers examine medicinal plants for diabetes treatment

JAKARTA – Researchers at Andalas University in Indonesia’s West Sumatra province are examining whether a mix of local medicinal plants may help treat diabetes and hypertension, the university has said.

Professor Fauzan Azima from the university’s Faculty of Agricultural Technology said that the research centers on a combination of three traditional medicinal plants: cinnamon, ground cherry and Dayak onion. The plant extracts contain bioactive compounds known for antioxidant and anti-inflammatory effects.

Azima said diabetes and hypertension are closely related metabolic disorders that may lead to oxidative stress, chronic inflammation and gradual organ damage. Laboratory findings showed that the combined extracts helped restore blood glucose levels and blood pressure in animals suffering from both conditions.

The study, conducted by researchers from several Indonesian universities, is set to continue with further studies on safety, mechanisms and clinical use before human use.

– Xinhua



Commuters exit a subway car in Seoul yesterday.

– AFP

Simple blood test shows promise for personalizing lung cancer therapy

SYDNEY – A single blood test could help doctors predict how lung cancer patients will respond to treatment before therapy begins, Australian-led research reveals.

Focusing on non-small cell lung cancer (NSCLC), the most common form of the disease, the study showed how analyzing proteins in a blood sample could support earlier and better-informed treatment decisions, said a statement from Australia's University of Queensland (UQ) released Wednesday.

The approach could change how treatment decisions are made, "a step towards truly personalized lung cancer care," said Associate Professor Arutha Kulasinghe from UQ's Frazer Institute.

"We want to use a patient's own biology to guide treatment decisions at diagnosis," said Kulasinghe, who led the study published in *npj Precision Oncology*.

"At the moment, clinicians often have to make treatment decisions

without a clear picture of how a patient will respond. What we're showing is that information already exists in the blood," he said.

Researchers collected blood from NSCLC patients before and after surgery and immunotherapy, then measured thousands of proteins and applied statistical modelling to identify signals linked to treatment response and disease progression.

"If we can tell from a blood sample who is most likely to relapse, or who will respond to immunotherapy, we can match patients to the right treatment sooner," Kulasinghe said, adding the findings were validated on an independent testing platform.

Researchers said blood-based monitoring would be "far less invasive than repeat biopsies and could give us earlier warning of recurrence" in lung cancer, which kills more people than any other cancer worldwide. The team is exploring whether the method can be applied to other cancers. – *Xinhua*



Bangladeshi migrants who had allegedly illegally crossed the border, arrive for verification near the Indian Border Security Force (BSF) camp at Hakimpur on the outskirts of Kolkata, India yesterday.

Hundreds of people in India's border region with Bangladesh have fled to the frontier, police said on Wednesday, after the government ordered the construction of detention centres for undocumented Bangladeshi migrants and Rohingya refugees. – *AFP*

Myanmar leader to visit India for first trip abroad as president

YANGON – Myanmar's President Min Aung Hlaing will travel to India tomorrow for a five-day visit, New Delhi said, his first trip abroad since becoming civilian leader.

The Myanmar foreign ministry, which announced yesterday an official visit to India "in the near future", said Min Aung Hlaing would be accompanied by a delegation of ministers and other officials.

India's foreign ministry said in a statement that the visit would last from tomorrow to Wednesday.

The former military chief will hold talks with India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi and meet with business representatives, according to both governments. Myanmar also said a meeting with Indian President Droupadi Murmu was planned.

The visit "is expected to further strengthen and deepen the multi-faceted relations between the two countries", New Delhi said.

Ex-junta chief Min Aung Hlaing

was sworn in as Myanmar's president in April, continuing his rule from a civilian post five years after snatching power in a military coup.

As the nation's armed forces chief, he ousted the elected government of Aung San Suu Kyi in 2021, detaining the popular democratic figurehead and triggering an ongoing civil war.

After five years of ruling by diktat, Min Aung Hlaing organised an election ending in January that excluded Suu Kyi's party and large swaths of the country under rebel control.

The vote also secured a walkover win for Min Aung Hlaing and military allies in parliament who backed him into the top office.

His swearing-in ceremony was attended by representatives from the neighbouring nations of China, India and Thailand as well as 20 other countries, according to parliamentary officials. – *AFP*

Fund for climate-exposed Pacific nation invests in fossil fuels

Steven Trask

SYDNEY – A trust fund set up to help a South Pacific nation gravely threatened by climate change has invested in coal mining, gas exploration and the world's largest crude oil refinery, an AFP investigation has revealed.

Low-lying Pacific island nation Tuvalu said it was reviewing the "fossil fuel exposure" of the US\$200 million fund after it was presented with AFP's findings.

Few countries are more exposed to climate change than Tuvalu, a chain of coral atolls reckoning with acidifying oceans, tropical disease and rising seas.

Land is already so scarce across the archipelago halfway between Australia and Hawaii that the international airport runway doubles as a makeshift sports field.

With a fragile economy and few natural resources, Tuvalu relies on a government trust fund to help foot the spiralling costs of the climate crisis.

Tuvalu has entrusted management of its single-largest financial asset to advisory firm Mercer, which has invested in funds holding stakes in major fossil fuel companies, according to financial records and government reports reviewed by AFP.

Tuvalu climate activist Richard Gokrun said it was "really shocking" to see the nation tied up with fossil fuel companies.

"We stand strong for the phase-out of fossil fuels, because we see the impacts to our country," the former weather forecaster told AFP from the capital of Funafuti.

"The major changes that we are seeing are sea-level rise. We are starting to see new places are getting flooded or inundated."

The Tuvalu Trust Fund was established in 1987 with help from Australia, New Zealand and the United Kingdom, providing crucial revenue to a nation reliant on foreign aid.

Mercer took over management in 2022.

'Adverse impacts'

Tuvalu's expectations are laid out in the fund's "investment objectives".

"Tuvalu is particularly susceptible to the adverse impacts of climate change and it is appropriate to reflect this in the investment strategy," the document states.

The fund must minimise its exposure to "fossil fuel reserves and carbon emissions" where possible, the document adds.

Mercer invested Tuvalu's money in funds specialising in sectors like "Australian shares", "international shares" and "emerging markets", according to a quarterly report dated September 2025.

Mercer is not required to list each of the dozens of companies in these funds, but does publish the 10 biggest holdings.



A general view shows the coastline of Funafuti Atoll, Tuvalu on February 19, 2004. A trust fund set up to help a South Pacific nation gravely threatened by climate change has invested in coal mining, gas exploration and the world's largest crude oil refinery, an AFP investigation has revealed. – *AFP*

AFP analysed this data for 14 Mercer funds held by Tuvalu.

Mercer's "emerging markets" fund invested in Indian multinational Reliance Industries, according to holdings data from December 2025.

Reliance Industries owns the Jamnagar petrochemical complex in western India, a sprawling industrial facility described as the largest single-site crude oil refinery in the world.

It pumped out nearly 20 million tonnes of planet-heating carbon dioxide in 2022, making it the world's highest-emitting oil refinery, according to non-profit Climate Trace.

Funds for fossil fuels

Tuvalu is also invested in a Mercer fund that holds American utilities The Southern Company and Duke Energy, the second and third-largest greenhouse gas emitters in the United States, according to the Political Economy Research Institute.

The Southern Company paid US\$60 million to "groups and firms involved in climate disinformation campaigns between 1993 and 2004", the US-based Energy and Policy Institute found in a 2024 report.

Mercer also put Tuvalu's money into funds invested in mining behemoth Rio Tinto and Australian oil-and-gas giant Woodside Energy, which government data says are among Australia's 10 largest greenhouse gas emitters.

Investments in Woodside are particularly awkward for Tuvalu, which was scathing when Australia approved a 40-year extension for Woodside's North West Shelf gas project in 2025.

Climate Minister Maina Talia warned then that the project's emissions threatened Tuvalu's very "survival", urging Australia to reject the extension.

About 12 percent of the Tuvalu Trust Fund – or US\$25 million – is invested in Mercer's "Australian shares fund", which has its largest holding in mining and metals firm BHP, one of Australia's

most valuable companies and the world's biggest miner.

