

Xi says China-DPRK ties stand at new historical starting point

PYONGYANG – Xi Jinping, general secretary of the Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Committee and Chinese president, said yesterday that the relationship between China and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) stands at a new historical starting point.

Xi made the remarks while attending a welcome banquet hosted by Kim Jong Un, general secretary of the Workers' Party of Korea (WPK) and president of the State Affairs of the DPRK.

Xi pointed out that China and the DPRK, linked by mountains and rivers and sharing a common future, have seen their traditional friendship passed down across generations and grow ever stronger over time through the test of the evolving international landscape.

This year marks the 65th anniversary of the China-DPRK Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation and Mutual Assistance, and the China-DPRK relationship stands at a new historical starting point, Xi said, noting that he has reached important consensus with Kim during his visit.

From the strategic perspective of the future and destiny of socialism, both leaders have agreed to seize the general trend of the times, respond to the shared aspirations of the two peoples, strengthen high-level exchanges, deepen strategic communication, expand practical cooperation, enhance people-to-people bonds, promote the high-level development of China-DPRK relations, jointly open up brighter prospects for the socialist cause of both countries, and contribute to the continuous progress of human society, Xi said.

The successful convening of the Ninth Congress of the WPK this year has made strategic plans and major arrangements for the long-term development of the Party and the country's cause, ushering in a new period of comprehensive development of the DPRK's socialist cause, Xi said.

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Xi Jinping (left), general secretary of the Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Committee and Chinese president, shakes hands with Kim Jong Un, general secretary of the Workers' Party of Korea (WPK) and president of the State Affairs of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK), at the Kumsusan State Guesthouse in Pyongyang yesterday. – Xinhua

Macau's life expectancy reaches 83.5 years in 2025: govt

Tony Wong

The local government said yesterday that Macau residents' average life expectancy reached 83.5 years last year – men at 80.6 years and women at 86.3 years, ranking amongst the highest in the world.

The Macau Government Information Bureau (GCS) made the remarks in a statement on its official WeChat account yesterday.

“Since Macau's return to the motherland, local residents' life expectancy has risen substantially”, the statement said.

The statement noted that Macau's average life expectancy was 77.9 years shortly before its return to the motherland. Over the past two-plus decades, the statement said, the figure has seen a substantial increase, outstripping the growth rate of most developed economies, which it said has “directly” been attributed to the local government's increased investment in public health following Macau's return to the motherland, with healthcare expenditure as a share of gross domestic product (GDP) rising from 2.1 percent to 3.8 percent in 2023.

The Macau Special Administrative Region (MSAR) was established on December 20, 1999, marking Macau's return to the motherland and the end of Portugal's temporary administration of the city.

According to historical data from the Statistics and Census Bureau (DSEC), Macau's official statistics agency, Macau residents' average life expectancy at birth stood at 76.6 years in the 1993-1996 period (the earliest available data on the DSEC online database) and 77.9 years in the 1996-1999 period. The figure had gradually risen to the highest, 84.2 years, in the 2018-2021 period, men at 81.3 years and women at 87.1 years. Afterwards, the figure stood at 83.8 years (2019-2022), 83.1 years (2020-2023), 83.3 years (2021-2024), and 83.5 years (2022-2025).

Yesterday's GCS statement noted that in alignment with the Outline of the Healthy China 2030 Plan, the MSAR government released its Healthy Macau Blueprint in July 2024, integrating health-related aspects into all public policies. Currently, the statement said, Macau has established

a healthcare network comprising “public hospitals + private hospitals + primary health centres”. In 2025, the number of registered doctors, nurses, and hospital beds per 1,000 population in Macau reached 3.0, 4.4, and 2.7, respectively, the statement said.

Backed by an extensive primary healthcare network, the statement said, Macau's nine public health centres provide a wide range of services such as vaccinations and chronic disease management, with the coverage rate for routine immunisation vaccines consistently maintained above 98 percent.

Addressing health threats such as hypertension and diabetes, the statement said, Macau has been implementing a programme facilitating full-cycle management for chronic disease patients through the city's network of family doctors. Compared to Hong Kong, which is also a city with a high level of average life expectancy, Macau's mortality rate from cardiovascular diseases is currently 17 percent lower, the statement said.

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The Macau Post Daily

Lebanon reports Israeli strikes as Hezbollah claims attacks against troops in south

An Israeli strike hit a vehicle in the city of Tyre, south Lebanon yesterday, Lebanese state media reported, as Israel vowed to press attacks on Hezbollah despite Iranian warnings.

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Armenia's PM wins vote, cementing Westward tilt

Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan's party won parliamentary elections, according to preliminary results yesterday that signalled a victory endorsing the nation's pro-Western shift.

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Peru's presidential runoff too close to call

Peru's presidential runoff was still too close to call yesterday, with four-time candidate Keiko Fujimori all but tied with her leftist rival to become the country's ninth president in a decade.

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Police arrest 4 mainlanders for drug crimes

Armindo Neves

The Judiciary Police (PJ) arrested four men for drug-related crimes on Friday, PJ spokesman Chao Teng Hin said during a regular press conference yesterday.

Chao identified two of them as key members of a drug-trafficking syndicate, aged 35 and 26, both surnamed Lu. Chao said that the other two are aged 33 and 32 respectively, surnamed Kang and Man. The quartet claimed to be unemployed.

According to Chao, in February, the Judiciary Police busted a case involving a mainland man who took drugs in a hotel guestroom in Macau. Subsequently, through a joint investigation with the Chinese mainland's law enforcement authorities, Chao said, both police forces discovered a drug-trafficking syndicate operating from a base in Southeast Asia, adding that the syndicate directed mainland Chinese individuals to smuggle drugs from Southeast Asia to Macau and Zhuhai for sale, primarily targeting gamblers in Macau's casinos.

According to Chao, the Judiciary Police launched an operation on Thursday.

That morning, the younger Lu, arrived in Macau on a flight from the Chinese mainland and immediately checked into a hotel in the city's central district, Chao said, adding that in the afternoon, the older Lu arrived in Macau on a flight from Southeast Asia and joined the younger Lu. Both stayed in the guestroom.

Chao did not say whether the two Lus are related.

Later that day, Hong entered the same guestroom. At around 1:00 p.m. on Friday, the Judiciary Police took action, according to Chao.

PJ officers intercepted the trio in the guestroom and seized three packets of methamphetamine weighing a total of 26.76 grammes worth 80,000 patacas, 90 transparent plastic bags for dividing the drugs, and drug-taking paraphernalia including modified water bottles and tin foil, and 12,000 patacas in suspected drug proceeds, Chao said, adding that in a parallel operation, police intercepted Man, who was in Macau illegally, near another hotel in the central district.

According to Chao, the two Lus were the kingpins of a cross-border drug trafficking syndicate.

The drugs were smuggled to Macau from Southeast Asia by the elder Lu, Chao said, adding that with the exception of the older Lu, the urine tests of the other three suspects came back positive.

However, Chao also said that PJ officers indicated that the older Lu showed signs of drug use.

The quartet were transferred to the Public Prosecutions Office (MP) recently, the spokesman said, adding that both Lus are facing charges of drug-trafficking, drug-taking, and possession of drug taking paraphernalia, while Kang and Man are facing drug-taking charges.

Meanwhile, Chao also said that mainland law enforcement authorities have recently arrested 21 lower-level members of the same syndicate. ■

12 prostitution racket suspects face triad charges: Prosecution



Judiciary Police (PJ) officers escort 26 suspected members of a prostitution racket from PJ headquarters in Zape to vehicles, ahead of their transfer to the Public Prosecutions Office (MP) for further questioning on Friday. - Photo: Armindo Neves

Staff Reporter

The 12 suspects remanded in custody for their alleged involvement in a large-scale prostitution racket, including three active-duty Public Security Police (PSP) officers, are facing triad charges based on "strong evidence of the commission of crimes," the Public Prosecutions Office (MP) said in a statement on Sunday night.

According to the statement, 14 other suspects in the case involving three crime syndicates have been released on other legally mandated coercive measures – including two retired Judiciary Police (PJ) officers – while awaiting trial.

The statement underlined that the three prostitution rackets used "saunas" as a disguise for their criminal activities. "Sauna" is a customary euphemism in Macau for a place providing commercial sex.

The statement also said that

some of the suspects bribed the five active-duty and retired police officers in exchange for information about police operations, thereby enabling the syndicates' criminal activities to continue undisturbed.

The 12 suspects remanded in custody in Macau's prison in Coloane also face bribe-taking and money-laundering charges.

The statement cited Article 2 of the Anti-Triad Law No. 6/97/M. Triads are formally known as "secret societies," or "black societies" in Chinese.

Article 2 states that triad membership is punishable by imprisonment ranging between five and 12 years, while triad leadership is punishable by between eight and 15 years behind bars. The punishment of a public servant found guilty of triad membership or leadership is aggravated by one third of the respective minimum and maximum

limits imposed by the law.

The statement identified the three active-duty PSP officers as a 60-year-old deputy commissioner surnamed Leong; a 51-year-old acting division chief surnamed Chan; and a 54-year-old constable surnamed Sou. The three officers, who were arrested last week, have meanwhile been suspended from duty and are undergoing disciplinary proceedings.

Public broadcaster TDM has identified the deputy police commissioner allegedly involved in the case as Leong Heng Hong, a former director of the Macau Public Security Forces Academy, who held other high-ranking PSP positions during his long career.

Sunday night's statement stressed that local authorities "will not tolerate under any circumstances any criminal acts that may jeopardise social order and the public interest." ■

Police nab local businessman for raping Myanmar maid

Armindo Neves

The Judiciary Police (PJ) arrested a local businessman on Sunday for raping a domestic helper from Myanmar on June 2 and trying to rape her again the following day, PJ spokesman Chao Teng Hin said during a special press conference yesterday.

Chao identified the suspect as a 54-year-old male surnamed Lam who claimed to be a businessman. Chao said that the victim is a young woman from Myanmar.

The suspect, who is married but separated from his wife, lived alone when he hired the victim, Chao said.

According to Chao, the victim moved to Macau three years ago to work as a domestic helper. This year, after leaving her job in March, she returned to Macau late last month looking for new employment. Through a friend's introduction, Chao said that she went to a residence in Taipa on May 31 for a job interview with Lam.

On June 2, Lam said that he wished to hire her, Chao said, adding that after both had completed the application process for her "blue card" (non-resident worker permit), the victim began working for Lam immediately.

Later that day, Lam suddenly demanded that she kiss him, threatening that if she did not comply, he would not proceed with the follow-up procedures for her "blue card", Chao said, adding that under financial pressure, the victim felt compelled to give in. Afterwards, Lam raped her. The following day, June 3, Lam again used the same method trying to coerce the victim into sexual intercourse, Chao added. After she explicitly refused, Lam pushed her to the ground in an attempt to rape her again, according to the spokesman.

However, due to the victim's strong resistance, Lam failed in his attempt and subsequently threw her out of his home, Chao said, adding that after some consideration, the victim reported the matter to the police on Saturday. The Judiciary Police arrested Lam at his home, the scene of the crime, on Sunday morning, according to Chao.

Lam was transferred to the Public Prosecutions Office (MP) yesterday, facing charges of rape and sexual coercion.

According Article 157 of Macau Penal Code, rape is punishable by three to 12 years behind bars.

Meanwhile, according to Article 158 of the Macau Penal Code, sexual coercion is punishable by two to eight years' imprisonment. ■



Judiciary Police (PJ) officers escort the hooded suspect to a PJ van outside the PJ headquarters in Zape yesterday. - Photo: Armindo Neves



This undated handout photo provided by the Judiciary Police yesterday shows evidence seized from the four drug suspects from the Chinese mainland.

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Macau Weather

CLOUDY.
SHOWERS, HEAVY AT FIRST.
OCCASIONAL THUNDERSTORMS.
FORCE 3 TO 4 WEST TO SOUTHWESTERLY WINDS, BECOMING NORTHERLIES WITH GUSTS.
RELATIVE HUMIDITY WILL RANGE BETWEEN 80% AND 99%.



24°C~28°C

Source: SMG

Food safety, healthy eating seminar draws 80 participants

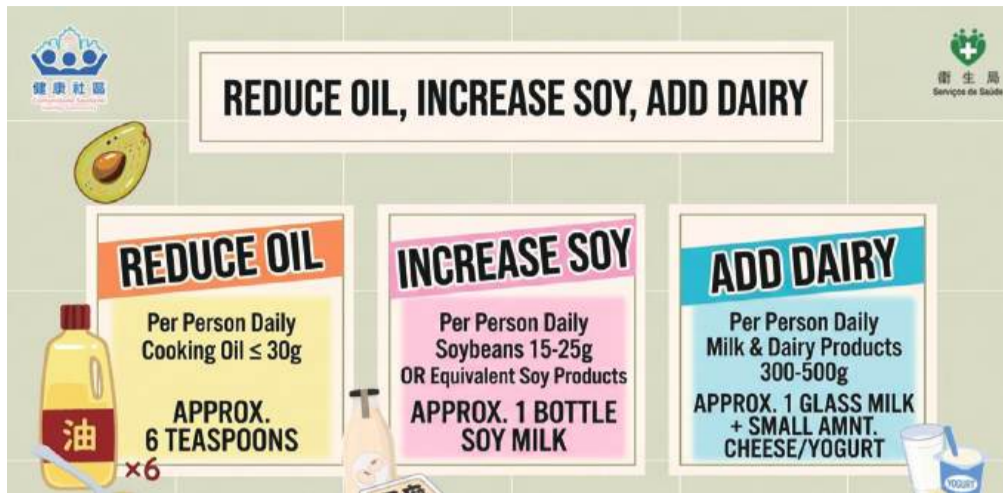
Khalel Vallo

A public seminar on food safety and healthy eating attracted around 80 residents on Saturday, with representatives from the Municipal Affairs Bureau (IAM) and the Health Bureau (SSM) giving advice on summer food safety, balanced nutrition and healthy eating habits, according to a joint statement by the two bureaux yesterday.

The event formed part of the 15th Food Safety Week series and concluded with interactive games and a Q&A session, the statement said, adding that the seminar focused on common food safety misconceptions and practical nutrition strategies, particularly during the summer months when high temperatures can increase food-related health risks.

