



Police bust Macau's largest-ever cannabis smuggling case

Nearly 35 kg worth 35 million patacas seized

Armando Neves

The Judiciary Police (PJ) busted Macau's largest-ever cannabis* smuggling case on Monday, PJ spokesman Chao Teng Hin said during a special press conference yesterday.

Chao identified the suspect as a 25-year-old man from Hong Kong surnamed Chau who told police that he is a stage technician.

Through intelligence analysis combined with risk assessment, PJ officers identified a suspicious passenger, Chau, on a flight arriving in Macau from a Southeast Asian country on Monday evening. In cooperation with the Macau Customs Service and the Public Security Police (PSP), officers took immediate action after Chau retrieved two suitcases from the luggage conveyer belt, seizing 60 bags of suspected cannabis from his luggage, Chao said, adding that quick tests confirmed the substance to be cannabis.

Chao also said that a total of 34,951 grams (34.9 kg) of cannabis were seized, with a total street value of around 34.95 million patacas, adding that this was the largest cannabis smuggling case ever recorded in Macau's history.

According to Chao, the operation successfully prevented an international cross-border drug trafficking syndicate from smuggling a large quantity of narcotics through Macau for onward distribution to neighbouring regions.

Chao added that the suspect told police that he was promised no less than HK\$60,000 (61,743 patacas) as payment for his role, and



Judiciary Police (PJ) officers escort the hooded drug suspect from Hong Kong to a PJ van outside the PJ headquarters in Zape yesterday.



Evidence seized from the drug suspect surnamed Chau is displayed at the PJ headquarters in Zape yesterday. – Photos: Armando Neves

admitted that he was fully aware that the suitcases contained illicit drugs.

Chao also said that the suspect has no prior criminal record in Macau and no connection has been established between this case and another drug trafficking case announced on Monday when PJ officers arrested two drug dealers and two buyers from the Chinese mainland.

Asked by the media whether the drugs were intended solely for transit or if some were destined for sale within Macau, the spokesman said further investigation was required before he could reveal further information on the case.

Chau was transferred to the Public Prosecutions Office (MP) yesterday, facing

charge of drug-trafficking.

Drug trafficking in Macau is a serious criminal offence punishable by 5 to 15 years of imprisonment. ■

*Cannabis has accumulated an incredibly vast library of slang terms, scientific names, and regional synonyms over the decades, such as marijuana, weed, pot, hashish. – Gemini

Trump says US forces 'must' respond after Iran shot down helicopter near Hormuz Strait



WASHINGTON, DC – US President Donald Trump said yesterday the US military "must" respond after Iran allegedly shot down a US Army helicopter near the Strait of Hormuz.

"I have just been informed ... that last [Monday] night the Iranians shot down one of our highly sophisticated Apache helicopters while patrolling over the Strait of Hormuz," Trump said in a post on Truth Social.

The two pilots onboard the helicopter were rescued and are "safe and uninjured," Trump said.

"Nevertheless, the United States must, of necessity, respond to this attack," he added. (Earlier story on p.10) – Xinhua

China vows deepened financial, economic practical cooperation with Brazil

BEIJING – China is willing to work with Brazil to strengthen macroeconomic policy communication and coordination, deepen financial and economic practical cooperation, and enhance coordination and collaboration in multilateral mechanisms, Vice Minister of Finance Liao Min said yesterday.

Noting the deepening practical cooperation in various fields between the two countries in recent years, Liao, at a financial subcommittee meeting of the China-Brazil High-

level Coordination and Cooperation Committee held in Beijing yesterday, called for joint efforts to strengthen macroeconomic policy communication and coordination and jointly respond to global challenges.

Brazil's Vice Minister of Finance Mathias Alencastro said Brazil attaches great importance to cooperation with China, and added that the momentum of Brazil-China cooperation remains strong.

He said Brazil is willing to deepen mutual trust and achieve win-win outcomes with China, expand

bilateral cooperation in areas such as sustainable agriculture and green transformation, and elevate bilateral financial and economic cooperation to a new level.