BHP has significantly divested from thermal coal in recent years, but still has a stake in Australian mines digging up the fossil fuel for steelmaking.

'Death sentence'

Tuvalu will receive a rare burst of international attention later this year when it hosts leaders for a special summit ahead of the UN's COP31 climate conference, billed as a chance to show how climate change is battering the region.

Tuvalu is targeting the COP process to find "new contributors" to its trust fund, according to a September government report.

Its Prime Minister Feleti Teo has made clear that he believes "opening, subsidising and exporting fossil fuels is immoral and unacceptable".

"To put it plainly – it is a death sentence for us if larger nations continue to open new fossil fuel projects," he said in 2024.

But Mercer's investments appear to show "virtually no formal consideration for climate change", said University of Otago climate finance expert Sebastian Gehricke.

AFP's reporting "clearly warrants further investigation," added Ivan Diaz-Rainey, a finance professor at Australia's Griffith University.

He urged "full disclosure of holdings and a clear account of what actions have been taken to give effect to the fund's commitments to climate action".

A spokeswoman said Tuvalu Trust Fund (TTF) was reviewing its exposure to fossil fuels in light of AFP's reporting.

"Since Tuvalu is particularly susceptible to the adverse impacts of climate change, the TTF continues to seek to minimise the fund's exposure to fossil fuel reserves and carbon emissions," she added.

Mercer said: "We do not provide commentary or analysis on our clients or their investment portfolios." – *AFP*

US, Iran accuse each other of violating truce after attacks

TEHRAN – The United States and Iran accused each other of violating an ongoing truce yesterday following an exchange of fire, three months after the Middle East war began with a wave of US-Israeli strikes on the Islamic republic.

The trading of fire was the most serious since the ceasefire started in April, rattling ongoing efforts to negotiate an end to the war and drawing in US ally Kuwait, which accused Iran of a “dangerous escalation”.

It came as violence on the war’s Lebanese front escalated sharply after Israel declared much of the country’s south a combat zone and stepped-up strikes, including near Beirut.

Iranian forces had fired at four ships attempting to cross the Strait of Hormuz without authorisation, state broadcaster IRIB reported yesterday. Iran has blockaded the waterway since the start of the war on February 28.

US forces said they had intercepted five attack drones in and around the strait, and prevented the launch of a sixth from a ground control station in the southern port area of Bandar Abbas.

The strike in Bandar Abbas prompted Iran to target “the American airbase that served as the source of the attack”, according to IRIB, citing the country’s Revolutionary Guards.

The Guards did not specify the location of the base, but Kuwait, which hosts US troops, said its air defences had responded to incoming fire.

Its foreign ministry later condemned “the criminal Iranian attacks that targeted the territory of the State of Kuwait with missiles and drones, in a dangerous escalation”.

The US Central Command called the attack an “egregious ceasefire violation”.

Iranian foreign ministry spokesman Esmail Baqaei said the Islamic republic would “take all necessary measures to defend its national sovereignty”, likewise describing the US strikes as “violations” of the truce.

A US official told AFP the actions had



Family members and friends grieve next to the grave of Israeli sergeant Rotem Yanai, a service conditions non-commissioned officer (NCO) in the 435th Battalion of the Givati Brigade, who was killed in a drone attack launched from Lebanon into northern Israel, after her funeral in Givat Ada yesterday. The Israeli military said yesterday that a soldier was killed the day before by a Hezbollah drone near the Lebanon border, taking to 24 the number of its troops killed in the war with the Iran-backed group. A military statement named her as 20-year-old sergeant Rotem Yanai, who “fell during operational activity in northern Israel”. – AFP

been “measured” and “intended to preserve the ceasefire”.

Iran’s Guards threatened a “firm response” yesterday in the event of renewed attacks.

The clash underscored the uncertainty surrounding the stuttering negotiations aimed at formally ending the conflict, though neither side has appeared eager to return to all-out war.

Before yesterday’s strikes, Amir, a 27-year-old software developer in the Iranian capital, said fears of renewed fighting were ever present in spite of the ceasefire and talk of a deal.

“I feel like nothing is certain yet,” he said. “The daily question is: Will there be missile strikes tonight?”

Hormuz impasse

A key focus of the proposed deal has been restoring full traffic in the Strait of Hormuz,

whose closure has global energy markets grappling with curbed supplies of the huge amounts of oil and gas that normally pass through it.

Oil prices bounced higher yesterday after reports of the strikes, reversing much of the previous day’s fall spurred by hopes of a deal.

Yet US sources said terms of the framework were mostly agreed to as of Tuesday, but both sides still needed approval from senior leadership.

President Donald Trump threatened US ally Oman when asked about a possible short-term arrangement allowing it and Iran to control the Hormuz strait.

“No, the strait is going to be open to everybody,” Trump said. “It’s international waters and Oman will behave just like everybody else or we’ll have to blow them up.”

US Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent yesterday also threatened to “aggressively target” Oman if it helped impose a tolling system in the key strait.

Oman mediated talks between the US and Iran in Geneva before the war, and has itself come under attack from Tehran. Pakistan has since taken on a lead mediating role in the peace efforts between Washington and Tehran.

Baqaei condemned the threat towards Oman, calling it “a worrying sign of the normalisation of anarchy and intimidation in international relations”.

Lebanon strikes

In Lebanon, a separate ceasefire has done little to stop the fighting between Israel and Iran-backed Hezbollah, which has only escalated in recent days.

Iran has insisted any agreement to end the war must apply to Lebanon.

The Israeli army said yesterday it had conducted a precise strike in the area of Beirut, with the Lebanese military saying the attack hit an apartment south of the capital.

AFPTV footage showed smoke rising from the area on the edge of Beirut’s southern suburbs, a Hezbollah stronghold, while an AFP correspondent saw residents packing cars and leaving.

Lebanese authorities said yesterday that Israeli attacks in the south had killed at least 14 people, including three children and a soldier.

The previous day it had declared most of south Lebanon “combat zones” and told residents to leave.

Lebanon’s health ministry on Wednesday reported the overall death toll stood at 3,269 since the start of the war.

The Israeli military, meanwhile, said yesterday that a soldier was killed the day before by a Hezbollah drone near the Lebanon border. Twenty-three Israeli troops and one civilian contractor have been killed in the war so far. – AFP

‘Terrorist’ knife attack wounds 3 at Swiss train station: official

Nathalie Olof-Ors

WINTERTHUR, Switzerland – A man reportedly shouting “Allahu akbar!” injured three people in a knife attack at a train station in Switzerland yesterday before being arrested, in what officials said was “a terrorist act”.

Witnesses described scenes of panic and confusion when the man – who authorities said was a 31-year-old Swiss-Turkish national with a history of psychological problems – suddenly began stabbing people at the main train station in Winterthur, Switzerland’s sixth largest city, during the morning rush hour.

“I am exceptionally calling this a terrorist attack,” Mario Fehr, in charge of security in the Swiss canton of Zurich, told a press conference.

Regional police commander Marius Weyermann agreed, telling reporters it was “clear from the scene that the motive for this act must be sought in the realm of radicalisation and extremism”.

He said police had received the first emergency call at 8:28 a.m. (local time) and that the suspected perpetrator was arrested by 8:33 a.m.

The man, identified as Nesip Dedeler, had been checked into a psychiatric clinic earlier this week before he showed up at the Winterthur station, wielding a knife, authorities said.

He injured three men, aged 28, 43 and 52, with the eldest seriously wounded by stab wounds to his thigh and forced to undergo emergency surgery, Weyermann said.

Swiss President Guy Parmelin said he was “shocked by the terrorist attack... This deeply affects me”.

“I wish the three injured a swift and full recovery. And I thank the emergency services for their work.”

“Images broadcast by several Swiss media outlets and on social media showed a man with long dark hair and a full beard running in front of the station shouting “Allahu akbar!” (“God is the greatest!”), while raising his right hand.

A 65-year-old taxi driver named Turhan Muslu told the *Blick* newspaper that he witnessed the attack.

“I saw him rush off the ramp and try to stab a man,” he told the daily, adding that the man had “fought back fiercely”, before station guards arrived and subdued the attacker.

“It all happened so fast. If those security guards hadn’t [arrived] so quickly, I don’t know what would have happened.”