The statement noted that IAM representatives addressed the misconception that refrigerating food guarantees safety, noting that certain bacteria, including *Listeria**, can continue to grow slowly at low temperatures, stressing that thoroughly cooking food remains the most important safeguard against foodborne illness.

Residents were also reminded to follow



This infographic provided by the Municipal Affairs Bureau (IAM) and the Health Bureau (SSM) yesterday promotes the “less oil, more soy and more milk” dietary principles.

basic refrigerator storage principles, including separating raw and cooked foods, storing cooked food above raw ingredients and maintaining cleanliness to prevent cross-contamination, the statement said, adding that the seminar also highlighted potential risks associated with takeaway meals during hot and humid weather. The statement pointed

out that participants were advised to choose delivery services with temperature-controlled transportation and to be cautious if hot food arrives cold, cold food arrives warm, or packaging appears damaged or leaking.

Meanwhile, Health Bureau representatives promoted the dietary principles of “less oil, more soy and more milk”, the statement said.

The bureau recommended limiting cooking oil consumption to no more than six teaspoons per person per day, increasing the intake of soy products such as unsweetened soy milk and tofu, and consuming at least one cup of milk daily, the statement noted, adding that low-fat or skimmed milk was suggested for people seeking weight management.

The statement pointed out that the Food Safety Week activities will continue with the “Food Safety Cool Summer” promotional campaign from this Friday through next Thursday at Nova Mall in Taipa, which will feature interactive activities designed to raise awareness of summer food safety and healthy eating practices. ■

* *Listeria* is a genus of rod-shaped, gram-positive bacteria naturally found in soil, water, and animal faeces. The most notable species is *Listeria monocytogenes*, which causes listeriosis, a serious and potentially fatal foodborne illness. Unlike many other food-poisoning bacteria, *Listeria* is unique in that it can thrive and multiply in cool, damp environments, including inside your refrigerator. - Gemini

Four Seasons Hotel Macao launches ‘101 Days of Summer’ wellness drive



This undated handout image provided by Four Seasons Hotel Macao shows a handcrafted ice cream for its “101 Days of Summer” wellness campaign.

Khalel Vallo

Hotel operator Four Seasons Hotel Macao has unveiled its “101 Days of Summer” campaign in a recent statement, offering a range of seasonal dining, wellness and family-orientated experiences throughout the summer months.

According to the statement, the initiative combines leisure, wellness and hospitality offerings aimed at both visitors and local residents during the summer season. Among the highlights is the launch of “Drift. Dream. Deepen.”, a new wellness treatment at the hotel’s spa. The ritual incorporates hand-harvested Irish seaweed, guided meditation, quartz crystals and a sleep-focused massage designed to promote relaxation and restorative rest.

The statement noted the treatment marks a new direction for its wellness programme, focusing on sustainable and holistic approaches to wellbeing, adding that in order to coincide with Global Wellness Day this coming Saturday, the hotel will also host “Inside Flow: Silent Disco Edition”, an outdoor yoga experience.

The event will be accompanied by refreshments inspired by balanced and healthy dining options, the statement said, noting that seasonal food and beverage offerings form another key component of the campaign.

Meanwhile, the five-star hotel’s poolside venue “Splash” will serve handcrafted ice creams featuring flavours such as Peach Melba, Black Forest and Chocolate Tiramisu, alongside summer-themed drinks and desserts, the statement highlighted.

Moreover, the hotel has also introduced the Little Macao Explorer package for families, where guests who book directly by July 15 can receive benefits including a complimentary family room upgrade, daily breakfast, and an adventure-themed activity package for children, discounted admission to “teamLab SuperNature Macao” and selected dining privileges, the statement said. ■

Local swimmer clinches 4 golds at All China University Swimming Championship

Armindo Neves

The five-day All China University Swimming Championship Finals held at the Ordos City Sports Centre complex were concluded on May 30, where Macau-born Zhejiang University first-year student, Kuok Hei Cheng, won four gold medals and broke the tournament record.

Ordos is one of 12 major subdivisions of the Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region (IMAR)

According to a Xinhua News Agency report dated May 28, the contest was organised by the China Student Sports Federation (CSSF), which attracted about 1,500 athletes, coaches, referees and event staff from over 200 key universities across the nation.

Kuok, according to a Zhejiang University statement announced last Tuesday, as a student of the university’s School of Medicine, won two gold medals in the women’s Group A



Macau-born Zhejiang University student Kuok Hei Cheng (second from left) poses with her teammates at the Ordos City Sports Centre complex in the Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region (IMAR) recently. - Photo courtesy of Zhejiang University

50-metre backstroke and 200-metre individual medley events, achieving “outstanding” results and setting new competition records in both. In the women’s Group A 4×50-metre

freestyle relay and the mixed Group A 4×100-metre freestyle relay, Kuok and her teammates joined forces to break the competition records and win gold medals as well. ■

Dazzling Galaxy – Crystalline Art Exhibition kicks off at GalaxyArt



This photo shows one of the works on display for the “Dazzling Galaxy – Crystalline Art Exhibition”, which kicked off yesterday at GalaxyArt in Galaxy Macao. - Photo: Rui Pastorin

Rui Pastorin

Integrated resort operator Galaxy Entertainment Group (GEG) yesterday kicked off the latest exhibition at GalaxyArt in Cotai, that being “Dazzling Galaxy – Crystalline Art Exhibition”.

Located at the Galaxy Macao integrated resort and running through September 13, the exhibition displays over 60 artworks comprising signature pieces and new works from the Wu Daijie Art Studio, with the featured works showcasing translucent, crystalline materials to create artworks, which range from a variety of animals, shapes, figures and even unique furniture.

The works are displayed across four themed zones, namely “Luminosity · The Spirit of Nature”, “Luminosity · The Glow of Modernity”, “Luminosity – Beyond Void & Form”, and “Luminosity – Flowing like Water”

Addressing yesterday’s opening

ceremony, GEG Director Philip Cheng Yee Sing said in his speech that the exhibition “bridges artistic expression with technological innovation, inspired by interpretations and imagination rooted in traditional Eastern culture. We believe that this brand-new exhibition will bring renewed vibrancy and creative energy to Macau’s arts and cultural scene this summer.”

Moreover, in his speech, lead artist Wu Daijie said that the exhibition acts not only as a “sharing of my personal artistic endeavours at this stage, but also a way to contribute to the popularisation of art.”

Yesterday morning’s opening ceremony was also attended by Macau Government Tourism Office (MGTO) Director Maria Helena de Senna Fernandes; and Chan Lei Lei, director of Macao Conservatory.

*More details and photos in an upcoming Page 4.

Cuchi-Cuchi Bookhouse and the power of picture books

Interview by Rui Pastorin

On a corner in Rua de Pedro Coutinho (高地烏街) sits a small local bookshop continuing to highlight what its owner believes to be important for a child's life and development: picture books.

The bookshop, called "Cuchi-Cuchi Bookhouse", has called the area home for about a year, though the brand has been around since 2018, being first set up near the Ruins of Paul's, owner Lily Wong (黃國娟) told the *Post* in a recent interview.

The business' name meanwhile comes from several meanings, among which is the sound people make when they tickle babies and children. Wong, who was born in Venezuela, added that the word "chi" also holds a special meaning, being an endearing term in Spanish that refers to something cute or lovely.

"I named this bookshop Cuchi-Cuchi Bookhouse because I think every child is lovely", she said. Meanwhile, taking the Cantonese context, Wong also uses the word "智", pronounced "zhi" and meaning wisdom, in its Chinese name, hoping children can also learn and play. And from when the idea got off the ground to now, she has been using the platform to promote the power of picture books on a child's development, as well as helping children and their parents "discover together".

Stepping inside, one is immediately met with an earth-tone, cozy space, shelves filled with books, mainly picture books, ranging from new to donated second-hand ones, along with a variety of toys and board games to explore. When not busy tending to customers and organising or sorting products, Wong can be found behind a counter preparing serve a selection of coffees and other beverages.

While running a coffee shop had been a lifelong dream, Wong has always had an affinity for picture books, particularly during her tenure as a social worker, going deeper and deeper into the impact of picture books as she worked with youngsters and families during parenting programmes, playing an important role. "There are many ideas in picture books", Wong emphasised, with many life-related stories with lessons to learn, ranging from caring for the environment and recycling to developing good morals, interpersonal relationships, managing one's emotions, emphasising its limitless nature. For her, it can also foster curiosity as well as generate ideas and creativity, with Wong carefully curating the selection of books to ensure that readers can take something away from reading them.

Enhancing this are paid workshops for children and their parents at the loft area of the bookshop, where children can also play and read for a fee, noting that to promote the use of picture books as well as help reinforce what children learn from them, those incorporating expressive art continue to be held,

allowing children to grasp the story and retain the messages behind them, as well as express their thoughts and learning through art.

Aside from these workshops are those for adults, all done in cooperation with various entities from public services to schools to non-government organisations (NGO), with the bookshop designing the programmes.

However, while there is some demand for picture books and workshops, it has not been easy, with Wong particularly pointing out the current market. "Not many parents see the value of books, especially now when the economy is not good. Not many parents like to also pay to join workshops or even buy a book", while others might prefer to use electronics such as iPads and social media platforms like YouTube for learning.

“They want the kids to hold something, They want their parents to read to them, I think most kids like to listen to stories and they like to see pictures.”

But what keeps her going?

Wong says the path, no matter the difficulty, remains "meaningful", while there are still parents who realise the importance of books in their child's development, along with a preference for something physical still existing in a world awash with screen time and digitalisation. "They want the kids to hold something".

Workshops and initiatives have also had encouraging results, with positive feedback from parents and those involved. "They want their parents to read to them", Wong added, noting: "From an early age, I think most kids like to listen to stories and

they like to see pictures". She hopes to help parents realise this as well as hold more storytelling training for them.

She also noted that some have observed a difference in temperament between kids who like and don't like reading books. As an example, she said that some who have a preference for electronics like iPads or platforms like YouTube might not have the patience or focus due to how fast and stimulating these might be. And once they hold a book or study, they "don't have the patience to read, look, or wait", yearning for digital platforms instead.

It might also affect emotions, particularly finding difficulty in expressing them, she said, and the inability to properly articulate how one feels can have negative connotations down the road, including self-harming.

"So, I think the parents can see the good and the value of using books", she said, seeing the need to read more and the importance it possesses, especially in their overall development. While some parents might already be aware of this, Wong says she hopes to take this further, such as hosting public talks beyond her bookshop being one of her goals. For now, Wong continues to promote the importance of picture books through her bookshop, selling books and activities, perhaps even a cup of coffee or two.



Cuchi-Cuchi Bookhouse founder and owner Lily Wong poses behind the counter at her bookshop on Rua de Pedro Coutinho.

– Photos: Rui Pastorin

Macau's life expectancy reaches 83.5 years in 2025: govt

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Hong Kong's average life expectancy also ranks among the top in the world. According to Hong Kong's Census and Statistics Department, the city's average life expectancy at birth reached 83.3 years for men and 88.7 years for women last year. Hong Kong's official statistics agency publishes average life expectancy at birth for men and women as separate figures, but does not provide a combined average for the population as a whole.

Yesterday's GCS statement also noted that Macau is one of the strictest regions in the world as far as tobacco control is concerned, with a blanket ban on smoking

in all indoor public venues and facilities. Macau's smoking rate dropped to 11.6 percent in 2023 from 16.9 percent before the current Tobacco Prevention and Control Law took effect on January 1, 2012.

The statement also said that the density of fitness equipment in public parks and sitting-out areas across the city has increased annually, while the proportion of local residents exercising regularly now exceeds 60 percent.

Macau's experience, the statement said, can serve as a reference for the development of healthy city clusters within the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macau Greater Bay Area (GBA). ■



This file photo taken earlier this year shows residents exercising on fitness equipment at the sitting-out area outside the Lok Yeung Fa Yuen residential estate in Fai Chi Kei.

— Photo: Tony Wong

Xi says China-DPRK ties stand at new historical starting point

Continued from p.1

As good neighbors, good friends and good comrades, the Chinese side sincerely wishes that, under the strong leadership of the Central Committee of the WPK headed by General Secretary Kim, the DPRK people will successfully accomplish the goals and tasks set by the Ninth Congress of the WPK and make constant new achievements in the socialist cause of the DPRK, Xi said.

On behalf of the WPK, the government and the people of the DPRK, Kim extended the warmest welcome to Xi on his visit. Kim said that Pyongyang was filled with an atmosphere of friendship on this special day as the DPRK's Party, government and people warmly welcomed their most distinguished guest.

Noting that Xi's first overseas trip of the year had brought him to the DPRK, Kim said this fully demonstrated the great importance Xi attached to developing relations between the two parties and the two countries, and constituted the most valuable support for the DPRK's socialist cause.

Noting the meeting with Xi came nine months after their previous meeting, Kim said that during this meeting, they reached important consensus on further advancing DPRK-China relations with new contemporary connotations in light of new changing circumstances, and exchanged views on international and regional issues of mutual concern, which will surely accelerate the development of the DPRK-China friendship with profound historical traditions, and contribute to peace and stability in the region and the world.

The DPRK people take heartfelt joy in the remarkable achievements made by the brotherly Chinese people, Kim said, expressing belief that under the leadership of the CPC with Xi at its core, the great Chinese people will surely create greater achievements in building a great modern socialist country in all respects, realizing the Second Centenary Goal, and completing the new journey toward the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation.

— Xinhua

Macau's waste rises 1.0 pct in 2025

Tony Wong

The total volume of solid waste generated in Macau continued to rise last year, an increase of 1.0 percent from 2024, according to the Environmental Protection Bureau's (DSPA) report on Macau's environmental state for 2025 published yesterday.

The bureau had customarily published its annual report on Macau's environmental state for the previous year on June 5, World Environment Day, but this time the report was published yesterday, June 8.

According to the report for 2025 published yesterday, Macau generated 532,053 tonnes of solid waste last year, an increase of 1.0 percent from 2024 when 526,979 tonnes were dumped.

Waste still lower than pre-pandemic level

The total volume of solid waste generated in 2025 was still lower than in pre-pandemic 2019.

Macau was affected by the COVID-19 pandemic for three years from early 2020 through 2022.