At the meeting, the two sides conducted in-depth exchanges on topics including global and China-Brazil macroeconomic situations, cooperation in banking, insurance, capital markets and trade finance, agricultural financing cooperation, sustainable investment and financing, and multilateral financial and economic cooperation. – Xinhua

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Xi's DPRK visit yields important consensus on bilateral ties

President Xi Jinping said yesterday that he reached important consensus with General Secretary Kim Jong Un on developing relations between China and the DPRK in the new era.

– Story on p. 7

EU orders Meta to open WhatsApp to rival AI chatbots for free

The EU ordered Meta yesterday to give rival AI chatbots access to its WhatsApp platform for free within five working days as it carries out an antitrust probe, or risk a heavy fine.

– Story on p. 11

Cabo Verde looks to ocean for growth, climate resilience

At the port of Praia, the capital of Cabo Verde, fishing boats unload the day's catch as vendors sort fish on the dock and women carry plastic basins of fresh fish toward the market.

– Story on p. 12

Govt vows to optimise Tourism & Leisure Bus tour



This photo taken in April shows one of the "Tourism and Leisure Bus" programme's 24-seat buses parked near Hong Kung Temple in the Inner Harbour area. - Photo: Armindo Neves

Ida Cheong

The government will roll out a number of route and frequency optimisation measures on Saturday to further enhance the service quality and community-linkage benefits of its "Tourism and Leisure Bus", according to a joint statement by the Macau Government Tourism Office (MGTO), the Economic and Technological Development Bureau (DSED), and the Gaming Inspection and Coordination Bureau (DICJ) on Monday.

As the current bus route primarily operates one way from Cotai to the Macau Peninsula, and in order to extend the service to tourists staying on the peninsula, the Gaming Inspection and Coordination Bureau has worked with the city's six integrated resort operators to adjust the bus route to a two-way operation model. The statement added that a new "Macau Peninsula to Cotai" route will be introduced, with additional community drop-off points along the route, to enhance the overall effectiveness of the project.

Meanwhile, the Zape bus route, originally operating only during the Labour Day Golden Week holiday, will be extended to a regular weekend service, thereby strengthening the linkage effect between community activities and local communities, the statement said.

To expand daytime sightseeing traffic to the Rua dos Ervanários (關前街) area around Hong Kung Temple and nearby community attractions, and to promote "distinctive" local shops and creative stores, following public feedback, the first departure time of the bus on the Hong Kung Temple route will be moved from weekend evenings to afternoons.

In addition, MGTO is expanding its promotional coverage through a diverse range of channels to comprehensively enhance the visitor experience. It plans to launch special programmes on television and streaming platforms, continue filming short videos for each route, and produce travel guides that integrate community attractions and merchants - aiming to promote the

community sightseeing experience.

Separately, the Economic and Technological Development Bureau is continuously updating its "Tourism and Leisure Bus" mobile information webpage. This includes offering promotional deals and adding a dedicated column on the webpage for exclusive offers, with the aim of enriching travel information for each shuttle bus route and for the surrounding communities.

The statement said that, as of the end of last month, nearly 10,000 passenger trips had been recorded at various bus stops, successfully channelling visitors into Macau's various "distinctive" communities. It added that the mobile information webpage had recorded more than 14,000 clicks from visitors seeking activity information.

Meanwhile, several public entities have released a total of 11 promotional videos and 164 posts across a range of channels and popular social media platforms, with cumulative views exceeding 7.48 million, the statement added. ■

Police nab Filipina maid for theft, fraud

Armindo Neves

The Judiciary Police (PJ) arrested a woman from Philippines for theft and fraud last Friday, PJ spokesman Chao Teng Hin said during a regular press conference yesterday.

Chao identified the suspect as a 31-year-old female surnamed Manansala who told police that she used to work as a domestic helper but now she is jobless.

According to Chao, the middle-aged male victim had employed Manansala as a live-in domestic helper since July 2025. In April this year, Chao said, the victim noticed that cash and other valuables in his home had gone missing.

On May 24, the victim confronted Manansala face to face, at which point the suspect admitted to the theft and the victim dismissed her right away and ejected her from his flat, according to Chao.

However, upon checking later, the victim discovered that items from the safe in the master bedroom had also been stolen.

The following day, when the suspect returned to collect her belongings, the victim questioned her again, Chao said, adding that Manansala admitted that she had used the key kept on top of the safe to open it and steal the contents while no-body else was at home.