In the published footage, filmed from a distance on a mobile phone, the man, wearing a black T-shirt and shorts, is seen running past a group of young children apparently on a school trip, without stopping.

“I heard a man scream ‘Allahu akbar’ five or six times, in a very agitated manner,” a young man who witnessed the chaos that ensued told *Blick*, which did not provide his name.

The witness described how the young children and other bystanders had “run across the road” in panic.

“I still have goosebumps,” he said.

Psychiatric hospital

Regional authorities said the attacker had grown up in Winterthur, where he had become a naturalised Swiss citizen in 2009. But he appeared to have spent most of the past two years in Turkey.

Dedeler was known to have links to a radical mosque, whose imam was charged in 2017 with calling for the murder of non-practising Muslims, authorities said.

He himself had faced a complaint in 2015 for allegedly violating a ban on spreading propaganda for the Islamic State (IS) jihadist group, they said.

Reacting to the attack, Switzerland’s Islamic Central Council (IZR) said in a statement that it “strongly condemns this

cowardly and barbaric act”.

IS, it added, “is not an Islamic movement, but a perverse terrorist sect whose sole aim is to sow discord, murder innocent people and damage the reputation of Muslims worldwide”.

Swiss authorities also highlighted Dedeler’s history of mental illness, pointing out that he had shown up at a Winterthur police station on Monday this week, speaking incoherently, and he had been taken to a psychiatric clinic.

But he had left the institution the next day, and doctors had determined he did not pose a danger to himself or others, Fehr said.

“Why that decision was made is beyond our knowledge, but the assessment was obviously wrong,” he said. – AFP



Commuters walk past a police vehicle parked in front of the central train station where a man wounded three people with a bladed weapon in Winterthur, near Zurich, yesterday. – AFP

Top EU economies vow to speed up financial integration

BERLIN – The EU's six biggest economies vowed yesterday to set aside differences and speed up integration of their financial markets as the bloc seeks to catch up with the United States and China.

The European Union has been trying for years to bring together its fragmented capital markets, in a bid to provide better investments for EU citizens and unlock more capital for the region's businesses.

The idea languished for years amid bickering between member states, but has been given added impetus as Chinese industry races ahead and ties with the United States sour under President Donald Trump.

German Finance Minister Lars Klingbeil, speaking ahead of talks with five of his EU counterparts in Berlin, said there are "times when we need more Europe – and right now is such a time".

The talks would focus on how "how we can deepen capital markets in Europe, how we can dismantle barriers to cross-border trade, make it easier for investors to invest in Europe, make it easier for European companies to raise capital," he said.

Germany, Europe's biggest economy, "must be prepared to make compromises," he said.

"For this, we must look beyond our national horizons if we want a strong Europe."

French Finance Minister Roland Lescure added that greater efforts were needed "to make sure that European capital stops flying everywhere else, and stays in Europe to finance European solutions for the global problems we face".

"We are doing this for our citizens; we want Europeans to be proud of investing in European companies," he said.

Klingbeil and Lescure were joined by the finance ministers of Italy, the Netherlands, Poland and Spain – a group of countries known as the "E6".

The EU's latest plan to bring together markets is called the Savings and Investments Union, which builds on an earlier project.

But it has been dogged by disagreements, particularly over whether to centralise market supervision.

While the E6 countries back this idea others, such as Ireland and Luxembourg, have expressed reservations.

Some have, however, raised the prospect of several EU states moving forward first, ahead of the rest of the 27-nation bloc. –AFP

Trump's face could appear on US\$250 bill

WASHINGTON, DC – US President Donald Trump could soon appear on a new US\$250 bill in the Republican's latest move to shatter US traditions by putting his personal stamp on national institutions.

A proposal for the new bill, featuring a glaring Trump, was reported yesterday by *The Washington Post*.

If carried out, it would be the first time the image of a living person – let alone a president – had appeared on US currency in a century and a half.

The design mock-up obtained by the *Washington Post* also shows the words "America 250 anniversary," a nod to the United States declaring its independence from Britain on July 4, 1776.

According to the newspaper, two Trump appointees at the US Treasury Department last year began urging staff at the Bureau of Engraving and Printing to prepare prototypes.

Employees there, speaking on condition of anonymity, told the newspaper that the plan raised concerns because it would violate a federal law banning the depiction of living presidents on US money.

Printing bureau director Patricia Solimene had pushed back, warning officials including US Treasurer Brandon Beach of legal and procedural obstacles, the employees told the newspaper.

Solimene was abruptly reassigned from her role, the newspaper reported.

Such worries have not stopped the Trump administration from pressing ahead with its effort to slap his likeness or name on cultural institutions and other items – sparking accusations of a cult of personality around the 79-year-old leader.

Earlier this year the US Commission of Fine Arts, whose members were appointed by Trump, unanimously approved the minting of a commemorative "Semiquincentennial Gold Coin" made of 24-carat gold.

In recent months both the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts and the US Institute of Peace have been rebranded to include Trump's name.

His likeness also stares down from banners draping the US Department of Justice and US Department of Agriculture – and it will soon appear in some US passports, according to the State Department.

Legislation to allow Trump to appear on a US\$250 bill was introduced to Congress last year but has sat idle.

A Treasury spokesperson told the paper that the printing office "is conducting appropriate planning and due diligence" in response to the proposed legislation.

Reaction among Democrats was critical, with Senator Mark Warner, a member of the Senate's banking committee, saying the unprecedented proposal amounted to the White House blatantly "stoking the president's ego." –AFP

UK risks 'lost generation' of jobless young people



Britain's Prime Minister Keir Starmer (right) visits Acton Works, a training facility in Chiswick, London, yesterday to meet apprentices and discuss how the government is tackling youth unemployment. –AFP

Alexandra Bacon

LONDON – Britain risks creating a "lost generation" as the number of young people out of work and education surges, a government-commissioned review warned yesterday.

The number of 16- to 24-year-olds not in employment, education or training – so-called "NEETs" – topped one million in the first quarter of the year for the first time since 2013, separate official data showed.

Without action, that figure could rise to 1.25 million, or one in six young people, within five years, the report said.

"We are at risk of a lost generation," said Alan Milburn, a former Labour cabinet minister who led the review and is due to propose solutions later this year.

"It's a warning that far too many young people are reaching adulthood only to find the door to opportunity closed," he told a press conference.

Calling the report "sobering" but vowing he would not allow a generation to be lost, Prime Minister Keir Starmer pledged to work with Milburn "on what more needs to be done".

For Shana Fatahali, 23, who has spent the past two years searching for work in England's West Midlands, "young people do want to get out there and have a job".

"A lot of the older generation are stuck in the mindset that you

fill your CV out, hand it in and you've got a job just like that. But times have moved on since then," she told AFP.

'Very anxious'

Fatahali, who has a four-year-old child and holds a health and social care diploma, noted there were few jobs "that fit around my responsibilities as a parent".

She described feeling trapped, like many young people, in a cycle of being rejected for lacking experience while unable to gain it without an opportunity.

Starmer commissioned the review last year to understand the causes of rising youth unemployment.

While 84 percent of NEETs want to be employed or in training, the report found that many young people are struggling to reach "the first rung of the career ladder".

It blamed a "sharp decline" in entry-level roles such as hospitality jobs, weekend jobs and apprenticeships.

"There is no shortage of effort on the part of young people. The shortage is of opportunity and of support," Milburn said.

Faith, a 22-year-old in southwest England, told AFP that she struggled to find even part-time work as she neared the end of her master's degree in criminology.

"I was applying everywhere in town, coffee shops, pubs, but they just ignore you," she said, adding that the process made her feel

"very anxious" about the future.

"A lot of people go to university because it's meant to help you get a job, but I haven't seen that personally."

'Multiple barriers'

About a decade ago, Britain had a similar NEET rate to the European Union average. By last year, only Romania recorded a higher rate.

The report found rising mental health problems played a key role in the increase in NEETs in Britain.

"For the first time in perhaps two centuries, changes in health, especially in mental health, are impeding economic growth and causing a contraction in the supply of labour," Milburn said.

The economic cost of the youth unemployment crisis was estimated at around £125 billion (US\$168 billion) per year, taking into account lost tax revenue and higher health and welfare spending.