In pre-pandemic 2019, according to previous DSPA data, Macau generated 545,725 tonnes of solid waste, because of which last year's volume of solid waste represented 97.5 percent of the 2019 level.

Last year, according to the report published yesterday, each



A woman walks past an enclosed waste chamber on Travessa de S. Domingos yesterday, an alley running between Largo do Senado, the city's main square, and Largo da Sé, where the city's Catholic Cathedral is located. — Photo: Tony Wong

person generated an average of 2.13 kilogrammes of solid waste per day in Macau. The figure was 2.10 kilogrammes in 2024.

This time, the report published no longer compares Macau's average daily volume of solid waste generated per capita with other neighbouring cities.

Solid waste generated in Macau is treated in its incinerator in Pac On district in Taipa.

Moreover, according to the report published yesterday, the total volume of construction waste generated in Macau dropped by 30.3 percent to 1.257 million cubic metres last year from 2024.

Construction waste generated in Macau is disposed of in its only

construction waste landfill in east Cotai.

Meanwhile, according to the report, Macau's electricity consumption increased by 1.3 percent last year from 2024.

The report also said that the amount of greenhouse gases generated in Macau decreased by 1.8 percent last year from 2024.

Moreover, the report also said that 38.5 percent of Macau's newly registered cars in 2025 were electric ones, up from just about four percent in 2019.

The report also said that Macau's total energy consumption per unit of gross domestic product (GDP) dropped by 5.4 percent last year from 2024. ■

Wang Yi urges enhancing understanding via dialogue among civilizations

BEIJING—Foreign Minister Wang Yi yesterday called for improving understanding and fostering mutual trust through dialogue when addressing an event observing the International Day for Dialogue among Civilizations via video.

Wang, also a member of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of China Central Committee, called on all sides to promote unity and seek consensus through exchanges, and continuously consolidate the popular and cultural foundation for building a community with a shared future for humanity in the face of unprecedented challenges.

China's 4-pronged approach

Wang highlighted that China proposes a four-pronged approach to promoting dialogue among civilizations.

He said, *firstly*, that all sides should adhere to mutual respect and promote harmonious coexistence

among different civilizations, calling for championing equality, mutual learning, dialogue and inclusiveness among civilizations.

Secondly, all sides should abide by a people-oriented approach and lay a solid foundation for exchanges among civilizations, Wang said, adding that efforts should be made to promote mutual understanding and friendship among people of all countries and ensure that the fruits of mutual learning among civilizations benefit the people more extensively and directly.

China is willing to enhance dialogue among civilizations with all countries and deepen exchanges of experience in state governance, in order to jointly solve the problems of the times and work together to broaden the path of world modernization, Wang added.

Thirdly, Wang called for endeavors in inheritance and innovation of traditional culture to enhance the driving force of

civilization and progress, noting that China will assist all countries in achieving creative transformation and innovative development of their outstanding traditional cultures.

He also appealed for fully exploiting technological dividends such as artificial intelligence and social media, to empower exchanges, mutual learning, inheritance and innovation among civilizations, and promote the common prosperity of human civilization.

Fourthly, Wang said all sides should adhere to exchanges and mutual learning and improve the mechanism for dialogue among civilizations.

China supports further leveraging platforms including the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the Forum of Ancient Civilizations to enable them to play an important role in inter-civilization dialogue, he added. — Xinhua

China willing to maintain communication with Russia, India on advancing cooperation: spokesperson

BEIJING — China is willing to maintain communication with Russia and India on advancing the cooperation among the three countries, foreign ministry spokesperson Lin Jian said yesterday.

“China, Russia and India are all emerging economies. Maintaining good relations not only serves the interests of the three countries, but also contributes to regional and global peace, security, stability and prosperity,” Lin said at a regular

news briefing.

Lin made the remarks when asked to respond to the comments on Russia, India, and China relations by Russian President Vladimir Putin in his wide-ranging interview last week with the media. — Xinhua



Xi Jinping (center, second from left), general secretary of the Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Committee and Chinese president, and his wife Peng Liyuan (center, left), along with Kim Jong Un (center, second from right), general secretary of the Workers' Party of Korea (WPK) and president of the State Affairs of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK), and Kim's wife Ri Sol Ju, applaud during an artistic performance at the Pyongyang Gymnasium in Pyongyang, capital of the DPRK, yesterday.

— Xinhua

Xi calls on China, DPRK to consolidate trust, boost practical cooperation

PYONGYANG — Xi Jinping, general secretary of the Communist Party of China Central Committee and Chinese president, said yesterday that China and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) should consolidate the foundation of political mutual trust and enhance the level of practical cooperation.

Xi made the remarks during his talks with Kim Jong Un, general secretary of the Workers' Party of Korea and president of the State Affairs of the DPRK.

Xi noted that after seven years, he is very pleased to once again visit the beautiful city of Pyongyang, and feels especially warm and familiar.

He expressed his readiness to work with Kim to take this visit as an opportunity to strengthen top-level planning and strategic guidance for China-DPRK relations in the new era, keep bilateral relations advancing with the times and achieve greater progress in bilateral ties, so as to better benefit the two countries and peoples, and make positive contributions to peace, stability, development and prosperity in the region and the world.

Stressing that China and the DPRK are both socialist countries led by communist parties, Xi said that the traditional friendship between the two countries is rooted in their shared ideals and beliefs as well as their common goals, and is backed by a profound historical foundation, a solid political basis and strong emotional bonds.

Xi noted that friendship passed down from generation to generation, a shared future and mutual support have always been the defining features of China-DPRK relations.

No matter how the international situation changes, the Chinese party and government's firm stance on highly valuing China-DPRK traditional friendship will not change, the firm support for General Secretary Kim in leading the DPRK's socialist cause will not change, and the firm commitment to safeguarding the shared interests of the two countries and preserving a favorable strategic environment will not change, Xi said.

Xi pointed out that, in the face of the profound changes unseen in a century that are accelerating across the world, the two sides should take a broad and long-term view, build on past achievements and open up a new future, draw wisdom from the development process of the relations between the two parties and the two countries, seize opportunities in the prevailing trend of human history, inject new contemporary connotations and

strong impetus into the traditional friendship between China and the DPRK, and open up a brighter prospect for the socialist cause of the two countries as well as regional peace and development.

Xi's 4 proposals

During the meeting, Xi put forward four proposals on developing China-DPRK relations.

The two sides should stay guided by the high-level exchanges and consolidate the foundation of political mutual trust, Xi said. The strategic guidance by the top leaders of both nations is the greatest strength of China-DPRK relations, he added, noting that he stands ready to maintain close strategic communication with Kim and guide China-DPRK relations to continuously reach new heights.

Noting that this year marks the 65th anniversary of the China-DPRK Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation and Mutual Assistance, Xi said that both sides will hold grand commemorative events.

The relations between the two parties play an important guiding role in the development of China-DPRK relations, Xi said, calling for further expansion and invigoration of friendly exchanges at various levels and in various fields between the two parties, as well as the deepening of exchanges of experience and mutual learning on party and state governance.

Both sides should enhance exchanges in diplomacy, law enforcement, military affairs and others, implement the important consensus reached between the two leaders, and pool wisdom and strength for the development of China-DPRK relations, Xi said.

The two sides should stay committed to the goal of delivering benefits to the people and elevate the level of practical cooperation, Xi said. China stands ready to work with the DPRK to strengthen the alignment of development strategies, and expand practical cooperation in such areas as economy and trade, agriculture, construction, science and technology, as well as health care, to bring greater benefits to the two peoples, he said.

Xi called on both sides to leverage the opportunity of the full reopening of border crossings and the resumption of civil aviation flights and international passenger trains to increase people-to-people exchanges and foster mutual interaction.

The two sides should uphold the inheritance of friendship as a driving force and strengthen the bonds between their peoples, Xi said, noting that the traditional friendship between

China and the DPRK, forged in blood, is a valuable shared asset of the two peoples.

China stands ready to work with the DPRK to preserve and properly manage the memorial facilities dedicated to the Chinese People's Volunteers martyrs in the DPRK, carry out distinctive programs on revolutionary traditions and youth education, and pass on the red legacy and traditional friendship between the two countries, Xi said.

China is also ready to work with the DPRK to make full use of each side's strengths and resources, enhance exchanges and cooperation in education, culture and the arts, tourism, sports, media, youth affairs, subnational engagement and sister-city relations, and ensure that the traditional friendship between China and the DPRK takes deeper root in the hearts of the two peoples, Xi said.

The Chinese president also called for upholding fairness and justice as a guiding principle to enrich the substance of strategic coordination. Xi said that, in response to the major question of where humanity is headed, he has proposed the vision of building a community with a shared future for humanity and the four global initiatives, which aim to steer global governance toward greater fairness and justice and have won broad support and positive responses from the international community, including the DPRK.

Noting that Asia is the common home where regional countries, including China and the DPRK, live and thrive, Xi said that the two countries should strengthen strategic coordination, firmly safeguard their respective sovereignty, security and development interests, and jointly uphold regional peace and development.

Calling Xi the most respected guest of the DPRK people, Kim said that his country extended the warmest and most cordial welcome to Xi, who visited the DPRK after a seven-year interval. Xi's choice of Pyongyang for his first overseas trip this year fully reflects the great importance he attaches to DPRK-China relations and the profound friendship between the two countries, which is a tremendous encouragement to the DPRK side, Kim said.

This visit once again clearly demonstrates that the DPRK-China relationship is unbreakable, Kim said. Calling the bilateral ties time-tested, Kim said that the bilateral ties have always stood on the right side of history and championed autonomy and justice.

The special nature of the bilateral relations lies not only in the fact that the two countries are close neighbors, but also in the deep

traditional friendship and shared ideals and convictions, which both sides cherish and are committed to carrying forward from generation to generation, Kim said.

Kim also recalled his meeting with Xi in Beijing last September, noting that since then the bilateral relations have achieved positive progress in various fields, bringing tangible benefits to the two peoples.

He voiced sincere appreciation for the important proposals put forward by Xi on advancing DPRK-China relations in the new era, adding that relevant departments of the DPRK side will work closely with their Chinese counterparts and make every effort to fully implement the proposals, promote new progress in bilateral exchanges and cooperation in such areas as economy and trade, infrastructure, science and technology, education, as well as people-to-people and cultural exchanges, and strengthen exchanges of experience and mutual learning through inter-party channels to provide valuable support for the development of the DPRK's socialist cause, so as to help the DPRK people advance toward modernization together with the Chinese people.

Kim said that the DPRK is pleased to see that, under the leadership of General Secretary Xi, China has achieved development accomplishments that have amazed the world and significantly enhanced its international status.

He noted that the concept of a community with a shared future for humanity and the four major global initiatives proposed by Xi carry profound significance for promoting world peace and development, and have won the support and appreciation of people around the world.

Kim said that the international community is undergoing unprecedented and profound changes in recent years, stating that the DPRK will unwaveringly uphold the one-China principle and firmly support China's policies and positions on safeguarding its core interests.

He stressed that consolidating and developing the DPRK-China friendship in the new era is the choice of the peoples of the two countries and a necessity of the times, and remains the DPRK's consistent strategic choice and steadfast strategic resolve.

He said the DPRK will, as always, regard the development of DPRK-China relations as the foremost strategic undertaking of the state, spare no effort to build bilateral relations into a model of interstate relations, and work together with China to contribute to peace and prosperity in the region and the world.

— Xinhua

Xi, Kim hold talks in Pyongyang, pledge to advance China-DPRK ties

PYONGYANG – Xi Jinping, general secretary of the Communist Party of China Central Committee and Chinese president, said yesterday that China and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) should consolidate the foundation of political mutual trust and enhance the level of practical cooperation.

Xi made the remarks during his talks with Kim Jong Un, general secretary of the Workers' Party of Korea and president of the State Affairs of the DPRK.

Xi arrived in Pyongyang yesterday for a two-day state visit to the DPRK.

Xi noted that after seven years, he is very pleased to once again visit the beautiful city of Pyongyang, and feels especially warm and familiar.

He expressed his readiness to work with Kim to take this visit as an opportunity to strengthen top-level planning and strategic guidance for China-DPRK relations in the new era, keep bilateral relations advancing with the times and achieve greater progress in bilateral ties, so as to better benefit the two countries and peoples, and make positive contributions to peace, stability, development and prosperity in the region and the world.

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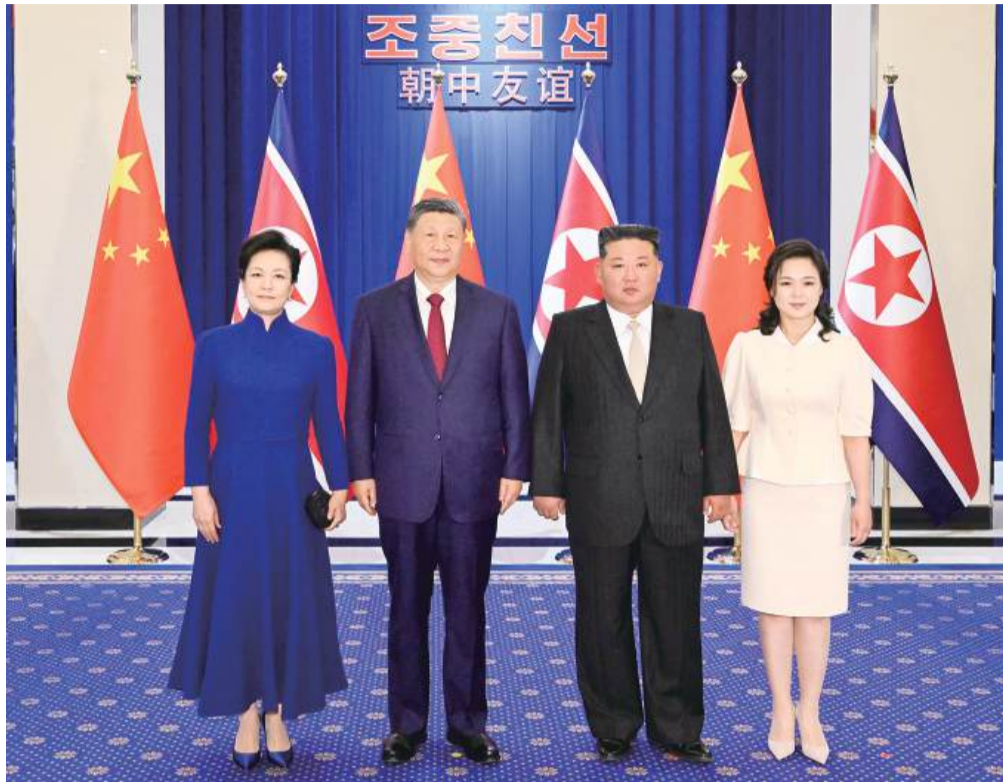
No matter how the international situation changes, the Chinese party and government's firm stance on highly valuing China-DPRK traditional friendship will not change, the firm support for General Secretary Kim in leading the DPRK's socialist cause will not change, and the firm commitment to safeguarding the shared interests of the two countries and preserving a favorable strategic environment will not change, Xi said.