Manansala immediately returned 3,000 patacas in cash as "compensation" and promised to repay the remaining amount, according to Chao.

The following day, however, Manansala vanished, and the victim reported the case to the police on May 27, claiming the total loss amounted to 26,500 patacas, comprising both cash and jewellery.

PJ officers confirmed that Manansala had left Macau on May 25, Chao said, adding that last Friday, Manansala was arrested by PJ officers when she re-entered Macau through the airport.

Under questioning, Chao said that Manansala admitted to having sent the stolen money back to her hometown and used it for everyday expenses here.

PJ officers later recovered three items of jewellery, valued at 14,600 patacas, from a pawnshop, according to Chao.

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



Judiciary Police (PJ) spokesman Chao Teng Hin looks on during a regular press briefing held at the PJ headquarters in Zape yesterday. - Photo: Armindo Neves

Nobel laureate Robert Engle to discuss climate change at UM lecture

Khalel Vallo

The public University of Macau (UM) will host a public lecture by 2003 Nobel laureate in Economic Sciences Robert F. Engle next Monday, where he will discuss climate change, geopolitical uncertainty and their impacts on global financial markets, according to a UM statement earlier this week.

The lecture, titled "Can We Stop Climate Change?", will be organised by the university's Faculty of Business Administration (FBA) and held at the Ho Yin Conference Hall on the university campus, the statement said.

Engle, 83, professor emeritus of Finance at the Leonard N. Stern School of Business of New York University (NYU) and co-director of the NYU Stern Volatility and Risk Institute, received the 2003 Nobel Prize in Economic Sciences for his pioneering work on ARCH/GARCH models*, which are widely used to analyse financial market volatility, the statement noted.

In his lecture, Engle, who was born in Syracuse, New York, is expected to explore the relationship between climate change and geopolitical risks, introducing the concept of "global common volatility" to elaborate on how major events such as wars, pandemics and elections can affect global asset markets and investment environments, the statement said, adding that he will also examine the compound and systemic risks associated with climate change, highlighting the growing challenges facing economies and financial systems worldwide.

The event is sponsored by UM's Development Foundation and

主辦單位 Organized by: 澳門大學 UNIVERSITY OF MACAU, 工商管理學院 FACULTY OF BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION, 澳門大學發展基金會 UNIVERSITY OF MACAU DEVELOPMENT FOUNDATION

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能否阻止氣候變遷? Can We Stop Climate Change?

主講嘉賓 Keynote Speaker 羅伯特·恩格爾教授 Prof. Robert F. ENGLE
2003年諾貝爾經濟學獎得主 Nobel Laureate in Economic Sciences (2003)

圓桌討論成員 Round-table Panelist 托本·安德森教授 Prof. Torben G. ANDERSEN
西北大學金融學教授 Nathan S. and Mary P. Sharp Professor of Finance, Northwestern University
金融計量經濟學會(SoFIE)現任會長 President, Society for Financial Econometrics (SoFIE)

日期及時間 Date & Time 15.6.2026 星期一 Monday 16:00

地點 Venue 澳門大學行政樓何賢會議廳 Ho Yin Conference Hall, Administration Building (N6-G010), University of Macau

語言 Language 英語 English

查詢 Enquiry 工商管理學院 Faculty of Business Administration 8822 9957 / 8822 8871 candykvlam@um.edu.mo / jasontang@um.edu.mo

網上報名 Online Registration https://go.um.edu.mo/c2qzxfq

This poster provided by the public University of Macau (UM) yesterday promotes its public lecture slated to be held by 2003 Nobel laureate in Economic Sciences Robert F. Engle of the US next Monday on its campus in Hengqin.

will be conducted in English, the statement noted.

The lecture will start at 4:00 p.m. next Monday, and registration is open to the public through UM's online registration platform at <https://umac.questionpro.com.au/t/ARtuhZSBIB>. ■

* ARCH (Autoregressive Con-

ditional Heteroskedasticity) and GARCH (Generalised ARCH) are statistical models used to analyse and forecast volatility in time series data. They are foundational tools in finance and econometrics, widely used to predict asset risk, price derivatives, and optimise portfolios. - Gemini

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Macau Weather

CLOUDY APART FROM SUNNY INTERVALS. ONE OR TWO SHOWERS. FORCE 2 TO 4 EAST TO NORTHEASTERLY WINDS. RELATIVE HUMIDITY WILL RANGE BETWEEN 60% AND 90%.