"Behind the statistics are real young people facing real and often multiple barriers," said Sarah Yong, deputy chief executive at Youth Futures Foundation.

The British Chambers of Commerce (BCC) said the issues identified have "long been reported by businesses".

The "report must be a wake-up call for policymakers about the crisis of young people not in employment, education and training", said Shevaun Haviland, BCC director general. –AFP

African Union's health agency vows Ebola Bundibugyo vaccine by end of 2026

NAIROBI – A vaccine against the Bundibugyo strain of the Ebola virus will be ready by the end of the year, the head of Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (Africa CDC) said yesterday.

The Bundibugyo strain of the virus that has caused a major outbreak in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) currently has no approved vaccine or treatment.

Jean Kaseya, head of Africa CDC, said there were already "some candidates" for a vaccine.

"What we can tell you for sure,

by the end of this year, 2026, Africa CDC will make sure that we have a vaccine and medicine against Bundibugyo," he told reporters in an online briefing.

"Our leaders are ready to invest. We are investing at technical level, at a strategic level, to make sure that [the vaccine] will happen," he added.

Kaseya said he had received a message the previous day from the Russian Ministry of Health stating to have already developed a vaccine against the strain.

A member of his team clarified

that the proposed vaccine targets the Zaire strain of Ebola, and that upcoming discussions with Moscow's Gamaleya National Research Centre would indicate why it may also be effective against the Bundibugyo strain.

Kaseya said there had been at least 1,077 suspected cases since the outbreak was declared on May 15, including 246 deaths.

That is slightly higher than the latest figures from the World Health Organisation (WHO), which has announced 10 confirmed and 223 suspected Ebola deaths. –AFP

Chinese FM hopes Portugal to help promote China-EU ties

NEW YORK – Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi on Wednesday expressed hope that Portugal would play an active role in promoting China-EU relations during his meeting with Portuguese Foreign Minister Paulo Rangel in New York.

China has always regarded the European Union (EU) as an important pole in a multipolar world and supports Europe in achieving strategic autonomy, said Wang, also a member of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Committee.

China and Europe are fully capable of helping each other succeed and achieving mutual benefits, Wang said.

China's top diplomat also said that China is ready to work with Portugal to carry forward the traditional friendship between the two nations, strengthen cooperation in new energy, and deepen cooperation in emerging areas such as artificial intelligence (AI), so as to support the development and revitalization of both sides.

For his part, Rangel said Portugal-China relations enjoy good momentum of development with



Foreign Minister Wang Yi (right), also a member of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Committee, shakes hands with Portuguese Foreign Minister Paulo Rangel during a meeting at the UN headquarters in New York City on Wednesday. – AFP

bright prospects. Portugal firmly adheres to the one-China policy and will reaffirm this clear stance on both bilateral and multilateral occasions.

Portugal opposes protectionism, supports free trade, and is willing to promote the stable and healthy development of EU-China relations, he said.

Wang and Rangel were in New York for a high-level meeting of the UN Security Council on upholding

the purposes and principles of the UN Charter and strengthening the UN-centered international system.

Calling the high-level meeting convened by China timely, Rangel said that the sovereignty and territorial integrity of all states are rooted in the multilateral system and embodied in international law, while supporting the United Nations serves the common interests of Portugal, China and all other countries. – Xinhua

Brazil expects record coffee harvest as productivity recovers

RIO DE JANEIRO – Brazil, the world's largest coffee producer and exporter, forecasts record coffee production in 2026, driven by favorable weather, expanded cultivated areas, and a positive productivity cycle in coffee plantations, the state-owned National Supply Company (CONAB) said last week.

Brazil's coffee production could reach 66.7 million 60-kg sacks in the current cycle, up 18 percent from the previous harvest and the highest volume ever on record.

If the output matches the forecast, production will surpass the previous record of 63.08 million sacks set in 2020.

The coffee boom comes amid recovering agricultural productivity and Brazil's strengthening position

in the international market, where the country remains the world's leading supplier of coffee.

According to CONAB, the total area set aside for coffee cultivation could grow 3.9 percent to 2.34 million hectares, while average national productivity could increase by 13 percent, to 34.4 sacks per hectare.

Production of Arabica coffee, the variety most exported and with the highest added value, is estimated to yield 45.77 million sacks, a 28 percent increase over last year.

CONAB attributed the increase mainly to the positive biennial production cycle and improved weather conditions in the country's top-producing regions.

For robusta coffee, used primarily in instant coffee and

industrial products, output is forecast at 20.9 million sacks, up 0.8 percent from the previous harvest.

The state of Minas Gerais, Brazil's leading coffee-producing state, is expected to account for nearly half of national output, with an estimated harvest of 33.4 million sacks, a 29.8 percent increase compared to last year.

Despite strong projected production growth, Brazil's coffee exports fell 22.5 percent year on year to 11.5 million sacks between January and April 2026, according to official data from the Ministry of Development, Industry, Trade and Services.

The decline reflects low domestic inventories following limited harvests in previous years and sustained international demand. – Xinhua

China vows to support Cuba against 'power politics and bullying'

BEIJING – China's foreign minister Wang Yi vowed to support Havana and confront "power politics and bullying" during talks with his Cuban counterpart in New York, state media reported on Wednesday, as the Caribbean island faces mounting pressure from the United States.

Cuba is suffering under a US energy blockade, and President Donald Trump has openly mused about taking over the country.

China has close ties to the communist state and has promised to donate 60,000 tonnes of rice to help Cuba deal with shortages, the first batch of which arrived last Sunday.

"China will continue to uphold justice and speak out on Cuba's behalf, support the just cause of the Cuban people, and contribute to the development of Cuba's economy and the improvement of its people's livelihoods," Wang told Cuban foreign minister Bruno Rodríguez Parrilla, according to a Chinese readout of their meeting.

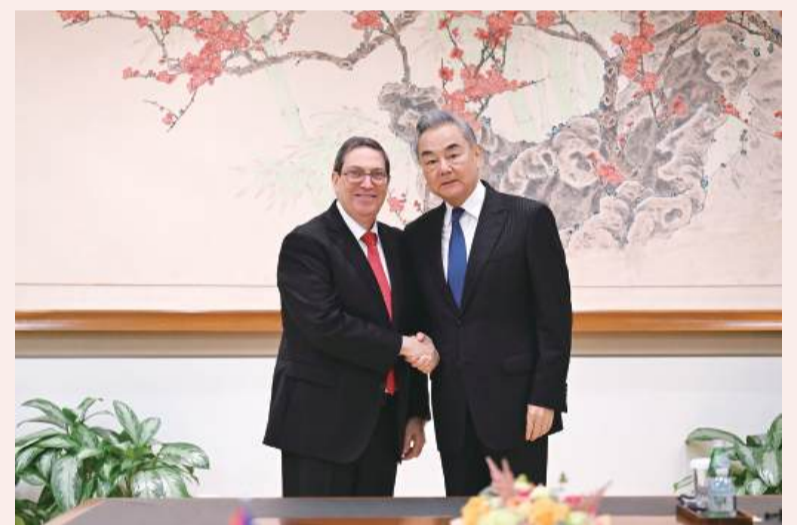
"It is essential to steadfastly respect the sovereignty and independence of all nations, and to oppose all forms of power politics and bullying," he added, in an apparent reference to the US.

The Trump administration cut off Cuba's supply of oil from Havana's ally Venezuela after it ousted Nicolás Maduro in a raid in January.

Washington tightened the screws last week by indicting former Cuban president Raúl Castro over the downing of two civilian US planes in 1996, fuelling fears that the US was seeking a pretext to overthrow the government in Havana.

China's foreign ministry urged the US to "stop brandishing... the judicial stick against Cuba and stop threatening force at every turn", in response to the indictment last week.

"China firmly supports Cuba in safeguarding its national sovereignty and national dignity and opposes external interference," spokesman Guo Jiakun said at the time. – AFP



Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi, also a member of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of China Central Committee, meets with Cuban Foreign Minister Bruno Rodríguez at the UN headquarters in New York City on Wednesday. – Xinhua

Angola to introduce import rules to support local producers

LUANDA – Angola will require importers of selected food products to source at least 20 percent of equivalent goods from domestic producers before obtaining import licenses, a measure aimed at promoting economic diversification and strengthening local industries, the government announced last week.