Xi pointed out that, in the face of the profound changes unseen in a century that are accelerating across the world, the two sides should take a broad and long-term view, build on past achievements and open up a new future, draw wisdom from the development process of the relations between the two parties and the two countries, seize opportunities in the prevailing trend of human history, inject new contemporary connotations and strong impetus into the traditional friendship between China and the DPRK, and open up a brighter prospect for the socialist cause of the two countries as well as regional peace and development.

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The two sides should stay guided by the high-level exchanges and consolidate the foundation of political mutual trust, Xi said. The strategic guidance by the top leaders of both nations is the greatest strength of China-DPRK relations, he added, noting that he stands ready to maintain close strategic communication with Kim and guide China-DPRK relations to continuously reach new heights.

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Xi Jinping (second from left), general secretary of the Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Committee and Chinese president, and his wife Peng Liyuan (left) pose for a photo with Kim Jong Un (second from right), general secretary of the Workers' Party of Korea (WPK) and president of the State Affairs of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK), and Kim's wife Ri Sol Ju, in Pyongyang yesterday. Xi and Peng attended a welcome banquet hosted by Kim here yesterday. – Xinhua

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The relations between the two parties play an important guiding role in the development of China-DPRK relations, Xi said, calling for further expansion and invigoration of friendly exchanges at various levels and in various fields between the two parties, as well as the deepening of exchanges of experience and mutual learning on party and state governance.

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Kim also recalled his meeting with Xi in Beijing last September, noting that since then the bilateral relations have achieved positive progress in various fields, bringing tangible

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Kim said that the international community is undergoing unprecedented and profound changes in recent years, stating that the DPRK will unwaveringly uphold the one-China principle and firmly support China's policies and positions on safeguarding its core interests.

He stressed that consolidating and developing the DPRK-China friendship in the new era is the choice of the peoples of the two countries and a necessity of the times, and remains the DPRK's consistent strategic choice and steadfast strategic resolve.

He said the DPRK will, as always, regard the development of DPRK-China relations as the foremost strategic undertaking of the state, spare no effort to build bilateral relations into a model of interstate relations, and work together with China to contribute to peace and prosperity in the region and the world.

Before the meeting, Kim held a grand welcome ceremony for Xi at Kim Il Sung Square in Pyongyang. The top leaders of the two parties and the two countries jointly ascended the review stand. Amid a 21-gun salute, the military band played the national anthems of China and the DPRK.

Accompanied by Kim, Xi inspected the honor guard of the three services of the Korean People's Army. After that, Xi watched a march-past with Kim.

Also yesterday, Xi attended a welcome banquet hosted by Kim, during which Xi said that the relationship between China and the DPRK stands at a new historical starting point and that he reached important consensus with Kim during the visit.

From the strategic perspective of the future and destiny of socialism, both leaders have agreed to seize the general trend of the times, respond to the shared aspirations of the two peoples, strengthen high-level exchanges, deepen strategic communication, expand practical cooperation, enhance people-to-people bonds, promote the high-level development of China-DPRK relations, jointly open up brighter prospects for the socialist cause of both countries, and contribute to the continuous progress of human society, Xi said. – Xinhua

Major quake off Philippines kills at least 35, dozens still missing

Pam Castro and Ferdinandh Cabrera

GENERAL SANTOS – A 7.8-magnitude earthquake in the southern Philippines yesterday killed at least 35 people, according to provincial authorities, after toppling buildings and sparking tsunami warnings across the region.

National disaster authorities said at least a dozen people were still missing, while 134 had sustained injuries.

Philippine authorities urged people in affected coastal regions to move to higher ground after the offshore quake hit south of General Santos, a city of about 720,000, where the death toll was now 12, according to the tally at a local command centre.

A series of powerful aftershocks rocked the area from about two hours after the first quake, according to the United States Geological Survey, with the largest measuring magnitude 6.5.

As night descended, AFP journalists watched as rescue workers in General Santos used their hands to dig through the rubble of a popular grocery store chain in a desperate bid to reach two employees buried beneath.

Morphy Angcad, a 35-year-old security guard, told AFP he was not ready to accept that his sister, one of the two, was dead.

“We received a call this morning telling us that she was one of the trapped there,” he said, adding he had refused a hotel room so he could stand watch.

“I don’t want to leave this site until I see the body of my sister... (but) I’m hoping against hope that she is still alive.”

Dioslinda Deluvio told AFP her son Joey, the other employee, had come to visit her just weeks earlier, asking: “Ma, what is your plan for your life? Are you OK?”

“All I can do is cry now, imagining the good things he did in the world,” she said.

A few kilometres away, others were preparing to spend the night on a pavement.



This frame grab made from UGC video footage courtesy of Deped Mahayahay Elementary School shows huddled schoolchildren in a field reacting as a structure (background) collapses during a 7.8 magnitude earthquake in Malita town, Davao del Sur province yesterday. – AFP

“I’ll be sleeping here outside even if it’s uncomfortable, because I’m scared there will be an aftershock,” 34-year-old sales clerk Johnson Alerta told AFP.

“I feel safer here.”

‘So many lives’

Rene Punzalan, disaster chief for hard-hit Sarangani province, told AFP 14 people had died in Glan municipality alone when a landslide buried their homes at the foot of a mountain.

“The landslide happened immediately after the earthquake, so many lives were lost,” he said, adding that some areas had yet to report if they had sustained casualties.

“The greatest challenge is communication. The power was cut, so it’s hard to get updates,” Punzalan said.

Videos posted to social media and verified by AFP showed a shopping centre with a Jollibee fast food restaurant reduced to rubble in General Santos, while a school building that officials said was unoccupied crumpled in another.

In another video verified by AFP, young schoolchildren could be seen screaming in the arms of their teachers as the quake violently swayed them back and forth on the ground.

‘Move to higher ground’

Sarangani’s Punzalan told AFP that more than 2,000 people

evacuated due to a morning tsunami warning were now awaiting a green light to return to their homes.

“(Authorities) are still assessing the situation now if it will be OK to send them home,” he said.

A notice from the Pacific Tsunami Warning Centre had said tsunami waves were possible along the coasts of the Philippines, Indonesia, Palau, Taiwan and Papua New Guinea.

But by mid-afternoon, the Philippines and other countries had cancelled their warnings.

Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos, who suspended classes across Mindanao island on what was to have been the first day of school, had called on residents in coastal areas to evacuate immediately.

“Move to higher ground now. Do not wait,” he said. “Your life is more important than anything left behind.”

Earthquakes are a near-daily occurrence in the Philippines, which is situated on the Pacific “Ring of Fire”, an arc of intense seismic activity stretching from Japan through Southeast Asia and across the Pacific basin.

Eastern Mindanao was rocked by a pair of earthquakes of 7.4 and 6.7 magnitude in October that killed at least eight people.

These followed a magnitude 6.9 quake days earlier that killed 76 people in Cebu province in central Philippines. – AFP

Indonesian, Philippine firms agree on barter trade to reduce US\$ reliance

JAKARTA – Companies from Indonesia and the Philippines yesterday signed countertrade agreements, enabling both sides to conduct import and export transactions without full reliance on the US dollar as a payment vehicle.

The agreements, inked at the Indonesian Ministry of Trade in Jakarta, involved multiple businesses from both nations, with potential trade volume projected to

reach US\$350 million.

Indonesian Minister of Trade Budi Santoso said countertrade, or barter-based commerce, is expected to bolster bilateral trade while trimming dependence on foreign currencies.

The minister said that the mechanism could help cushion the impact of exchange rate fluctuations, which have recently pressured both currencies. – Xinhua

Indonesia to optimize free nutritious meals program for efficiency

JAKARTA – Indonesia will shift the focus of its Free Nutritious Meals program to maximize budget efficiency and enhance food quality, newly inaugurated National Nutrition Agency (BGN) head Nanik S. Deyang said yesterday.

“Our immediate priority is budget efficiency to avoid straining the state budget, while maintaining our established nutritional targets for beneficiaries,” Nanik said following her inauguration.

To achieve this, the BGN will

temporarily halt the construction of new meal-service kitchens to evaluate and map out the ideal capacity required for each region, ensuring supply matches local demand, Nanik said.

Additionally, the agency said it plans to review and refocus its beneficiary list to guarantee that aid is directed precisely to children and vulnerable groups in urgent need of nutritional intervention, while simultaneously tightening quality control on existing kitchens. – Xinhua



Newly appointed head of the National Nutrition Agency Nanik Deyang (left) shakes hands with Indonesian President Prabowo Subianto during her inauguration ceremony at the Presidential Palace in Jakarta yesterday. – AFP

Mass school closures in Japan city as bear roams streets

TOKYO – A bear roaming the streets of a Japanese city for three days forced the closure of nearly 100 schools yesterday, as dozens of hunters and officials searched for the animal.

The city government of Utsunomiya, north of Tokyo, closed all 94 public primary and junior high schools in the area after receiving more than 10 reports of bear sightings since Saturday – including in a shopping arcade.

“We have vehicles out to areas where a bear was seen to make people aware and to urge people to stay indoors or in vehicles,” a city official told AFP, adding that dozens of hunters, police and local officials have been looking for the animal.

It was not clear whether there is one bear or more, he said, speaking on the customary condition of anonymity.

In recent years, Japan has seen an increasing number of bear sightings and attacks, especially in urban areas.

A record 13 people were killed by bears in Japan last year, and there has been a jump in encounters as the animals emerge hungry from hibernation.

In the last year to March, bear sightings nationwide topped 50,000 – more than double the previous record set two years earlier, according to official data.

In Utsunomiya, a regional capital and home to 510,000 residents, there were just two unconfirmed bear sightings in the previous year.

The bear now being hunted was first spotted Saturday morning, north of the city centre, and was described as being around one metre long.

A series of sightings followed, including in a residential neighbourhood that day, at a shopping arcade on Sunday, and at a park, a high school and a junior school.

Early yesterday, residents spotted a bear close to a wholesale market, the city official said. – AFP

Australia’s PM Albanese says migration to fall as far right surges

SYDNEY – Australia’s Prime Minister Anthony Albanese said yesterday migration levels are reducing, responding to an opinion poll showing a right-wing populist party ahead of governing Labor.

Support for Australia’s One Nation party was 31 percent, ahead of Labor on 30 percent, a Newspoll published in *The Australian* newspaper yesterday showed.

The poll of 1,240 people is the second major survey to show anti-migration One Nation in a leading position.

Asked by reporters about the surge in support, Albanese said the rise of populist political parties was a global trend, and he wants social

cohesion at the core of Australian identity.

Australia’s population reached 28 million in June.

One Nation has seized on comparatively high recent net migration – government data shows 538,000 net arrivals in 2023, 429,000 in 2024, and 306,000 last year – as the cause of a housing shortage.

The government has said high arrivals in those years are due to a backlog of students and workers entering the country after borders were closed during COVID-19.

Albanese said people were struggling with housing and an economy that “isn’t working for them”.

“We will reduce the net overseas

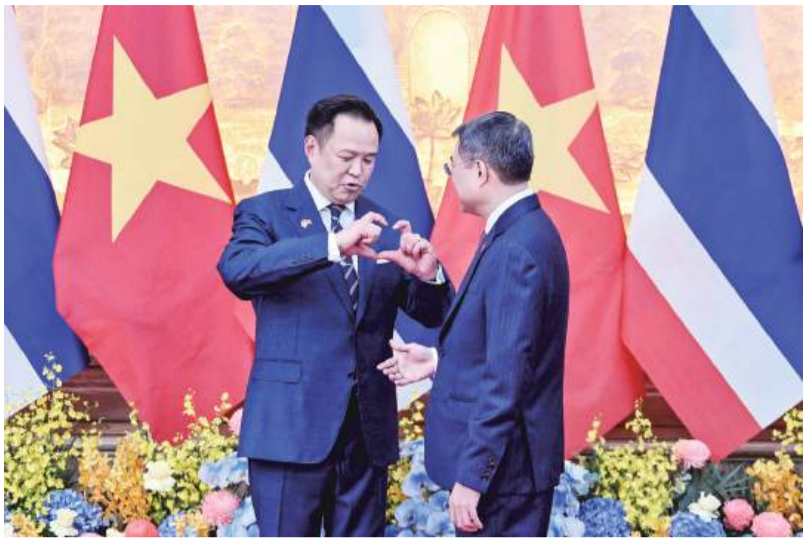
migration over the next couple of years down to 225,000. We think that is the right number,” Albanese told reporters in Canberra.

“The fact that we have people who have come from all over the world, proud to call Australia home, is something that is a national asset for us,” he added.

Almost half of Australians have a parent born overseas, census data shows.

An Australian election is not due until 2028.

Albanese’s government holds a majority of seats in the parliament’s lower house, where One Nation won its first seat last month in a by-election. – AFP



Vietnam's Prime Minister Le Minh Hung (right) and Thailand's Prime Minister Anutin Charnvirakul gesture during a welcoming ceremony at the Government Office in Hanoi yesterday. — AFP

8 killed, 6 injured following explosion at steel plant in India

NEW DELHI — At least eight workers were killed and six others suffered injuries yesterday after a ladle carrying molten steel exploded at a steel plant in the southern Indian state of Andhra Pradesh, police said.

The incident took place at the Vizag steel plant's heat facility in Visakhapatnam, about 392 km

northeast of Amaravati, the capital city of Andhra Pradesh.

Following the incident, the plant management initiated emergency response measures and deployed safety teams to the affected area.