23°C~30°C

Source: SMG

Archives of Macao to exhibit city's historic footprints through photography

Rui Pastorin

A free-admission exhibition of historical photographs will kick off at the Archives of Macao this Friday, presenting the city's historical footprints through images, according to a recent statement from the Cultural Affairs Bureau (IC).

After Friday's opening ceremony, the free-admission "City in Rephotography* - Exhibition of Historical Photographs from the Archives of Macao" will be on from Saturday through September 30, with the archives located at 91-93 Avenida do Conselheiro Ferreira de Almeida.

The statement said that it is among the activities held in celebration of the "China Cultural and Natural Heritage Day" and "International Archives Day".

International Archives Day is annually celebrated on June 9. The Cultural and Natural Heritage Day is annually observed on the second Saturday of June, this year falling on June 13.

The contents that archive visitors will see include historical images chosen from its collection paired with contemporary photographs. Through this, the statement added that the exhibition aims to guide members of the public in appreciating "the urban transformations and cultural sentiments of Macao across time and space".

One can visit the archives from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m., being closed on Mondays and public holidays, the statement said. ■

*Rephotography is the act of taking a photograph of a specific site that has already been photographed in the past. It's essentially a visual "then and now" comparison. The core goal is to stand in the exact same spot, use the same framing, and sometimes even replicate the original lighting or time of day to capture how a place has transformed over time. It is used in scientific research, urban planning and historical studies, as well as art and culture. -Gemini

Health community stations across 5 districts to start Saturday

Ida Cheong

Aiming to spread summer safety information among the community, the Health Bureau (SSM), in conjunction with local associations, will set up "Health Community Pop-up Stations" across five districts in the peninsula and Taipa from 2:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. on Saturday, covering Iao Hon and Areia Preta; Patane (Sa Lei Tao) and Fai Chi Kei; the central district (Jung Koi); Praia do Manduco (Ha Van) and Nape (Wohng Chiuh); and Taipa, SSM Centre for Disease Control and Prevention senior official Wong Ka Ian announced in yesterday's press conference held at the SSM Health Emergency Personnel Residence Hall on Guia Hill.

The Health Bureau announced its "Summer Accident Prevention and Emergency Management", with the aim of educating residents on how to prevent common summer accidents and apply correct first aid measures, thereby enhancing public safety awareness, self-rescue and mutual rescue capabilities.

Wong added that each pop-up station will feature an information booth where interactive games will convey messages on drowning prevention, heatstroke prevention, and sports safety. Participants who complete the games will receive a small gift.

Wong pointed out that summer is the traditional peak season for water activities, adding that according to the World Health Organisation (WHO), key risk factors for



The Health Bureau's (SSM) Seac Pai Van Health Centre Director Tam Kwong Ho (centre), SSM Centre for Disease Control and Prevention senior official Wong Ka Ian (right), and Dr Tam Ka Lok, attending physician in the Emergency Department of public Conde de São Januário Hospital Centre (CHCSJ), look on during yesterday's press conference about the bureau's "Summer Accident Prevention and Emergency Management", at the SSM Health Emergency Personnel Residence Hall on Guia Hill. - Photo: Ida Cheong

drowning include a lack of risk awareness, inadequate preparation, and a lack of adult supervision of young children.

Wong reminded the public that when engaging in water activities, one should pay attention to personal health conditions, follow safety rules, always supervise children and toddlers, monitor weather changes, use proper equipment and warm up adequately, and be wary of household water storage containers to prevent young children from accessing them unsupervised.

Dr Tam Ka Lok, attending physician in the Emergency Department of the public Conde de São Januário Hospital Centre (CHCSJ), warned the public that

in hot and humid environments, the body easily suffers from heat-related illnesses, a range of acute physical discomforts caused by the body's inability to regulate its temperature properly, including heat syncope (fainting), heat cramps, heat exhaustion, and heatstroke.

Dr Tam advised the public to remember five steps for pre-hospital management of heat-related injuries: seek shade, remove excess clothing, cool the body, rehydrate, and seek medical attention.