Minister of Industry and Commerce Rui Miguéns de Oliveira said that the policy is outlined in an executive decree approved by the Economic Commission of the Cabinet Council and will take effect 30 days after its official publication.

The minister said the measure will initially apply to five products for which domestic output is considered significant but still insufficient to meet national demand: pork, poultry, 5-percent broken white rice, refined sugar, and tilapia.

"Anyone wishing to import 100 tonnes of pork will have to prove to the Ministry of Industry and Commerce that they will acquire, have contracted, or are in the process of acquiring at least 20 tonnes from national producers," explained the minister.

He said the policy is designed to expand market opportunities for local producers and facilitate the sale of domestically manufactured goods. The decree will also require wholesale and retail outlets to give greater visibility and prominence to locally produced products on shelves and in commercial spaces, while prohibiting practices that limit or obscure consumer access to such goods.

"Products of national production will always have some prominence in our commercial units," the minister said, noting that compliance checks will begin during the import licensing process.

The minister added that economic oversight authorities will monitor implementation of the measures through inspections and consultations with producers, associations, and consumers.

He also dismissed concerns that the restrictions could trigger price speculation, saying stronger domestic production would help increase supply and stabilize prices of essential goods. – Xinhua

Mozambique taps gas revenues for post-unrest recovery, flood reconstruction

MAPUTO – The Mozambican government has approved the use of billions of meticais from accumulated oil and gas revenues to fund reconstruction efforts following post-election unrest and recent natural disasters, officials said.

The decision was announced on Tuesday after a meeting of the Council of Ministers in Maputo, where the government approved amendments to the 2026 Economic and Social Plan and State Budget to be submitted to parliament.

Government spokesperson Inocêncio Impissa told a press briefing that the revised budget incorporates 3.57 billion meticais (US\$56 million) in additional domestic resources generated from petroleum and natural gas production between 2022 and 2025.

According to the government,

the funds had been held in reserve while authorities finalized legal and financial mechanisms governing the management of hydrocarbon revenues.

Impissa stressed that the money does not come from Mozambique's Sovereign Wealth Fund, which is established to safeguard part of the country's gas earnings for future generations, adding that only the state's share of hydrocarbon revenues would finance the revised spending plan.

According to Impissa, the additional resources will mainly support the reconstruction of public infrastructure damaged during post-election demonstrations in 2024 and 2025, as well as roads, buildings and facilities affected by floods and cyclones.

Mozambique has faced mounting fiscal pressure in recent months as authorities sought to

respond to political instability, disaster recovery needs and growing demands for public services.

The spokesperson said the revised budget aims to accelerate the restoration of critical infrastructure and reinforce socioeconomic resilience in affected communities.

Under the revised framework, domestic revenue is expected to rise from 442.9 billion meticais to 446.5 billion meticais, while overall public spending will increase to 524.2 billion meticais, equivalent to 32.1 percent of the country's gross domestic product.

During the briefing, Impissa also addressed reports of a possible visit by International Monetary Fund (IMF) representatives to Mozambique, saying any future negotiations with international lenders would take place "from a position of greater flexibility" for the country. – Xinhua

Salah, Belgian golden generation eye last shot at World Cup glory



PARIS – Egypt's Mohamed Salah and Belgium stalwarts Kevin De Bruyne, Romelu Lukaku and Thibaut Courtois head into Group G at the 2026 World Cup knowing this summer's tournament will likely be their last chance for glory on football's biggest stage.

Their respective countries have been drawn together into the same pool, alongside New Zealand and Iran, whose participation at the World Cup had been thrown into question following co-host country United States and Israel's war with the Middle East nation.

The arrival on the international scene in the early 2010s of a Belgian golden generation, featuring Eden Hazard, Vincent Kompany, De Bruyne, Lukaku and Courtois, seemed to herald a new dawn for the country as they sought to win a first major trophy.

But despite rising to become FIFA's number one-ranked team, the best result that glittering cast of stars managed to return was a third-placed finish at the 2018 World Cup.

Of that generation remain only Napoli duo De Bruyne and Lukaku, now aged 34 and 33 respectively, and Real Madrid goalkeeper Courtois, 34, who returned to the fold last year after a falling-out with previous coach Domenico Tedesco that caused him to miss Belgium's round-of-16 exit at Euro 2024.

The trio will suspect that the upcoming World Cup in the US, Canada and Mexico will be their last chance of turning all that initial hope and expectation into some long-awaited silverware.

And the current batch of Belgian hopefuls is not without talent, as the likes of Amadou Onana, Charles De Ketelaere, Jeremy Doku and Youri

Tielemans more than have what it takes to be a stellar supporting cast to their star team-mates.

Hamstrung?

Salah, his country's second-highest goalscorer in history, who will turn 34 during the World Cup, will doubtless have more modest ambitions heading into the tournament as part of an Egyptian team that have failed to win a trophy since being crowned Africa Cup of Nations champions for a third straight time in 2010.

Despite being widely considered the finest footballer ever to come out of the North African country, Liverpool legend Salah has never tasted success with Egypt.

His sole previous World Cup appearance, in 2018, was hampered by a shoulder injury he suffered in that year's Champions League final and he goes into this edition struggling for fitness after suffering a hamstring injury in late April, which curtailed his Anfield farewell.

Iran are set to appear at their fourth straight World Cup, but much of the build-up to their latest attempt to reach the knockout stages for the first time has been overshadowed by questions about whether they would be allowed to enter the States.

After a call was made by US special envoy Paolo Zampolli to have his native Italy replace Iran at the World Cup, American Secretary of State Marco Rubio interceded to deny that Washington had asked the Iranian team not to come to the tournament.

New Zealand will make their third appearance at a World Cup finals this summer thanks to a 3-0 victory over New Caledonia in the final of OFC qualifying.

– AFP

Germany enter World Cup Group E with score to settle



PARIS – Four-time champions Germany head to North America seeking to break their more recent World Cup hoodoo after failing to make it out of the group stage at the last two editions.

Since Mario Goetze's extra-time winner at the Maracana in the 2014 final, perennial World Cup contenders Germany have had a miserable time of it on football's biggest stage.

Their title defence in Russia in 2018 ended with a bottom-place finish in their group, before their campaign in Qatar four years later hit the rocks at the same stage.

Germany have won just two World Cup games since lifting the trophy in Rio de Janeiro, against Sweden and then Costa Rica.

Standing between Julian Nagelsmann's charges and a return to the knockout stages at the 2026 edition in Group E are 2023 Africa Cup of Nations champions Ivory Coast, Ecuador and World Cup debutants Curacao.

Since 38-year-old Nagelsmann took over Germany two years ago,

he has overseen an upturn in their fortunes, spearheaded by extravagant youthful talents such as Florian Wirtz and Jamal Musiala, as well as experienced stalwarts like Joshua Kimmich and Antonio Rudiger.

They reached the quarter-finals of Euro 2024 on home soil and then made it to the last four in the UEFA Nations League the following year, falling on both occasions to the eventual winners of the respective tournaments, Spain and Portugal.

Elephants, Blue Wave, Tricolor

Germany's biggest threat in Group E will likely be Ivory Coast as the Elephants return to the World Cup for the first time since 2014.

Long gone is the great generation of Didier Drogba and the Toure brothers, Yaya and Kolo, but Emese Fae's current squad nonetheless boasts some mercurial talents such as Nicolas Pepe and Amad Diallo.

After a disappointing AFCON title defence this winter, which was curtailed at the last-eight stage by Egypt, Ivory Coast enter

their fourth World Cup finals with probably their best chance yet of making the knockout stages after three consecutive third-placed finishes between 2006 and 2014.

Caribbean island nation Curacao will appear for the first time at the global showpiece after emerging unbeaten from CONCACAF qualifying.

Since becoming the smallest nation ever to make a World Cup, their momentum has stalled somewhat as Curacao crashed to consecutive defeats against China and Australia in warm-up friendlies in March.