The injured were immediately taken to nearby hospitals for treatment. — Xinhua

India says sailors rescued off tanker ablaze off Oman

MUMBAI — Omani authorities airlifted 24 Indian sailors off a tanker on fire off the coast of Oman yesterday, New Delhi officials said, without saying what caused the blaze.

"We are thankful to the Omani authorities for their swift response and rescue of all the 24 crew members of Indian nationality, onboard MT Marivex, and ensuring their safety," the Indian embassy in Oman said in a statement on social media.

India's Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways said a fire was reported at around 1:30 p.m. (0800 GMT) on the MT Marivex, a Palau-flagged tanker.

"There has been a fire reported on a vessel, MT Marivex, on which there were 24 Indian seafarers... all Indian seafarers are safe," ministry director Opesh Kumar Sharma told reporters.

Images posted on social media by the Forward Seamen's Union of India showed crew members being winched from the vessel by

helicopter as thick black smoke billowed from its bridge and accommodation cabins.

The tanker's position was shown by ship-tracking service MarineTraffic as being off the coast of Oman, south of the capital Muscat.

Indian authorities did not provide details about the extent of the damage to the vessel and did not indicate what may have sparked the fire.

Iran has largely blocked shipping through the Strait of Hormuz since the outbreak of war with the United States and Israel on February 28. The vital waterway normally carries about one-fifth of the world's oil and LNG shipments in peacetime.

New Delhi's foreign ministry condemned recent violence in a statement earlier yesterday.

"This conflict has now lasted over 100 days and has already caused immense human suffering," it said.

"It has also had a debilitating impact on the global economy and energy supplies." — AFP

Women detained in Afghanistan's Herat in clothing crackdown

HERAT — Afghan residents in the western city of Herat have told AFP of witnessing multiple women detained by the Taliban government's morality police, in a crackdown over clothing which has drawn criticism from the United Nations.

The UN mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) said Sunday it was "concerned over multiple arrests and detentions of women in Herat Afghanistan for alleged non-compliance with dress requirements".

Taliban authorities rule according to a strict interpretation of Islamic law, and have gradually tightened restrictions on women since returning to power in August 2021.

Women nationwide must be completely covered when they leave home, with many wearing a flowing abaya robe along with a Muslim headscarf and a face covering.

In Herat, residents witnessed women being detained on Saturday for not wearing the body-cloaking chador or burqa. They spoke to AFP on condition of anonymity for security reasons.

"I saw two employees of the ministry, one of whom was carrying a whip, putting two women who were not wearing chadors into a vehicle," said a 23-year-old woman, referring to officials from the Ministry for the Propagation of Virtue and the Prevention of Vice (PVPV).

She said those detained were fully covered, including wearing Muslim headscarves.

"Everyone is frightened," she told AFP.

Another woman said she saw PVPV officials stopping vehicles and checking passengers' clothing, and saw multiple women being detained and put into vans.

"The majority of those arrested were women who were not wearing chadors," the 27-year-old said.

The PVPV ministry did not comment on women being detained when contacted by AFP.

"There is nothing unusual in Herat," the ministry's information department said.

The dress code "is a divine command and an enforced law, and we are obligated to implement it," the ministry said.

Since the crackdown was launched, an AFP journalist and multiple residents in Herat said the number of women leaving home had dropped sharply.

A 20-year-old taxi driver said "they're not seen in the city at all".

"We've been told not to transport women without a chador," he said.

One woman described the situation as "unbearable".

"I am genuinely saddened that we don't even have the right to breathe freely," the 33-year-old said.

"Life has become very difficult for us." — AFP

India detains and deports 5,000 Bangladeshis

KOLKATA — India has deported nearly 5,000 Bangladeshi citizens since Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Hindu-nationalist party swept to power in West Bengal last month, according to official statistics.

Modi's Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) won a sweeping victory in elections in the eastern border state of more than 100 million people, promising to "detect, delete and deport" illegal migrants.

India shares a long and porous border with Muslim-majority Bangladesh, where migration has historically been driven by economic hardship and longstanding family links.

On taking power, the new West Bengal government ordered the establishment of detention centres for undocumented Bangladeshis and Rohingya refugees, a mainly Muslim people who fled persecution in Myanmar.

State Chief Minister Suwendu Adhikari, speaking in the capital Kolkata on Sunday, said nearly 5,000 Bangladeshi citizens had been deported across the border.

"We have started the work of deporting Bangladeshi infiltrators who do not fall under the purview of the Citizenship Amendment Act," Adhikari said, saying the government had "established holding centres in all districts of the state" in May.

"From these centres, 4,800 Bangladeshi infiltrators have already been deported so far," he added.

"Another 836 people are currently in the holding centres... we are making arrangements to deport the 836 soon," Adhikari said.

The deportation campaign comes against a backdrop of longstanding political tensions over immigration in the border state.

Top Indian officials have referred to migrants as "termites"

and "infiltrators".

Critics say the BJP's rhetoric and policies have added to the unease and marginalisation of India's more than 200 million Muslims, accusing the party of conflating religious identity with illegal migration.

Rights groups have previously accused India of also pushing hundreds of Bengali-speaking Muslims into Bangladesh without due process.

Relations between India and Muslim-majority Bangladesh soured after a 2024 revolution in Dhaka ended the autocratic rule of then-prime minister Sheikh Hasina, an ally of New Delhi, who fled to India.

A new government in Dhaka was elected in February, and relations have since slowly improved. Bangladesh and Indian border force chiefs were due to meet in New Delhi yesterday. — AFP

AI helps detect smuggled seahorses, shark fins in airport scans

SYDNEY — Researchers in Australia have developed an artificial intelligence (AI) system capable of detecting smuggled marine wildlife products, including shark fins, dried seahorses and sea cucumbers, in airport luggage scans.

The study uses existing 3D X-ray CT airport scanners and a neural network to identify trafficked items concealed in baggage with 92 percent accuracy, according to a media release from the journal *Frontiers in Ocean Sustainability*, which published the research yesterday.

Marine wildlife trafficking, estimated to generate billions of

dollars annually, poses a major threat to ocean ecosystems. Unlike more widely recognized wildlife crimes, such as ivory or rhino horn trafficking, illicit trade in marine species is harder to detect as items are often hidden in ordinary travelers' luggage or packages, the release said.

To train the algorithm, the team led by scientists at Australia's Macquarie University conducted nearly 300 scans using samples of marine wildlife trafficking seizures, simulating smugglers' tricks and real-life circumstances such as wrapping items in tin or clothes, or hiding them inside toys.

The system achieved detection

rates of 95 percent for shark fins, 96 percent for seahorses, and 86 percent for sea cucumbers, researchers said.

They said the technology could support border enforcement efforts but emphasized it would complement, not replace, existing detection methods, noting limitations including false positives and uneven access to advanced 3D scanners.

"We can only mock up real-world trafficking scenarios based on what has been detected before. AI is not a silver bullet for detection, nor a replacement for human and sniffer dog detection," said Vanessa Pirotta of Macquarie University, the study's lead author. — Xinhua



Potters and artisans holding the giant tricolour flag take part in a rally to demand fair pay for their work in Kolkata, India yesterday. — AFP

Lebanon reports Israeli strikes as Hezbollah claims attacks against troops in south

BEIRUT – An Israeli strike hit a vehicle in the city of Tyre, south Lebanon yesterday, Lebanese state media reported, as Israel vowed to press attacks on Hezbollah despite Iranian warnings.

Hezbollah meanwhile said it targeted Israeli troops in Lebanon, but did not claim any attacks on Israeli territory.

Lebanon's state-run National News Agency (NNA) reported that "an enemy airstrike targeted a car with a missile in the city of Tyre, near the Lebanese Red Cross building".

An AFP photographer in Tyre saw flames erupting from a car on a coastal road as residents gathered at the scene and an ambulance and

paramedics headed towards it.

Reporting airstrikes from the early morning, the NNA said Israeli raids hit more than a dozen locations in the south, including Burj al-Shemali near Tyre.

A Lebanese culture ministry official said Israeli bombardment on the city a day earlier damaged a UNESCO World Heritage site there, and AFP correspondents saw dust and debris at the site.

The NNA said some of yesterday's strikes caused casualties, though Lebanon's health ministry has not yet released any tolls.

Iran's military command yesterday afternoon said it was halting its operation against Israel

after the two sides exchanged fire for the first time since a truce in the Middle East war took effect in April.

Iran had delivered a "painful response" to Israel and "accordingly, the cessation of armed forces operations is hereby announced", the Khatam al-Anbiya central command said in a statement carried by state television.

"However, it is emphasised that should acts of aggression and hostility continue, including in southern Lebanon, much more severe and crushing measures than before will follow," it added.

But Israeli Defence Minister Israel Katz later vowed that the military would "continue to operate

in Lebanon against the terrorist organisation Hezbollah".

He added that Israel would strike Beirut's southern suburbs in retaliation for every attack on northern Israel.

"We categorically reject Iran's threats. Any Iranian attempt to link Lebanon and Iran and attack Israel will be met with great force, as happened yesterday," Katz said.

Iran insists a halt to the broader Middle East conflict must include a ceasefire in Lebanon, and on Sunday fired missiles at Israel in response to Israeli strikes on Beirut's southern suburbs earlier in the day.

On Monday, Hezbollah claimed a series of attacks on Israeli troops who have invaded south Lebanon.

Israel's military intercepted three projectiles fired from Lebanon, an AFP correspondent near the border reported, as Israel's military said the munitions had targeted its forces operating in Lebanon's south.

Lebanon says Israeli strikes have killed more than 3,600 people since Hezbollah drew Lebanon into the Middle East conflict on March 2 with rocket fire at Israel to avenge the US-Israeli killing of Iran's supreme leader.

After an April 17 ceasefire between Israel and Hezbollah began, Israel announced a so-called Yellow Line inside Lebanese territory about a dozen kilometres from its northern border where its ground troops are operating. – AFP

UN rights chief urges US to lift tough Cuba sanctions

GENEVA – The United Nations rights chief yesterday urged Washington to immediately lift tough sanctions imposed on Cuba this year, warning they were causing widespread suffering and endangering lives.

While Cuba has been under a US trade embargo since 1962, President Donald Trump has drastically ramped up pressure in recent months, cutting off its fuel supplies and threatening to take over the island.

"The fuel restrictions imposed since early 2026 and recent tightening of extraterritorial sanctions, taken together, are directly harming Cubans, especially the most vulnerable," UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Volker Türk said in a statement.

"Children are dying because doctors lack access to essential medical supplies and medicines. This is unacceptable," he said.

"These sanctions must be lifted immediately."

The United States has been heaping pressure on Cuba, claiming the country's communist regime threatens the security of Americans.

Trump has repeatedly stated it could be next to fall, after the January overthrow of Venezuela's socialist leader Nicolás Maduro and the US campaign against Iran.

US officials also brought an indictment against Cuba's former president Raul Castro, in a case that dates back to 1996, fuelling speculation that Trump would try to topple the communist state.

Türk pointed out that the oil blockade had left Cuba with daily blackouts that frequently exceed 20 hours.

And additional sanctions imposed last month, some with extraterritorial effect on private entities like traders, insurers and shipping companies,

had added to the misery.

"These measures, combined, are significantly affecting the population's human rights," Türk's statement said.

It highlighted that critical medical services were under severe strain, with essential medicines in "critical short supply".

Recent public health data indicated that infant mortality had doubled and childhood cancer survival rates had decreased since the fuel restrictions were imposed, the statement said.

It also highlighted a reported 60-percent decrease in food production and spikes in the cost of basic food items.

"Such severe sanctions packages that target entire sectors of an economy and produce broad, indiscriminate and harsh effects on populations are incompatible with basic principles of international human rights law," Türk said. – AFP

Bolivia protests: president warns 'narcoterrorists' days numbered



Bolivia's President Rodrigo Paz raises a bottle with gasoline as he speaks after signing the enactment of a law regulating states of emergency, in the capital La Paz yesterday, after weeks of protests against him and his rightwing policies. – AFP

LAPAZ – Bolivia's embattled president yesterday signalled dwindling patience for protests that have paralysed the country for a month, as he moved a step closer to declaring a state of emergency that would allow the military to intervene.

For weeks protestors have marched and erected roadblocks, bringing the country to a near standstill – pushing up food and fuel prices and causing shortages of basic goods.

The protestors have demanded that President Rodrigo Paz's fledgling government tackle a deep economic crisis, while others have demanded that he step down.

Amping up his rhetoric yesterday, Paz blamed "narcoterrorists" for the unrest and warned their "days are numbered".

Yesterday he backed a law paving the way for a state of emergency which would authorize military deployment to

repress the movement and clear the blockades.

Paz has suggested that former president Evo Morales and his coca-growing supporters are pushing protests to destabilise his government, the first conservative government in two decades.

The US-backed, pro-business Paz took office in November promising to resolve the country's worst economic crisis in decades, but his unpopular economic reforms and failure to respond to social demands have roused public ire.

Morales – in hiding from charges related to his relationship with a teen with whom he allegedly fathered a child – is accused of fomenting the unrest.

On Friday, US President Donald Trump's new Shield of the Americas alliance – an anti-cartel coalition that includes pro-US administrations in Argentina, Bolivia and Chile among other countries – gave Paz its unequivocal backing. – AFP

Venezuela's leader Rodríguez meets Turkey's Erdogan in Istanbul

ISTANBUL – Venezuela's interim President Delcy Rodríguez met Recep Tayyip Erdogan in Istanbul yesterday with the pair seeking to step up cooperation in trade, energy and mining, the Turkish president's office said.

Rodríguez, who has led Venezuela since US forces captured former socialist president Nicolás Maduro in January, arrived in Istanbul late on Sunday after a five-day visit to India.

Her arrival was announced on X by Turkish Energy Minister Alparslan Bayraktar, who said she had come at Erdogan's invitation.

During talks at the Dolmabahçe Palace on the shores of the Bosphorus, the pair discussed bilateral ties and global events and Erdogan emphasised Turkey's "determination to further advance cooperation... in many areas, particularly in trade, energy, and mining", his office said.

Turkey has strong ties with oil-rich Venezuela, and Erdogan was close to the governments of late socialist firebrand Hugo Chávez and his successor Maduro.