The director of the Health Bureau's Seac Pai Van Health Centre, Tam Kwong Ho, recommended that residents prioritise safety, exercise within their limits, and avoid comparing themselves to others. ■



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Pianist Kiana Yin performs at the Macau Cultural Centre (CCM) Small Auditorium last Tuesday.



Kiana Yin shines in demanding piano solo recital

Interview and review by William Chan

Rising local pianist Kiana Yin (尹金蕙) delivered a compelling solo recital last Tuesday at the Macau Cultural Centre's Small Auditorium, showcasing her technical command and emotional depth across a daunting classical programme.

The young musician, who holds a Bachelor of Music in Piano Performance from the Eastman School of Music*, performed the heavyweight repertoire entirely from memory – a testament to her mastery of the music's intricate details.

Yin is no stranger to the local classical scene. Having previously studied under local veteran pedagogue** Luong Kim Ying, she made her orchestral debut with the Macao Orchestra at the tender age of 15 and held her first solo recital at 16. During her time at Eastman, she studied under Alexander Kobrin. Yin has also secured top prizes in numerous competitions, including the Junior Steinway, the Macao Young Musicians Competition, and the China-Singapore International Music Competition.

Yin's recital demonstrated versatility, navigating a diverse and technically demanding programme with both ease and authority. She opened with Mozart's Piano Sonata No. 18 in D Major, K. 576, the Austrian composer's final piano sonata, which is widely considered one of his most challenging works due to its intricate counterpoint. Yin brought clarity and a spirited energy to the performance. Moving from the Classical to the Romantic era, she then tackled Chopin's Piano Sonata No. 2 in B-flat Minor, Op. 35. In this iconic "Funeral March" sonata, she balanced the work's tempestuous, dramatic outbursts with its moments of profound, lyrical melancholy.

The true highlight of the evening was her performance of Sergei Rachmaninoff's Études-Tableaux in E-flat Minor, Op. 39, No. 5. Rachmaninoff is often referred to as a "pianist's pianist," known for composing works of

terrifying technical difficulty that require massive hand spans and unyielding stamina.

The Op. 39, No. 5 is a deeply passionate, almost volcanic piece, filled with dense, swirling textures and a surging, melancholic melody. Yin manoeuvred through the treacherous score with remarkable control and precise articulation. She maintained a crystalline clarity, allowing the expressive, brooding Russian soul of the music to resonate through the auditorium. Her ability to balance power with nuanced emotional depth proved she is a mature artist fully capable of conveying the profound intensity that Rachmaninoff demanded.

Following her stellar performance, I had the opportunity to speak with Yin about her musical journey, her time abroad, and her artistic evolution.

Reflecting on her foundational years, Yin credited her former teacher, Luong Kim Ying, with building a solid technical and emotional foundation, noting that Luong's strict emphasis on score details, logic, and patience cultivated her lifelong passion for the instrument. Her subsequent studies in the United States under Alexander Kobrin sparked a shift in her musical thinking. Rather than dictating rigid interpretations, Kobrin encouraged independent thought, urging her to dissect the architecture of each piece to build her own unique artistic voice.

This evolution has altered Yin's perspective on performance. While she admitted that her younger self was often consumed by the fear of making mistakes and obsessed with audience perception, years on stage have taught her that a concert is ultimately an act of sharing. Today, her goal is no longer to prove her capabilities or chase a zero-error execution, but rather to communicate what she genuinely loves and believes in through the music. By anchoring her interpretations in the structural, stylistic, and historical contexts of the compositions, she finds that emotional expression flows much more naturally.

Looking ahead, Yin is eager to expand her horizons. While maintaining a strong interest in large-scale classical masterpieces, she intends to explore a more 20th Century and contemporary repertoire. She also hopes to look beyond traditional solo recitals to pursue chamber music and cross-disciplinary collaborations, having developed a deep appreciation for the dynamic synergy of ensemble playing. Audiences can expect to hear more from the young pianist soon; following this home-coming recital, Yin will head to New York this autumn to pursue her Master of Music in Piano Performance, a step she hopes will allow her to continue refining her craft and sharing her musical insights with broader audiences.