Their buildup was also disturbed after the man who guided them to the World Cup, Dutch veteran Dick Advocaat, first departed his role for family reasons and then returned after his replacement, compatriot Fred Rutten, stood down.

Ecuador qualified for the tournament by finishing second in South American qualifying, ahead of Brazil, Uruguay and Colombia, meaning they certainly won't be there just to make up the numbers at this enlarged 48-team World Cup.

– AFP

Football shorts

Barcelona reach agreement with Newcastle's Gordon

BARCELONA - Barcelona reached an agreement with Newcastle on Wednesday for the transfer of England international Anthony Gordon, the La Liga champions told AFP, confirming reports in the Spanish press.

The 25-year-old winger, who has been named in England's World Cup squad, is expected to be Barca's first summer signing, as the club looks to strengthen its attack following the departure of its veteran Polish striker Robert Lewandowski.

According to an internal source contacted by AFP, the Catalan giants, once again allowed to sign players without financial restrictions, had their offer of 70 million euros (US\$81 million) plus 10 million euros in bonuses accepted by the Premier League club.

The official announcement of Gordon's move is expected by the end of the week, the club said.

According to the Catalan press, Gordon's arrival, as a left winger who can also play centrally, does not rule out other potential attacking signings.

Born in Liverpool and developed at Everton, Gordon joined Newcastle in 2023 for around 50 million euros.

He faced Barca twice in this season's

Champions League campaign, during which he scored 10 goals in 12 matches. – AFP

Italiano terminates Bologna contract amid Napoli rumours

MILAN – Vincenzo Italiano quit Bologna yesterday after agreeing to terminate his contract with the Serie A club ahead of a rumoured move to Napoli following the departure of Antonio Conte.

“Bologna FC 1909 announces that a mutual agreement has been reached with Vincenzo Italiano to terminate his contract,” said Bologna in a statement.

“Italiano informed the club that he believes his time at Bologna has come to an end after two seasons marked by excellent results.”

The 48-year-old led Bologna to victory in the Italian Cup last year, the club's first major trophy since previously winning it in 1974.

Bologna missed out on European football this season after finishing eighth in Serie A, with a quarter-final exit from the Europa League at the hands of eventual winners Aston Villa.

Italiano is reportedly in a battle with Massimiliano Allegri, recently sacked by AC Milan, for the vacant post left at Napoli by Conte, who is in turn the favourite to take over the Italian national team. – AFP

Neymar a doubt for Brazil's World Cup opener due to injury

RIO DE JANEIRO – Brazil forward Neymar is a doubt for the start of the World Cup after injuring his calf, requiring two to three weeks of treatment, the national team's doctor Rodrigo Lasmar said yesterday.

The 34-year-old Santos star will miss Brazil's two pre-World Cup friendlies against Panama and Egypt, but may also be out of their tournament opener against Morocco on June 13.

An MRI scan “identified a grade two muscle injury... our expectation is that he will be available in two to three weeks,” Lasmar said at Brazil's pre-tournament training centre just outside Rio de Janeiro.

Neymar joined his international teammates at the training centre on Wednesday but sat out the first session.

He has missed Santos's last few matches due to what his club coach Cuca had called “a slight injury”.

His inclusion in Brazil coach Carlo Ancelotti's 26-man squad for the World Cup was something of a surprise as Neymar had not been picked for the national team in almost three years.

A mixture of injuries and poor form had left him outside the national team set-up, with

Ancelotti citing concerns over his fitness after leaving him out of Brazil's squad for March friendlies against France and Croatia.

However, Neymar is Brazil's all-time leading goalscorer with 79 goals in 128 appearances for the Selecao. This will be his fourth World Cup.

His last appearance for Brazil was in 2023 during a World Cup qualifier against Uruguay.

– AFP

London to host 2026 Ballon d'Or in October - organisers

PARIS - The Ballon d'Or ceremony for 2026 will take place for the first time in London on October 26 to mark the 70th anniversary of the trophy being awarded to England's Stanley Matthews in 1956, organisers announced yesterday.

The most prestigious individual prize in football is an award that for many years had been dominated by Lionel Messi and Cristiano Ronaldo.

Paris Saint-Germain winger Ousmane Dembele won last year, in a ceremony held in Paris by Groupe L'Equipe, owners of the *France Football* magazine.

The London venue for the 2026 ceremony was not revealed. – AFP



Italian football World Cup winner Marco Materazzi (second right) attends the opening of the FIFA Museum in Hong Kong on yesterday. – AFP

Ailing Sinner crashes out of French Open, Sabalenka through

Jed Court

PARIS – Jannik Sinner succumbed to illness and a remarkable Juan Manuel Cerundolo comeback to crash out of the French Open on Thursday, blowing the men's tournament wide open, as Aryna Sabalenka safely avoided a similar fate to progress.

Men's world number one Sinner was cruising when leading by two sets and 5-1 in the third set before suddenly struggling with his movement as he lost 18 points in a row.

Sinner took a medical time-out, complained of feeling "dizzy" and left a sweltering Court Philippe Chatrier for treatment, but after returning still slipped to a 3-6, 2-6, 7-5, 6-1, 6-1 second-round loss to world number 56 Cerundolo.

"I struggled, starting to feel very dizzy. Very low of energy. Tried to serve it out, but didn't have a lot of energy," said the Italian.

"Woke up this morning, didn't feel very well and tried to keep the points very short."

Sinner suffered his earliest exit from a Grand Slam since the 2023 French Open, as Cerundolo completed one of tennis' biggest shocks in recent years and set up a last-32 tie against Spanish youngster Martin Landaluce tomorrow.

The 24-year-old Sinner was the latest player to wilt under the blazing sun this week, seeing his 30-match winning streak, after taking titles in Rome, Madrid and Monte Carlo, Miami and Indian Wells, come to a shuddering halt.



Aryna Sabalenka cools down during a break in play of her singles match against France's Elsa Jacquemot on Court Philippe-Chatrier at the French Open tennis tournament at the Roland-Garros Complex in Paris yesterday. – AFP

The Italian will now have to wait until next year, when injured rival Carlos Alcaraz will likely be back in action, for his next chance to complete the career Grand Slam.

The top seed was in total control and romping towards the most routine of victories before he suddenly started to struggle physically, losing three consecutive games to love.

He asked the chair umpire what his options were when 0-40 down in the next game, before being evaluated by a physio, saying he felt dizzy and needed to vomit.

Sinner gingerly returned to the court after treatment to applause from the crowd but continued to melt in the 32C heat as Cerundolo took the set.

Unheralded Argentinian Cerundolo appeared inspired by the unexpected opportunity and raced

to victory against his deflated opponent, who was left bent over double after every lengthy rally.

"I was little bit lucky, I feel sorry for him," said Cerundolo, whose older brother Francisco also booked a last-32 spot shortly afterwards.

French 17-year-old Moise Kouame became the youngest man to reach the third round at a major since Rafael Nadal at Wimbledon 23 years ago.

The wildcard delighted a raucous crowd with a dramatic 6-3, 7-5, 3-6, 2-6, 7-6 (10/8) over Paraguay's Adolfo Daniel Vallejo after four hours and 56 minutes on Court Suzanne Lenglen.

"Frankly, without you, I would never have won this match, never," Kouame told the crowd.

Canadian fourth seed Felix Auger-Aliassime reached the third round for



Brazilian chair umpire Ana Carvalho helps France's Moise Kouame to stand up after he fell on the court while playing against Paraguay's Adolfo Daniel Vallejo during their singles match at the French Open tennis tournament on Court Suzanne-Lenglen at the Roland-Garros Complex in Paris yesterday. – AFP

only the second time in his last eight Grand Slam events, beating Roman Andres Burruchaga in four sets.

Sabalenka, Gauff through

Women's world number one Sabalenka ground down a battling Elsa Jacquemot to win 7-5, 6-2.

The 67th-ranked home hope Jacquemot pushed Sabalenka for long periods on Chatrier but ultimately could not live with the Belarusian's power.

Sabalenka, chasing a fifth Grand Slam title and first at Roland Garros, will next take on Daria Kasatkina.

Reigning champion Coco Gauff also booked her place in the last 32, seeing off Egyptian qualifier Mayar Sherif 6-3, 6-2.