Turkey's President Recep Tayyip Erdogan (right) shakes hands with Venezuela's Interim President Delcy Rodríguez at the Dolmabahçe Presidential working office in Istanbul. – AFP

The two nations signed a raft of agreements in recent years covering defence, energy, tourism and agriculture.

Venezuela has the world's largest proven oil reserves, but years of underinvestment and mismanagement have seen a

dramatic collapse in production.

The situation worsened with a US oil embargo in 2019, but Washington eased the sanctions after Maduro's capture and Rodríguez has since pushed through reforms opening up the oil industry to private capital. – AFP

Armenia's PM wins vote, cementing Westward tilt

YEREVAN – Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan's party won parliamentary elections, according to preliminary results yesterday that signalled a victory endorsing the nation's pro-Western shift after claims of Russian interference.

Pashinyan's push to move Armenia out of the orbit of its former ruler has angered the Kremlin – which claimed the West swayed the result and authorities had pressured the opposition.

Pashinyan claimed a "historic victory" in the election that came after years of turmoil since he was swept to power in a 2018 street revolution.

The small Caucasus country is still haunted by Azerbaijan's 2023 military takeover of the Karabakh region, which ended decades of territorial conflict and prompted the exodus of the enclave's 100,000-strong ethnic Armenian population.

Pashinyan framed the vote as a choice between lasting peace with Azerbaijan and a return to war.

His ruling Civil Contract party secured 49.8 percent of the vote, comfortably ahead of the 23.3 percent of Russian-Armenian billionaire Samvel Karapetyan's Strong Armenia alliance, the Central Election Commission said. The turnout was 59 percent.

In Yerevan, voters greeted Pashinyan's victory with a mix of relief, hope and unease – some seeing it as a mandate for peace, others warning that Armenia's future remained uncertain.

"I am very glad that our people trusted Pashinyan again. What did some people think, that the people would go and elect those corrupt Russian puppets?" 58-year-old welder Aram Mnatsakanyan told AFP.

Sargis Harutyunyan, 81, said he feared post-election unrest, warning that opposition street protests "would not be the right thing in this geopolitical situation".



Armenian Prime Minister and leader of the Civil Contract party Nikol Pashinyan holds a press conference following the country's parliamentary election at the party's headquarters in the capital Yerevan yesterday. His party won the election, according to preliminary results. – AFP

Closer EU ties

European Union chief Ursula von der Leyen congratulated Pashinyan on his win, telling him: "Armenia can count on us."

"The spirit of the Velvet Revolution you led in 2018 is alive and well," she said on social media.

Pashinyan has drifted from Moscow since 2023, with Armenia criticising Russia not coming to its aid when Azerbaijan recaptured Karabakh.

He froze participation in a Russia-led security bloc, signed a strategic partnership agreement with Washington, and set Armenia on a path toward possible EU membership.

Moscow has in recent weeks escalated its rhetoric.

In a pointed warning, Russian President

Vladimir Putin said in May: "We all see what is happening with Ukraine now... How did it all begin? With Ukraine's attempt to join the EU."

In the weeks before the vote, Russia banned the import of several Armenian products.

The Kremlin was widely accused of online misinformation, hacking and pumping out Kremlin-friendly narratives portraying Western cooperation as dangerous.

The Russian foreign ministry blasted the vote, alleging it was marked by "Western interference" and "unprecedented pressure" on the opposition.

It said the results showed Armenian society was divided and that Pashinyan's support was declining.

International monitors from the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) said "elections offered voters a genuine choice among political alternatives in a well-run process".

"Direct pressure from abroad, in the form of escalating [Russian] trade restrictions and security threats were observed during the campaign, aimed at unduly influencing voters in favour of the opposition," they said in a statement.

Armenia's Investigative Committee said it had opened 59 criminal cases over alleged electoral violations – including people casting multiple ballots – and detained nine people.

'Institutionalise peace'

Pashinyan's opponent Karapetyan – under house arrest on charges he alleges are politically motivated – called the elections "shameful", denouncing alleged violations and saying dozens of his campaign staff had been arrested.

Critics accuse Pashinyan of using the courts, police and administrative resources to pressure opponents.

Analyst Armen Badalyan said the result means Pashinyan's party "won enough seats in the new parliament to form the country's next cabinet".

"But it fell short of the supermajority needed to pass constitutional amendments" demanded by Azerbaijan as a condition for a final peace treaty.

Pashinyan hailed a "historic victory" and pledged to follow a balanced foreign policy, saying Armenia would "continue the course of rapprochement with the West" while also deepening Russia ties.

"I hope this will draw a positive response from Turkey and Azerbaijan," he said.

"We need to institutionalise peace between Armenia and Azerbaijan."

– AFP, MPD

Hungary MPs back plan to cut their own paychecks

BUDAPEST – Hungarian lawmakers unanimously voted to slash their incomes and allowances yesterday, as Prime Minister Peter Magyar seeks to reduce administrative costs.

Critics had previously accused Magyar's predecessor, nationalist premier Viktor Orban, of providing high salaries in an attempt to placate opposition deputies.

Magyar, whose party filled with political newcomers won the April 12 elections by a landslide, was among those highly critical of the practice.

All 189 representatives present in the 199-member legislature voted for the bill, submitted by the ruling Tiszta party.

Under the legislation, deputies' monthly base salaries are set to decrease by 40 percent to the equivalent of 3,690 euros (US\$4,260) before taxes, starting next month.

Base salaries will still be almost double the average national wage, but down from about three times under Orban.

The prime minister, the speaker, and members of parliamentary committees are also facing pay reductions.

Reimbursement of mobile phone bills will be scrapped entirely, alongside cuts to lawmakers' allowances for office rent, housing, and staff.

According to Magyar, the measures will save a full year of operating costs over the

current parliament's four-year mandate as he seeks to refill the government's coffers drained by years of alleged corruption.

"Besides humanity, it is [about] self-restraint... and humility," Magyar told private broadcaster RTL last month, arguing for the cuts.

In the same interview, Magyar suggested that mayors' salaries should also be cut, prompting pushback from some local leaders.

Conservative, pro-EU Magyar came to power promising wide-ranging reforms, including cracking down on corruption.

Systemic corruption cost Hungary at least 186 billion euros during Orban's 16-year tenure, the head of the country's anti-graft watchdog Integrity Authority Ferenc Biro estimated in an interview with investigative group De Akciokozosseg.

The autonomous public body was established in 2022 as part of reforms Orban's government undertook to partially access EU funds withheld over rule-of-law concerns.

Investigators raided the Integrity Authority's office in January 2025, laying out corruption accusations against Biro.

In the video interview published on Sunday, Biro claimed the former justice minister told him not to carry out his duties, and he is facing criminal proceedings because he did not comply. – AFP

France, Germany axe joint fighter jet project: Berlin

BERLIN – France and Germany have agreed to abandon a joint fighter jet programme due to disagreements between the companies involved, Berlin said yesterday in a blow to European efforts to boost defence cooperation.

The Future Combat Air System (FCAS) programme was launched in 2017 to replace France's Rafale jets and the Eurofighter planes used by Germany and Spain.

The project was seen as a key test of European efforts to work more closely on defence as they seek to present a united front.

But the multi-billion-euro programme was beset by disagreements between the firms involved – France's Dassault Aviation and Airbus, which represents Germany and Spain.

A German government official told AFP that Chancellor Friedrich Merz and French President Emmanuel Macron had "reached the shared assessment that the companies will not be able to come together on building a joint combat aircraft."

"They acknowledge this reality." The official, however, said other parts of the wide-ranging project will continue.

"The actual core of FCAS is to be continued as a European system," the official said, describing it as a "nervous system that networks aircraft, drones and other components into an integrated whole".

The French and German defence ministries are set to draw up a plan for defence cooperation "focused on a few realistic and relevant projects"

at a forthcoming meeting, the official added.

Long-running rows

The news came despite calls for Europe to integrate its fragmented militaries more closely as geopolitical turmoil worsens.

The Ukraine war is in its fifth year, while European countries are increasingly worried about US security commitments to the continent under President Donald Trump.

There had been last-ditch efforts to salvage FCAS.

In March two mediators – one from France and one from Germany – were tasked with coming up with proposals to rescue the initiative.

But they were unable to do so, while the head of Dassault Aviation continued to insist that the firm could go it alone on the project and was not in favour of it being "co-managed".

The project's demise comes despite both Merz and Macron insisting publicly they were determined for it to succeed.

The German leader had said earlier this year that he would "do everything in my power, and fight until the very last moment, to get joint European projects off the ground here, and above all German-French projects".

Macron – speaking in April after talks with Merz – had denied then the project was dead.

"We are continuing to move forward. Europe has never needed unity, greater independence and greater sovereignty more than it does now," he said. – AFP, MPD

Peru's presidential runoff too close to call



Peru's presidential candidate Keiko Fujimori (centre), for the rightwing Fuerza Popular ("People's Force") party, waves to supporters after a speech following the first results of the presidential election runoff, in Lima on Sunday. – AFP



Peru's presidential candidate Roberto Sánchez (centre), for the leftwing Juntos por el Perú ("Together for Peru") party, gestures after a speech following the first results of the presidential election runoff, in Lima on Sunday. – AFP

Andrew Beatty

LIMA – Peru's presidential runoff was still too close to call yesterday, with four-time candidate Keiko Fujimori all but tied with her leftist rival to become the country's ninth president in a decade.

With 92 percent of polling centers reporting, conservative Fujimori had a less than one percentage point lead over Roberto Sánchez.

Her 50.2 percent vs 49.8 percent lead was projected to dwindle as ballots continued to trickle in from rural areas, where Sánchez has dominated.

Adding to the suspense is this: before declaring a winner, election officials must examine results in districts where the tally has been challenged, with around 400,000 votes at stake. This process could take several days.

"As of now there is no winner. There will be long days ahead," Fujimori, the daughter of a late president who had been jailed for human rights violations, said late Sunday.

Many voters had hoped the election would draw a line under years of political chaos that has seen a string of presidents jailed, deposed and impeached.

But Peru remains deeply divided between the populous coast and the more rural, indigenous south.

Sánchez told jubilant supporters late Sunday that the race was a "dead heat" and all was still to play for.

Exit polls and quick counts also showed the race was impossible to call.

"The result reflects the country's divisions," said Paulo Vilca, a political analyst at the Peruvian

Studies Institute. "Whoever wins will have half the country against them."

'Respectful'

Fujimori, 51, is hoping to ride a wave of support for right-wing candidates who have won recent elections in Bolivia, Chile and Ecuador with a tough-on-crime message.

She appeals to the legacy of her late father, Alberto Fujimori, who stabilised the economy and crushed a Maoist insurgency, but was convicted of corruption and crimes against humanity.

Sánchez, a 57-year-old former psychologist, surged late in the race to reach the runoff.

He has moderated his early calls for "radical change" and told AFP he wants a "respectful" relationship with US President Donald Trump.

April's first round was marred by logistical problems and a vote

count that took weeks to complete, deepening distrust in Peru's creaking institutions.

Around 27 million Peruvians can vote, and voting is compulsory.

On the eve of the election, a judge said Sánchez must stand trial over past financial irregularities in his party, raising claims of interference.

If he wins, he would have presidential immunity, though remain vulnerable to the country's right-leaning legislature – which has ousted several recent presidents.

"I hope the entire process is carried out transparently, that the people's vote is respected," early voter Evelyn Pazos, 43, told AFP.

Sánchez has the backing of former president Pedro Castillo, a schoolteacher jailed after a failed attempt to dissolve Congress in 2022.

Sánchez is rarely seen in public without a broad-brimmed palm

straw hat gifted to him by his mentor, whom he plans to pardon.

'Communism' or 'dictatorship'

Neither Sánchez nor Fujimori will have a legislative majority and whoever wins must build alliances to complete their term, according to analyst Jeffrey Radzinsky.

Despite political disillusionment, Peruvians' main concern is security, as criminal gangs spread and extortion complaints spiked ninefold in five years.

"They kill, dismember, demand protection money. Enough!" said 58-year-old taxi driver Roberto Lovaton.

The winner will inherit a stable economy, with GDP growth of over three percent and low inflation.

He or she will replace interim president José María Balcázar from July 28. – AFP



The King of Spain's mother Queen Sofia of Spain (centre) arrives to attend Pope Leo XIV prayer to Our Lady of Almudena at the Cathedral of the Holy Mary of Almudena in Madrid yesterday. Leo is visiting Spain on June 6-12 with stops in Madrid, Barcelona, and the Canary Islands. – AFP

Catholic bishop shot dead in Mozambique

MAPUTO – A Catholic bishop appointed to a central region of Mozambique by Pope Leo XIV was shot dead at home on Saturday in what the country's episcopal body called "mysterious circumstances".

Bishop Osório Citoro Afonso, 54, was shot in the chest "probably with a single bullet", a spokesman for the criminal investigations bureau, Maximino Amílcar, told reporters outside the senior clergyman's residence in the city of Quelimane.

He described the killing as "murder by gunshot", adding that

"it is not easy at this time to give details".

The Vatican said the pope had "learned with deep sorrow of the grave act of violence that led to the death of His Excellency, Monsignor Osório Citoro Afonso".

Mozambican President Daniel Chapo issued a statement expressing his "deep sadness" at Afonso's death, calling it "an irreparable loss for Mozambican society".

Around a quarter of the population in the African country, a former Portuguese colony, is thought

to be Catholic, based on the last census taken nearly a decade ago.

Afonso, born in Mozambique, served in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and in Italy, then as auxiliary bishop in Maputo in 2023 before being made a bishop the following year.

In July 2025, Pope Leo transferred him to the diocese of Quelimane.

The Episcopal Conference of Mozambique said Afonso was "found lifeless and in mysterious circumstances that need to be made clear". – AFP

Colombia's largest dissident rebel faction to extend ceasefire

BOGOTÁ – The largest dissident faction of the former Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia announced on Sunday that it will extend a ceasefire ahead of the upcoming presidential runoff election.

The Estado Mayor Central (EMC – "Central General Staff"), led by Ivan Mordisco, Colombia's most wanted guerrilla commander, rejected the 2016 peace agreement between the FARC and the government.

It is one of the main drivers of insecurity in the country, which is experiencing its worst wave of violence in a decade, as it prepares to elect a successor to leftist President Gustavo Petro.