* *The Eastman School of Music is the music school of the University of Rochester, a private research university in Rochester, New York. Established in 1921 by celebrated industrialist and philanthropist George Eastman, it was the first professional school of the university.* – Wikipedia

***A pedagogue is an expert in the theory, methods, and practice of education. Rather than directly teaching a classroom of students, they work to analyse, design, and improve educational processes by studying how people learn and developing the best strategies to optimise teaching methods.* – Gemini



In this undated photo, Kiana Yin (right) poses for a photo with Luong Kim Ying. – Photos provided by Yin



Navy Yard to host Macau's first wellness & culture fest

Rui Pastorin

“Wondera Festival” is set to take place this weekend at the Navy Yard No.1 & No.2 in Barra district, with organisers referring to the event as Macau's first wellness and culture festival.

The festival is supported by lululemon, a Canadian-American multinational athletic apparel retailer, and co-organised by Oneness Cultural Space, CYCA Macao, and Long Fung Drama Club.

It will coincide with Global Wellness Day, which is held on the second Saturday of June, and is held ahead of the International Day of Yoga, which is on June 21.

According to a statement from organisers on Monday, the two-day event will feature 42 local market booths across five themed, free admission zones, with activities featuring, among others, wellness, craft, lifestyle and food, while the programme will consist of workshops, talks, and live music, though some sessions require pre-registration and a fee.

Centred on the theme “Everything is Healing”, the Wondera Festival features unconventional sessions.

The statement highlighted activities like the “Ice Cream Run,” where participants make ice cream mid-run, and “Sonic Brew,” a session fusing coffee, breath awareness with sound healing.



This poster provided by the organisers promotes this weekend's Wondera Festival taking place at Navy Yard No.1 & No.2 in Barra district.

Other sessions highlighted are a workshop combining numerology and floristry, a “Writer's Night”, and a dialogue where theatre and psychology intersect.

On its goals, the organisers said in the statement that the festival “aims to create an accessible, welcoming, and positive platform for wellness culture, with the core values of wonder, healing, creativity, connection, and local roots”.

The festival will run from 10:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m. during its two-day run, with the market being open from 12 noon through 9:00 p.m. More details can be found at @WonderaFestival on Instagram. ■

MGM's 2 local resorts earn highest WELL Platinum certification

Khalel Vallo

Integrated resorts MGM MACAU and MGM COTAI have received Platinum certification under the WELL Building Standard v2 yesterday, becoming the first integrated resort operator in Macau to implement the “WELL at Scale” framework and setting a new benchmark for healthy building development in the city.

The certification was presented during the “Beyond Green: Advancing to WELL Buildings – WELL Platinum Certification Ceremony and Thematic Session” at MGM COTAI yesterday.

The certification was awarded by the International WELL Building Institute, which administers the WELL Building Standard, a global certification system focused on health and well-being in built environments. According to a statement by MGM yesterday, the framework evaluates buildings across 10 categories – air, water, nourishment, light, movement, thermal comfort, sound, materials, mind, and community.

Both MGM MACAU and MGM COTAI achieved scores of 121 points, which the statement said is the highest score among publicly disclosed WELL-certified projects in China, adding that both



MGM China Holdings Limited Chief Executive Officer and Executive Director Kenneth Feng Xiaofeng (left) and IWBI Asia Senior Vice President Mei Xu address yesterday's “Beyond Green: Advancing to WELL Buildings – WELL Platinum Certification Ceremony and Thematic Session” at MGM COTAI.

integrated resorts had previously obtained the WELL Health-Safety Rating and WELL Equity Rating.

Kenneth Feng Xiaofeng, chief executive officer and executive director of MGM China Holdings Limited, said the achievement reflected the company's shift from focusing primarily on environmental sustainability to prioritising the health and well-being of employees and guests.

“Achieving WELL certification reflects our expanded focus – from the ‘environment’ to ‘people’ – with a stronger emphasis on the physical, mental, and overall

well-being of our employees and guests”, Feng said.

Meanwhile, Mei Xu, senior vice president of IWBI (International WELL Building Institute) Asia, pointed out that the two local MGM resorts have achieved 10 WELL recognitions covering more than 750,000 square metres and impacting over 67,000 people as of 2025.