The American, who could face Sabalenka in the semis in a rematch

of last year's final, got the better of a scrappy match featuring 11 breaks of serve.

"It was a physical match, a tough match, my patience was really tested today," said Gauff.

Naomi Osaka edged closer to a possible last-16 meeting with Sabalenka after reaching the third round for the first time in seven years by beating Croatia's Donna Vekic 7-6 (7/1), 6-4.

The four-time Grand Slam champion will face a tough test from American teenager Iva Jovic tomorrow after the 17th seed thrashed compatriot Emma Navarro 6-0, 6-3.

Sixth seed Amanda Anisimova, who lost the Wimbledon and US Open finals last year, progressed when her opponent Julia Grabher retired after losing the first set 6-0. – AFP

LA28 unveils Paralympic competition schedule

LOS ANGELES – LA28 organizers on Wednesday unveiled the competition schedule for the 2028 Paralympic Games, which will feature a record 23 sports and 560 medal events across 14 days of competition.

The Games will be the first Paralympics staged in Los Angeles and is set to be the largest in history, with more than 1,100 hours of competition planned across nearly 20 venues in seven competition zones around the Los Angeles region.

According to the organizers, all venues will be located within a 35-mile radius, aiming to provide a compact and accessible Games experience.

The opening ceremony will be held on August 15, 2028, with the closing ceremony scheduled for August 27.

Para climbing will make its Paralympic debut at LA28 after being added to the program after the International Paralympic Committee in 2024 approved to include Para climbing into the 2028 program. The sport will feature 80 athletes competing in eight medal events from August 24 to 27.

Three other new medal events will also be introduced, including one women's event each in Para

table tennis and Para triathlon, as well as a new Para swimming relay for athletes with intellectual impairment.

LA28 organizers said the Games will have the largest athlete field in Paralympic history and the most gender-balanced quota, with 45 percent of athlete places allocated to women, up from 42 percent at Paris 2024.

For the first time, Paralympic competition will begin before the opening ceremony. Wheelchair rugby will start two days before the ceremony, while boccia will begin one day earlier, though LA28 said no athletes will be eliminated before the ceremony.

The final weekend is expected to be one of the busiest in Paralympic history. On August 26, described by organizers as "Super Saturday," champions will be crowned across 15 finals sessions, with more than 50 gold medals to be awarded in sports including Para archery, Para badminton, Para canoe, Para climbing, Para judo, Para swimming, sitting volleyball, wheelchair basketball and wheelchair tennis.

The final day of competition on August 27 will feature seven finals sessions and see 20 medals before the closing ceremony. – Xinhua

PPA Tour Asia debuts in Macao, sparkling pickleball clashes

Pickleball

MACAO – The PPA Asia 500 Macao Open 2026 kicked off yesterday, marking the Professional Pickleball Association (PPA) tour's first event in the Macao Special Administrative Region.

Supported by the SAR's sports bureau, the tournament attracted over 600 players competing for a total prize pool of US\$70,000. Professional champions will get 500 ranking points.

France's Magnier sprints to Giro 18th stage win, Vingegaard in pink

Cycling

PIEVE DI SOLIGO, Italy – A shocked Paul Magnier won the 18th stage of the Giro d'Italia yesterday after a bunch sprint, as Jonas Vingegaard held the overall leader's pink jersey.

France's Magnier surged to the line in Pieve di Soligo ahead of Italian pair Edoardo Zambanini and Jonathan Milan to reclaim the points jersey from Jhonatan Narvaez.

It was a third stage win of this year's Giro for Magnier, who rides for Soudal-Quick-Step, and his first since the race left Bulgaria following stage three.

But he had not planned on being

Macao player Marco Leung told Xinhua that the tournament feels like a milestone for both his hometown and his career. Leung, a former tennis player who represented Macao at the Asian Games, transitioned to pickleball in 2024.

"I am incredibly excited and thrilled to represent Macao in a professional tournament held right here at home," Leung said, noting that he currently focuses on full-time training. He expressed hope

that the event would increase public interest and spark further investment in Macao's sports landscape.

Organizers said the tournament allowed amateur players to compete alongside professionals. It was expected to help promote international pickleball exchanges and support the development of sports tourism in Macao.

The event runs till Sunday at The Venetian Macao. All games start at 9:00 a.m. – Xinhua/MPD

in the sprint finish given the stage had a lumpy, punchy end.

Before the stage started, he had said he expected to be bringing up the rear.

"I really didn't expect to win today, which makes the victory all the sweeter," said the 22-year-old.

"I had no confidence in myself this morning. I even gave up on the first climb.

"I expected to spend a long day in the gruppetto but my teammates got around me and Jasper (Stuyven) did an amazing lead out (for the sprint finish)."

Vingegaard continued his push for a first Giro title in an undulating

stage which ended with a sprint after a series of attacks in the hilly final kilometres.

The Dane stays four minutes and three seconds ahead of closest rival Felix Gall.

Today, Vingegaard can take a decisive step towards victory in the toughest stage yet of this year's edition, the first of two punishing mountain stages before Sunday's procession finale in Rome.

The peloton will reach the highest peak of the race at Passo Giau on their way to a summit finish at Alpe di Siusi after 151km of riding in the Dolomites which will feature six categorised climbs. – AFP

Online horror phenomenon turns movie blockbuster with ‘Backrooms’

Kilian Fichou

PARIS – Originating as a creepy shared story told online by ordinary internet users, the “Backrooms” universe erupts into US cinemas today with a film directed by star YouTuber Kane Parsons.

The work depicts a group of characters who find themselves trapped in a warren of bizarrely laid-out rooms resembling empty offices, illuminated by a pallid yellow light.

Distributed by American production company A24 – behind multiple horror hits, including 2019’s “Midsommar” – “Backrooms” mines the unease generated among users of image board 4chan by a strange photo someone posted in 2019.

“I would have been 13 at the time. I do not recall the first time I saw it exactly, because it was very prevalent as a meme,” Parsons told AFP.

He watched as posters’ imagination developed the image into a “vaguely nostalgic and vaguely dreamlike but also very tangible science-fiction concept”.

The original image was

accompanied by a short piece of anonymous text, warning readers against stumbling into its disturbing parallel world.

It quickly became a so-called “creepypasta” – a short horror story reposted and modified around the web, to which other users added details such as monsters and undiscovered dimensions.

“This project is obviously bigger than me,” feeding on the input of countless other online posters, Parsons acknowledged.

Viral phenomenon

It was only in 2024 that online sleuths tracked down the original photo to a 2002 renovation of a furniture store in Wisconsin.

Before that, in 2022, Parsons shared a short film to his YouTube channel that he had made with the 3D software Blender.

It depicted a young boy wandering lost through the Backrooms’ terrifying corridors.

Within two weeks, the video had racked up 20 million views.

“I started getting emails from a whole bunch of different companies,” Parsons remembers.

“I was 16... it was all very new and I was very sceptical of what it could mean to try and adapt this or to be engaging with suits” from Hollywood, he added – especially on “something that I cared so personally about”.

Parsons finally reached a deal with two production companies and A24, with filming taking place in summer 2025.

British actor Chiwetel Ejiofor plays the protagonist in what became Parsons’ first full-length director’s credit.

“There was no version of this where I wasn’t the one directing that I would personally be open to,” he said. “I’ve always been very stingy about that.”

On his YouTube channel, Kane Pixels, Parsons today has more than

three million subscribers, with more than 215 million views for the 20 or so videos related to “Backrooms” alone.

Extended universe

The film is “in direct continuity with the YouTube series”, Parsons said.

It alternates between “found footage” segments filmed in first person that resemble his web show, and more classic filmic shots.

“It’s going to be weird seeing how much [‘Backrooms’] has dropped into the mainstream... Formerly this has been semi-niche,” he mused.

Parsons’ work is not the only internet-spawned universe to hit cinemas this year.

YouTuber Mark Fischbach, whose channel Markiplier boasts

38 million subscribers, released the horror movie “Iron Lung” in January.

The film was adapted from a video game he helped popularise with online clips.

And in 2018, another “creepypasta” about the gangly, besuited monster “Slender Man” was turned into a feature film that raked in US\$50 million worldwide.