Colombians will go to the polls on June 21 to choose a president between Senator Iván Cepeda, a Petro ally, and far-right candidate Abelardo de la Espriella.

In a statement, the EMC announced "the extension of the suspension of offensive military

actions and operations against the public security forces" from June 10 through June 23.

"We will continue to reserve the right to legitimate self-defence against attacks by Colombian or US security forces and other armed groups," the EMC secretariat said.

"We once again hope that this decision will create favourable and peaceful conditions for communities, enabling them to turn out to vote in large numbers," it added.

Petro has unsuccessfully attempted to negotiate with Mordisco as part of his "Total Peace" policy, which sought to secure the disarmament of all armed organisations in Colombia.

In April, fighters under Mordisco's command killed 21 people in a bombing attack on a highway in the southwest of the country, the deadliest attack against civilians in two decades.

– AFP

Denmark's Eriksen 'doing well' after collapsing during friendly

Football

COPENHAGEN – Christian Eriksen collapsed during Denmark's friendly against Ukraine but was later able to walk off the field, five years after suffering a cardiac arrest during the European Championship.

The 34-year-old former Manchester United midfielder, who has a type of pacemaker, fell to the ground in the 64th minute of the match in Odense on Sunday.

Medical staff rushed onto the pitch while players from both teams gathered around him to shield the scene from television or smartphone cameras.

The referee called off the match with Denmark leading 2-1 and Eriksen was subsequently taken to hospital, having been shielded by both sets of players as he walked off the pitch.

"Christian Eriksen is conscious and doing well under the circumstances," the Danish football association wrote on social media.

Eriksen has worn a type of pacemaker since he collapsed during the group stage game against Finland at Euro 2020, which was played in 2021.

That led to him spending more than six months away from football.

Denmark's team doctor Morten Boesen said Eriksen was "doing well".

"As I see it, the pacemaker responded as it should," he said.

"He was briefly unconscious, but regained consciousness very quickly, and we were quickly in contact with him.

"He will now undergo further examinations at the hospital to determine what caused the incident.

"We are in ongoing contact with him and the doctors at the hospital.

"But Christian is doing well and he asked me to send his regards to all the players and tell them that he was OK."

Denmark captain Pierre-Emile Hojbjerg praised the swift help his team-mate received.

"There was a throw-in and I walked calmly to the touchline. Then I turned around and I saw Christian collapse," he told Danish television station TV2.

"We know very well what that means and the reaction was extremely rapid and respectful."

Denmark coach Brian Riemer, who worked with Eriksen at Brentford, said it had been "an extremely shocking experience for everyone, the staff, the players and the opponents".

He said: "He's someone who counts a lot for me. You're closer to certain players than others and he was one of the ones I got close to at Brentford."

'Really awful'

When Eriksen suffered his cardiac arrest at Euro 2020, the match resumed, with Finland winning 1-0.

Eriksen continued his career seven months later at Brentford in the Premier League, having been forced to leave Inter Milan because of Italy's rules against playing with a pacemaker.

He went on to join Manchester United, where he won the FA Cup and League Cup, and now plays for Wolfsburg in Germany, where he has another year to run on his contract.

He also returned to international football, playing for Denmark at the 2022 World Cup in Qatar and Euro 2024 in Germany.

Denmark have not qualified for the World Cup in North America, which starts next week.

Former Denmark striker Nicklas Bendtner said the latest incident had been "really awful" but was relieved Eriksen was conscious.

"The main thing is that he was able to walk off by himself because that makes you think he's doing OK given the circumstances," Bendtner told TV2.

"But these are terrible images that outweigh the rest of the evening.

"It's the second time it's happened and as a friend of Christian's, it's really awful."

– AFP

Somali referee denied entry to US for World Cup: official



MOGADISHU, Somalia – Award-winning Somali referee Omar Artan, set to be the first from his country to officiate at the World Cup finals, was denied entry to the United States, a sports ministry official told AFP yesterday.

It was not immediately clear why Artan was barred from entering the US at Miami International Airport, but Somalia is one of several countries on a travel ban list introduced by President Donald Trump's administration.

"Omar Artan is among Africa's most respected referees and deserves the support of the entire football community," Ciise Aden Abshir, a senior advisor to Somalia's Ministry of Youth and Sports and a former national team captain, told AFP.

Artan had a valid visa for the US, Abshir said. He has flown back to Istanbul, where he has been staying.

"Denying him entry to the United States and preventing him from officiating scheduled matches harms not only him personally but also undermines football's commitment to fairness, merit, and the spirit of fair play," Abshir added.

Artan was among the 52 referees announced by FIFA to officiate at the



Guinea's defender Issiaga Sylla (left) speaks with Somali referee Omar Abdulkadir Artan during the Africa Cup of Nations (CAN) 2024 round of 16 against Equatorial Guinea at the Alassane Ouattara Stadium in Ebimpe, Abidjan, on January 28, 2024.

– AFP

June-July World Cup finals in Canada, Mexico and the United States.

He has been officiating in the Somali national football league championships since he became a FIFA referee in 2018.

He has also officiated at the 2023 African Cup of Nations (AFCON) finals in Algeria, and in 2025 he was named by the Confederation of African Football as men's referee of the year.

Somalia President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud praised Artan in April after he made history as the first Somali to be selected to officiate at the World Cup finals.

"I commend the effort, professionalism, and integrity shown by referee Omar, as he has become a symbol of inspiration for the new generation of Somalis," said Mohamud.

– AFP

Spain coach Bermudez happy as win in Iceland will book Women's World Cup ticket



MADRID – Spain women's national team coach Sonia Bermudez warned her side still has work to do if they want to secure direct qualification to defend their title at the 2027 Women's World Cup in Brazil.

Spain's emphatic 4-0 win over England in Mallorca on Friday night saw Bermudez's side leapfrog England to the top of the group. Spain will book their ticket to Brazil with a win away to Iceland today in the sixth and final group match.

If Spain fail to win, England could still qualify directly with a home victory over Ukraine in a match being played at the same time.

Spain defeated Iceland 3-0 in their first group meeting in Castellon

on March 3, but Bermudez expects a much tougher challenge today in Reykjavik.

"We know that at their ground, they (Iceland) are a very difficult, very complicated, very tough opponent, but we're eager for tomorrow to arrive so we can try to achieve our objective," said Bermudez at her pre-match press conference.

She warned that Iceland is "a very strong team in the air, in duels, in second balls, they transition quickly, and they have very powerful forwards."

Bermudez said she was delighted with Friday's victory, in which Spain produced an outstanding display to outplay England for 90 minutes, with Alexia Putellas scoring twice, while Patri Guijarro and Claudia Pina also found the net.

"Obviously, when you win and do it the way we did, everything has an impact, but now it's a completely different game," she said, explaining that today presents "a different context, in a different country."

She added that if Spain had been offered the chance at the start of qualifying to secure direct qualification by winning its final group game, everyone would have accepted it.

"We'd have signed to go into this match with these options, to get three points and qualify directly... Spain have never won in Iceland, I think that's also extra motivation," concluded Bermudez.

The game will be played at 3:00 a.m. tomorrow morning Macau time.

– Xinhua/MPD

Football shorts

England boss Wiegman plans changes for crunch World Cup qualifier

LONDON – England coach Sarina Wiegman has said she intends to make changes for her side's decisive final 2027 World Cup qualifying match against Ukraine today.

The European champions' hopes of an automatic place in next year's tournament in Brazil are no longer in their own hands following a 4-0 hammering by world champions Spain last week.

England face Ukraine at Everton's Hill Dickinson Stadium in Liverpool needing to better Spain's

result against Iceland to take top spot in Group A3.

Any other outcome would see England heading into the play-offs to try and punch their ticket for the finals being hosted by Brazil.

"There are some tactical decisions to make because we expect different challenges," Wiegman told a pre-match press conference yesterday.

"Yes, I will make some changes. There are some players knocking on the door and I want to see them."

Wiegman added she had a fully-fit squad available.

The game will be played at 3:00 a.m. tomorrow morning Macau time.

– AFP/MPD

Feyenoord sack van Persie after 'difficult season'



THE HAGUE – Dutch giants Feyenoord said on Sunday they had sacked Robin van Persie as coach after a frustrating season that saw them finish 19 points adrift of champions PSV Eindhoven.

It was a "difficult decision" to fire the 42-year-old former Arsenal and Manchester United star, the club's technical director Devy Rigaux said in a statement.

"Robin van Persie has given everything for the club over the past one-and-a-half years," said Rigaux.

"He certainly deserves credit for

concluding a difficult season with a final second-place finish," securing Champions League football at De Kuip for next season.

The club had conducted an internal analysis of the points scored and the manner of play and decided that it was time for new blood at the helm.

"The conclusion was that it is better for us to start the next season with a new head coach," said Rigaux.

Feyenoord expect to announce in the coming weeks who will take over at De Kuip.

As well as finishing well behind runaway Eredivise champions PSV,

Feyenoord also endured a tough season in Europe.

Turkish side Fenerbahce knocked them out of the Champions League in the final qualifying stage.

The Europa League group stage also proved an unhappy hunting ground, with Feyenoord losing six out of their eight matches, beating only Sturm Graz and Panathinaikos.

Van Persie had a glittering career as a player, representing the Netherlands more than 100 times, as well as a prolific club career for Manchester United, Arsenal, Fenerbahce and Feyenoord.

– AFP

Marschall hands 'lucky' Duplantis first pole vault loss since 2023

Athletics

STOCKHOLM – Armand 'Mondo' Duplantis suffered a first pole vault defeat in almost three years when he failed to clear six metres at the Diamond League meeting in Stockholm on Sunday before taking a break to get married.

In other events, Audrey Werro set the fastest time in the women's 800m in 43 years, US teenager Cooper Lutkenhaus sparkled on his Diamond League debut in the men's 800m and Melissa Jefferson-Wooden won in her first 100m of the season.

Duplantis said he hoped the defeat would prove a good romantic omen.

"I'm getting married in about a week's time... there's a lot around that but I don't want to make that the excuse," he said.

"We have a saying in Swedish... that you're either lucky in games or you're lucky in love.

"In some really strange way I think there some funny message and silver lining to this whole thing that maybe it's saying something about my commitment that I'm about to make in my marriage, maybe.

"There's something that really makes me believe in that right now."

But he added he hoped he only needed to suffer one defeat.

"I lost in my home city, I'm here in Stockholm, and I had so much family here, it's actually the worst thing that could ever happen to me," he said as he wrestled with the logical implications of his statement.

"I think that this loss will keep the love lucky for quite a while, I would hope, probably for ever."

The last time Duplantis failed to win was in the Monaco Diamond League meeting in 2023, when he finished tied for fourth and Australian Kurtis Marschall was third.

Since then, Duplantis has raised the world record nine more times to 6.31, set in Uppsala, Sweden, in March.

The stage was set for the American-born Swedish star to again hit new heights before his fans, and family, but he struggled



Switzerland's Audrey Werro (right) reacts as she wins the Women's 800m event of the IAAF Stockholm Diamond League athletics meeting in Stockholm, Sweden, ahead of Britain's Keely Hodgkinson in second, on Sunday. – AFP

with the conditions.

Marschall outjumped and out-bluffed Duplantis.

They were the only two competitors left after Duplantis cleared 5.80m.

Marschall then went over at 5.90m.

After Duplantis failed at 6.0m, Marschall passed, forcing Duplantis to lift the bar to 6.05m where he failed again.

"Big hats off to Kurtis because he was the better man and beat me fair and square," said Duplantis.

"We had a little bit of some tough winds today, for sure, but I didn't jump that well."

Duplantis added: "I felt I was pretty unfocussed."

'I feel pretty old'

In the women's 800m, Werro became only the third woman ever to run the event in under 1min 54sec, with her time of 1:53.98 the third fastest in history.

In doing so she beat Olympic champion Keely Hodgkinson into second place, despite the Briton beating her British record with a time of 1:54.33.

Switzerland's Werro, 22, smashed her personal best by more than two seconds.

"I have no words, it's really a crazy performance and I will need one week to process what just happened today," Werro said.

The only two women to have run faster were Czech Jarmila Kratochvilova, when she set the current world mark of 1:53.28 in 1983, and Soviet runner Nadezhda Olizarenko, who had set the previous record in 1980.

Many world records set in the 1980s, when doping was rife, have long been viewed with suspicion, even those that set them never failed a doping test.

"Every day for two years I repeat to myself 'I am the best', sometimes it's really hard to believe but if you repeat this every day you can do great things, like today," Werro added.

Jefferson-Wooden, running her first 100m since taking the world title last September in Tokyo, bounced back from her 200m defeat in the Rome Diamond League meet a few days earlier as she cruised to victory.

"I'm really happy I was able to come out and perform after Rome three days ago, that being my first race of the year," she said at the finish.

Two months after becoming the youngest world champion, at the indoors in Poland in March, 17-year-old Lutkenhaus won on his Diamond League debut, outfoxing an experienced 800m field to surge through on the home straight and win in 1:42.70.

"I'm young but I feel pretty old sometimes," he said. – AFP

Zverev says 1st Grand Slam title gives him 'freedom'

Neil Fulton

PARIS – Alexander Zverev said he hopes winning his first Grand Slam crown at the French Open will unblock the path to more major titles after years of near-misses and heartbreak on the biggest stage.

Zverev broke his major drought at the fourth time of asking by beating Flavio Cobolli 6-1, 4-6, 6-4, 6-7 (5/7), 6-1 in the Roland Garros final on Sunday.

After painful past defeats in the title-matches at the 2020 US Open, Roland Garros in 2024 and last year's Australian Open, Zverev was considered by many to be the best player never to have won a Grand Slam.

The 29-year-old joked it was "fine" if people now consider him "the worst player to win a Grand Slam" but that he "could not care less".

"Now no matter what happens, I will always be a Grand Slam champion, and nobody can take that away from me," Zverev added.

"To be honest, I'm a little bit drunk already, so I just repeat myself a little bit more than I'm used to. I'm just happy to be sitting next to this trophy."

The Tokyo Olympics gold medallist said having the Coupe des Mousquetaires in his possession would make his future attempts at winning more of tennis' biggest titles less burdensome, mentally.

"For sure this trophy helps the belief a lot," he said.

"That does give me some freedom. It does give me some - maybe my mind will just be a little bit calmer when I play a final,

meaning that even if I lose it, I will still be a Grand Slam champion.

"I think this trophy for me is very important, because if I would have lost this one, the self-belief would have gone down a lot. But now that I've won it, I feel like I can do it again."

'Had to let go'

However, Zverev admitted that the favourite tag he had seemed to carry serenely through most of the tournament did weigh on him during the final against world number 14 Cobolli.

"I was just very tight today (Sunday). I honestly feel like I've managed the last two weeks extremely well, because with all the losses that happened early on with Jannik (Sinner) going out, with Novak (Djokovic) going out, I managed to stay composed, I managed to stay calm in my mind," he said.

"But then today I feel like I didn't manage so well."

Zverev revealed he experienced "mental cramps" during the match, but in the end they helped him get over the line after four hours and 16 minutes of battle on Court Philippe Chatrier.

"I was a lot more nervous, which at some stage is also human, I think. That's why I say the cramps helped me in a way, because my mind let go," he explained.

"I started swinging more freely. I started hitting the ball a bit more aggressive. All of that, you know, that's because of the cramps. I couldn't focus on being tight anymore. I had to kind of let go. That's why I played the fifth set the way I did." – AFP



Team captains Scotland's Kathryn Bryce, (from left to right) Ireland's Gaby Lewis, South Africa's Laura Wolvaardt, Netherlands' Babette de Leede, West Indies' Hayley Matthews, England's Nat Sciver-Brunt, New Zealand's Melie Kerr, Pakistan's Fatima Sana, Bangladesh's Nigar Sultana, India's Harmanpreet Kaur, Australia's Sophie Molineux and Sri Lanka's Chamari Athapaththu pose during The Captains' Carnival, the activation event for the ICC Women's T20 cricket world cup 2026, in central London on Sunday. – AFP

England coach McCullum 'hopeful' Archer available for 2nd Test

Cricket

Julian Guyer

LONDON – England could face a tricky decision over Jofra Archer's return, with coach Brendon McCullum "hopeful" that the fast bowler will be available for next week's second Test against New Zealand.

Archer, despite having an England central contract, was not considered for the series opener at Lord's following a lengthy stint in the Indian Premier League.

The 31-year-old rested up instead in his native Barbados as England, who are looking to recover from a humiliating Ashes series loss in Australia, started their international

season with a comprehensive 115-run win over the Black Caps.

England's pace attack made the most of excessively seam-friendly conditions in what was the 150th Test staged at Lord's, the most of any ground, with Ollie Robinson and Gus Atkinson taking seven wickets each and Josh Tongue bagging five.

The trio will all expect to feature at the Oval, where England will bid to take an unassailable 2-0 lead in the three-match series.

Express quick Archer, however, has long been regarded as a first-choice selection when fit and available.

Off-spinner Shoaib Bashir did not send down a single over at Lord's but, with improved batting

conditions expected at the Oval, England may decide they still need a specialist slow bowler.

'Trust Jof'

Archer is due back in England later this week and could be added to the squad.

"In the next couple of days we'll probably drill down on that but we're hopeful he will be available for the second Test, then we'll work out conditions-wise where we're at," said McCullum.

"He's following a plan (in Barbados). He's bowling.

"We completely trust Jof and he's shown us in the past what he does, which is get himself ready based on

the plans we get together and come up with. He's always turned up in the condition we wanted from him."

England captain Ben Stokes is the fourth seamer in the pace attack and the all-rounder was more of a support act at Lord's, a ground where he often has been the star of the show.

He only bowled himself for seven overs in the match, taking one wicket on Sunday's fourth and final morning, and was dismissed for 12 and nought.

Batsmen on both sides struggled on a pitch of sharply uneven bounce, but Stokes has been light on runs for England for a couple of years.

Since the start of 2024 he has averaged a modest 27.09, with just

one hundred in his past 48 innings.

Stokes has just moved down a place in the batting order to number seven and McCullum believes his skipper, who turned 35 during the first Test, has the experience to succeed in the new role.

"Stokesy obviously hasn't got the runs that he wanted of late but I'm confident with the work he's been doing," said McCullum. "I feel like he's moving a lot better. I feel like his fluency is starting to come back.

"Number seven is quite a nice role for him. With his experience and cricketing nous, he's able to operate and guide the tail quite nicely, plus he's got the raw power if you're eight or nine wickets down." – AFP

Latest 'Scary Movie' aims to cancel 'cancel culture,' creators say

Paula Ramon

LOS ANGELES – With its fake horror and off-colour jokes, the creators of the sixth instalment in the "Scary Movie" franchise say they are offering an antidote to what they see as today's censorious culture.

The Wayans family, who created the politically incorrect parody almost three decades ago, brought their offering to US cinemas on Friday, and think it is arriving at just the right time.

"I think that it's an important movie right now for the culture, so that we can handle cancel culture in a whole another way," Shawn Wayans told AFP at the Los Angeles red carpet premiere.

Wayans is confident that audiences in 2026 will embrace this new episode of the saga, which takes on issues at the heart of the culture wars, like sexuality, gender and race.

"Just because cancel culture exists, it doesn't mean that we shouldn't have laughter anymore," he said.

"I think it's important for the world to be able to laugh; that's healthy, it's healing, it's medicine."

His sister, actress and comedian Kim Wayans, agreed that as a society we need to have fewer sacred cows and be more ready to laugh at things, even if it offends some people.

"Tonight we're going to cancel cancel culture – that's what this movie is going to do," she said on Friday.

Director Michael Tiddes said the project proved to be a challenge.

"You had to find a balance

between the movies we were spoofing, the Wayans brothers' authentic comedy that I was injecting into the film, and also our own story and our own characters, making sure that they had a beginning, a middle and an end," he said.

In addition to Shawn, Kim, Marlon and Damon Wayans, the cast also features Anna Faris, Regina Hall, Jon Abrahams and Cheri Oteri – bringing back Doofy, the parody of the killer from "Scream" (Ghostface) that served as the catalyst for the very first film.

But true to tradition, the new instalment was refreshed by satirising recent horror hits – including "The Substance," "Sinners," "Smile," "Weapons," "Longlegs," "Terrifier" and the series "Wednesday."

The franchise is back in the hands of the Wayans clan after several years of absence, becoming a true family affair.

Not only did several of the brothers write the script, but some of their children and nephews – such as Gregg Wayans – also joined the team.

For the 37-year-old, "Scary Movie" is timeless and has the potential to make different generations laugh, thanks to his uncles' brand of "no-limits" humour.

"I think people want to laugh. They're just waiting for filmmakers like my family to stop abiding by all the rules," he told AFP.

"We need some more rule-breakers, and us getting this franchise back, I think it's the first step," he said. "It's the Wayans antidote."

– AFP

'Liberation' & 'Schmigadoon!' top Tony Awards



US playwright Bess Wohl poses in the press room with the Best Play award for "Liberation" during the 79th Annual Tony Awards at Radio City Music Hall in New York on Sunday. – AFP



Cinco Paul, winner of the Best Book of a Musical award for "Schmigadoon!", poses at The 79th Annual Tony Awards Media Room at 3 West Club on Sunday in New York City. – AFP

Raphaëlle Peltier

NEW YORK – Bess Wohl's play "Liberation," a look at second-wave feminism, and musical "Schmigadoon!" earned the top prizes on Sunday at the 79th Tony Awards, the highest honours in American theatre.

The ceremony, held at Radio City Music Hall, reflected the political climate of President Donald Trump's America, with host Pink taking a stand in support of transgender people and freedom of expression.

The awards honoured socially conscious works that explored feminism, antisemitism and US history, and celebrated LGBTQ culture.

"Liberation," which explores sexuality and the place of women in society in the 1970s, was named Best Play after winning a Pulitzer Prize in May.

Wohl is only the fourth woman to receive the honour.

The award for Best Musical went to "Schmigadoon!," a humorous tribute to Broadway's greatest hits and an adaptation of the series of the same name.

John Lithgow won Best Actor for his portrayal of Roald Dahl in

"Giant", and praised the play as "extraordinarily important right now."

The play by British writer Mark Rosenblatt revisits a period in Dahl's career after he published an essay about the 1982 Israeli siege of Beirut that was deemed antisemitic.

"It's the gift we give to an audience, it's just to ruminate on that very serious subject, antisemitism, cruelty of all kinds, hatred of the other," Lithgow said.

"These are things that we're dealing with these days upfront and personal, and I think that's what makes 'Giant' so important, and what's made it such a success," he said.

The play comes in the wake of a broader debate surrounding Dahl's work, which was revised by his publisher in 2023 to remove terms deemed offensive.

Reinterpretations

"Ragtime," which explores the social and economic upheavals affecting non-white people in early 20th century America, received four awards, including Best Revival of a Musical.

"Cats: The Jellicle Ball," a reinterpretation of Andrew Lloyd Webber's musical set within the LGBTQ "ballroom" culture of New York, won three awards, including one for costume designer Qween Jean, the first openly transgender person to be honoured at the Tony Awards.

"This award has such incredible significance," Jean said, before denouncing efforts by the Trump administration to "demonise" transgender people and restrict their access to health care.

Another adaptation, that of Arthur Miller's "Death of a Salesman," won six awards, more than any other work.

Among them were Best Revival of a Play and Best Supporting Actress for Laurie Metcalf, known for her role in the series "Roseanne."

Theatre remains a hit with New York audiences, with 14.6 million tickets sold during the 2025–2026 season and bringing in US\$1.9 billion in gross revenue, according to the Broadway League, the industry's leading trade association. – AFP



(From left to right) US actor/producer/writer Marlon Wayans, US actress Kim Wayans and US actor/producer/writer Shawn Wayans pose upon arrival for Paramount's "Scary Movie" premiere at the Paramount Theatre in Los Angeles, last Wednesday. – AFP

Eurovision viewing figures drop to 131 million after boycott

GENEVA – The 2026 Eurovision Song Contest was watched by 131 million viewers, organisers said on Friday, down 35 million on the year before after five countries boycotted over Israel's participation.

Bulgaria won the TV extravaganza for the first time with Dara's catchy floor-filler "Bangaranga" sweeping the 70th edition of the world's biggest live televised music event, with Israel finishing in second place.

The Netherlands, Iceland, Spain, Ireland and Slovenia all pulled out of this year's Eurovision – with the latter three refusing to broadcast the show at all.

Eurovision 2026 was held in Vienna, with the grand final taking place on May 16.

First held in 1956, Eurovision is run by the European Broadcasting Union (EBU), the world's biggest public-service media alliance.

"While some of our figures are

naturally lower without those of our five members who chose not to participate this year, we remain committed to doing everything possible to find pathways back for them in 2027," said Eurovision director Martin Green.

The biggest share of viewers watching Eurovision was recorded in Finland (93 percent), Sweden (86 percent), Norway (83 percent) and Denmark (79 percent).

Across the board in 35 measured TV markets, the grand final attracted an average viewing share of 42.6 percent.

The share for viewers aged 15 to 24 was higher, at 54.8 percent.

The EBU noted that viewing figures were down 3.8 million in Poland, 3.7 million in Britain and 3.3 million in France, compared to those for Eurovision 2025, held in the Swiss city of Basel.

Eurovision garnered more than a billion views for content on

Instagram this year.

"It's fantastic to see the impact the Eurovision Song Contest is having on young audiences globally," said Green.

"The hundreds of millions reached via our digital platforms also underlines the Eurovision Song Contest's 70-year evolution from a TV show to a true global, cultural, multi-platform phenomenon."

People in 148 different countries and territories cast votes for their favourites.

Outside the 35 participating countries, the biggest votes were received from the United States, the Netherlands, Canada, Spain, Ireland, Slovakia and Turkey.

Around 100,000 tickets were sold for the shows at the Wiener Stadthalle ("Vienna Cityhall") arena, bought by fans from 75 countries.

After Dara's win, next year's edition will be hosted in Bulgaria. – AFP

World Weather

CHINA	ASIA-PACIFIC	WORLD	LUSOPHONE
Beijing 15°C~26°C	Manila 26°C~33°C	New York 18°C~27°C	Lisbon 14°C~25°C
Shanghai 16°C~27°C	Bangkok 26°C~35°C	London 9°C~18°C	Rio de Janeiro 18°C~27°C
Hong Kong 23°C~28°C	Tokyo 18°C~24°C	Frankfurt 10°C~21°C	Luanda 21°C~25°C
Taipei 23°C~27°C	Singapore 25°C~31°C	Vancouver 11°C~17°C	Maputo 14°C~26°C
Guangzhou 21°C~27°C	Kuala Lumpur 25°C~32°C	Paris 10°C~19°C	Dili 23°C~31°C
Nanjing 16°C~30°C	Jakarta 24°C~34°C	Moscow 16°C~28°C	São Tomé 24°C~32°C
Guilin 18°C~27°C	Seoul 16°C~28°C	Las Vegas 23°C~37°C	Praia 20°C~29°C
Xi'an 17°C~30°C	Sydney 11°C~20°C	Monte Carlo 17°C~25°C	Bissau 23°C~34°C

1. Brainwave in heatwave!

A vendor sells inflatable swimming pools along a street on a hot summer day in Karachi, Pakistan yesterday. — AFP



2. Protective parents

This photograph shows swans and their cygnets swimming in a lake park in Warsaw, Poland on Sunday. — AFP

3. Brow moping sarge!

Vietnamese honour guards prepare for the welcome ceremony of Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Manet at the Government Office in Hanoi yesterday. — AFP

4. Larry leads again!

Germany's Chancellor Friedrich Merz, (from left to right) Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelensky, Britain's Prime Minister Keir Starmer and France's President Emmanuel Macron walk out to the 10 Downing Street doorstep as 'Larry the Cat' walks away after a meeting in central London on Sunday. — AFP

5. Ornamental headpiece

A racegoer poses wearing a fascinator on Ladies Day and the opening day of the Epsom Derby Festival horse racing event in Surrey, southern England on Friday. — AFP



6. Similar traits but different

A hummingbird hawkmoth (macroglossum stellatarum) collects pollen from a red valerian plant (Valeriana rubra) in Ludwigsburg, southern Germany, yesterday. — AFP