As for Parsons, “‘Backrooms’ is not done”, he said.

“I wouldn’t rule out film. I wouldn’t rule out even television series. That would be my personal hope.”

He has meanwhile launched another series on YouTube, “The Oldest View”, which follows the exploration of an abandoned subterranean shopping mall. – AFP



Dresses worn by Marilyn Monroe are displayed during the Exhibition Preview for “Marilyn Monroe: Hollywood Icon” hosted by The Academy Museum at The Academy Museum of Motion Pictures, in Los Angeles, on Wednesday. – AFP

Amazon greenlights AI-generated shows for children

LOS ANGELES – Amazon MGM Studios announced on Wednesday that it has greenlit the first three children’s shows that were created under a new initiative to use artificial intelligence (AI) in content development.

The GenAI Creators Fund pays filmmakers, digital creators and startups to use AI to develop their projects in a short time frame.

“Punky Duck” series director Jorge Gutierrez said he is used to spending two years making a pilot, but his new show was greenlit to run on Amazon after just two months.

“The best way I can describe it is, it’s like you have sex and then someone hands you the baby,” Gutierrez said at the annual AI on the Lot Conference, where the first images of the approved animated series were shown. “It’s pretty crazy.”

Two more projects – “Diana Music Hunters” from Albie Hecht and “Cupcake & Friends” from BuzzFeed Studios – were also greenlit in a couple of months, reflecting a new approach from major studios.

Hollywood’s unions and artists have raised concerns about the use of AI, with creatives, writers and actors fearing they could be replaced by digital facsimiles.

AI Studios chief at Amazon MGM Albert Cheng told the conference that the technology won’t eliminate jobs, it will actually reduce costs and timelines to make it possible to increase the number of productions.

But Cheng acknowledged “AI is addictive,” adding that it’s important for humans to make sure they don’t “succumb and let our brains go to waste.”

– AFP

Louvre heist to be turned into film

PARIS – Last year’s brazen robbery of the Louvre – when thieves made off with jewellery worth some US\$100 million – is set to become a movie and a documentary series, a publisher said on Tuesday.

French director Romain Gavras – whose work includes 2025 Hollywood film “Sacrifice” starring Anya Taylor-Joy and music videos including most recently a hypnotic schoolboy choreography for GENER8ION – will draw inspiration from the investigative book “Main basse sur le Louvre” (literally “A grab at the Louvre”).

Film rights to the book about the October 19, 2025 heist had

been sold to the production company Iconoclast while rights for a documentary series were acquired by a British producer, the Flammarion publishing house said.

The book, written by three journalists, from French dailies *Le Parisien* and *Le Monde*, and weekly glossy magazine *Paris Match*, hit bookstores on Wednesday.

According to trade magazine *Le Film Français*, the movie project is in development, though neither the title nor the cast has been announced.

The Louvre heist sent shockwaves around the world and sparked a security crisis within

the world-famous museum that ultimately led to the replacement of its director, Laurence des Cars.

After seven months of investigation, and despite the arrests of the main suspects, the jewels have still not been found.

The authors said their apparent disappearance “has become a dense mystery, a puzzle that has plunged investigators into deep confusion”.

The heist illustrates how “the theft of artworks has become a business like any other for many criminals”, they say. “The criminal underworld has found a new cash cow.” – AFP

World Weather

CHINA	ASIA-PACIFIC	WORLD	LUSOPHONE
Beijing 17°C~32°C	Manila 26°C~35°C	New York 14°C~26°C	Lisbon 15°C~28°C
Shanghai 18°C~29°C	Bangkok 26°C~36°C	London 13°C~25°C	Rio de Janeiro 18°C~23°C
Hong Kong 23°C~32°C	Tokyo 18°C~30°C	Frankfurt 18°C~31°C	Luanda 21°C~26°C
Taipei 22°C~29°C	Singapore 25°C~31°C	Vancouver 9°C~17°C	Maputo 17°C~28°C
Guangzhou 24°C~35°C	Kuala Lumpur 25°C~34°C	Paris 19°C~33°C	Dili 21°C~31°C
Nanjing 18°C~29°C	Jakarta 23°C~33°C	Moscow 6°C~10°C	São Tomé 26°C~31°C
Guilin 21°C~32°C	Seoul 15°C~29°C	Las Vegas 16°C~27°C	Praia 21°C~31°C
Xi’an 14°C~25°C	Sydney 12°C~20°C	Monte Carlo 19°C~27°C	Bissau 24°C~35°C



Alps across the Seine

This photograph shows the installation of "The Pont Neuf's cave", the latest artwork by French photographer and street artist JR, on the Pont-Neuf bridge in Paris yesterday. - AFP

Fashion for all

Humanoid robots and models present creations at Galaxy Corporation's "Mach33: Physical AI Fashion Show" in Seoul yesterday. - AFP



Fancy cyclist

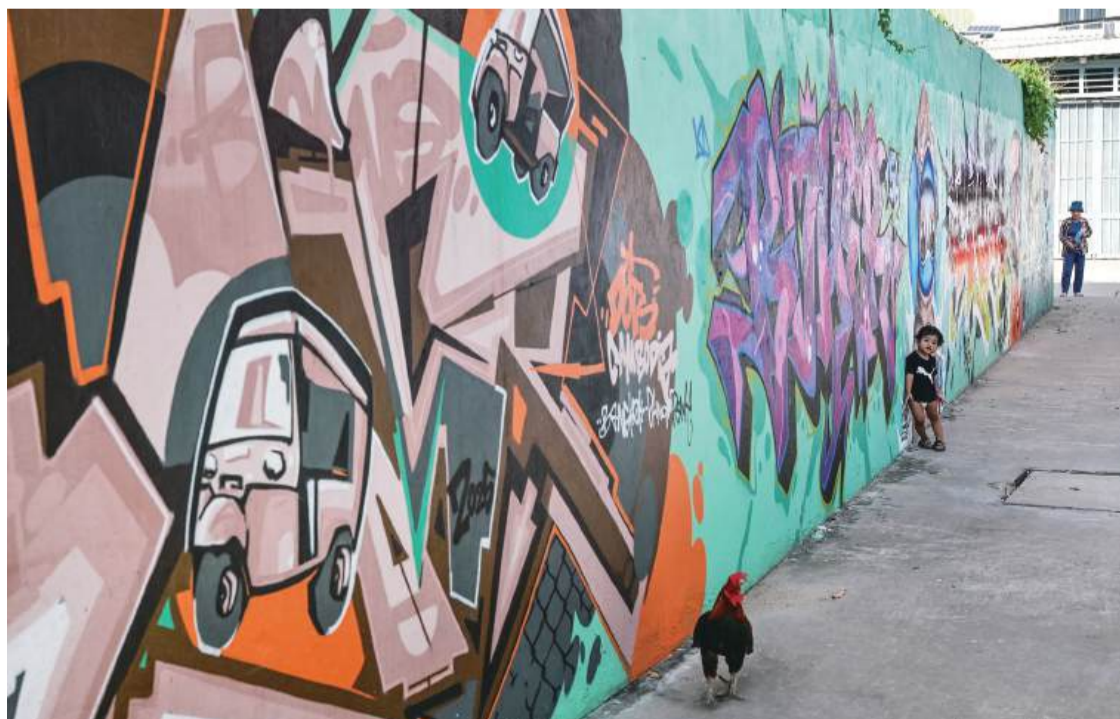
Participants ride bicycles during the Klaten International Cycling Festival 2026 in Klaten Regency, Central Java Province, Indonesia, on Sunday. - Xinhua

Going out with a bang

Fireworks in celebrations of Eid al-Adha light up the sky over Katara Cultural Village in Doha, Qatar, on Wednesday. - Xinhua

Changing direction

US musician and artist Jack White (left) poses next to his 30-foot (9.1m) sculpture "The Red Tree" alongside British artist Damien Hirst's son, Connor Hirst, during a press preview of "Jack White: These Thoughts May Disappear" at the Newport Street Gallery in south London, yesterday. "Jack White: These Thoughts May Disappear" marks the first public presentation of works by the artist. - AFP



Street wise bird

A child and a rooster stand next to graffiti on a wall in Phnom Penh yesterday. - AFP