The dual Platinum certification marks a milestone in Macau's hospitality sector, highlighting a growing emphasis on healthy building standards alongside sustainability goals, said the statement. ■

Lawmakers pass outline of bill proposing 90-day maternity, annual leave up to 12 days

Tony Wong

The Legislative Assembly (AL) yesterday unanimously passed the outline of a government-initiated bill that proposes to raise the number of days for statutory paid maternity leave in the private sector to 90 days from the current 70 days.

The bill also proposes to raise the number of days for private-sector employees' statutory minimum paid annual leave. Currently, the number is six days for all private-sector employees with a minimum of one-year employment, regardless of their length of service. The bill, the outline of which was passed yesterday, proposes to establish a system where the number of days for employees' statutory paid annual leave will increase with their length of service, but with a maximum of 12 days.

The bill proposes amendments to the Labour Relations Law, which regulates the private sector's employment. The public sector has its own employment regulations that are much more generous than those of its private counterpart.

As the position of Macau's secretary for economy and finance was still vacant yesterday following Anton Tai Kin Ip's resignation on April 16 this year, the outline of the amendment bill was introduced by the chief-of-cabinet of the Secretariat for Economy and Finance, Lo Chi Fai, during a plenary session of the legislature's hemicycle yesterday.

After yesterday's passage of its outline, the amendment bill will be passed to one of the legislature's

standing committees for an article-by-article review, after which it will be resubmitted to another plenary session for its second and final debate and article-by-article vote.

During yesterday's plenary session, Lo said that after assessing the around 10,000 opinions and suggestions gathered during a 45-day public consultation earlier this year, the government concluded that members of Macau's civil society generally agree with its proposals to raise the number of days for private-sector employees' statutory paid maternity leave and the number of days for their statutory minimum paid annual leave.

Lo underlined that the government has drafted the amendment bill after considering local businesses' capabilities to adapt to the new requirements proposed by the bill while striking the right balance between the labour and business sectors.

When the Labour Relations Law came into force in 2009, the number of days for statutory paid maternity leave was 56 days. The number was raised to the current 70 days on May 26, 2020 when the law's amended, current version took effect.

Private-sector employees with a minimum of one-year employment, regardless of local and non-resident workers (NRWs), are entitled to statutory paid maternity leave. The Labour Relations Law's current version requires 63 days out of the 70 days of statutory paid maternity leave to be used immediately after the baby's birth, while the mother can choose to take the remaining



Lo Chi Fai, the chief-of-cabinet of the Secretariat for Economy and Finance, addresses yesterday's plenary session in the Legislative Assembly's (AL) hemicycle. – Photo courtesy of TDM

seven days before or after the birth.

According to Lo, the amendment bill proposes to raise the number of days for statutory paid maternity leave to 90 days from the current 70 days. The bill proposes that 60 days out of the proposed 90 days of statutory paid maternity leave to be used immediately after the baby's birth, while the mother can choose to take the remaining 30 days before or after the birth.

The government proposes that the bill, if passed by lawmakers in its final reading, will take legal effect on January 1 next year.

After the Labour Relations Law's current version took effect on May 26, 2020, the government ran a three-year transition period during which the respective employers were only required to pay at least 56 days out of

the 70 days of statutory paid maternity leave, while the remaining up to 14 days was paid by the government.

After the three-year transition period ended on May 25, 2023, the government once again launched a scheme, on a provisional basis, subsidising eligible employers' payments of 14 days of maternity leave. Under the scheme, which is now running until December 31 this year, eligible employers must pay mothers the whole 70-day maternity period first before filing an application to the Labour Affairs Bureau (DSAL) to receive a subsidy of 14 days of maternity leave.

The current subsidy only applies to local female employees, because of which the employer of a mother who is a non-resident worker (NRW) still needs to pay the whole 70-day maternity period.

Govt to run maternity leave subsidy on permanent basis

Lo said during yesterday's plenary session that after the number of days for statutory paid maternity leave is raised to 90 days, the government will continue to subsidise eligible employers' payments of maternity leave. Instead of a provisional one, the government will launch a subsidy scheme on a permanent basis, according to which eligible employers can apply for a subsidy of up to 20 days of maternity leave, Lo said.

He said that after the amendment bill is passed by the legislature in

its final reading, the government will draw up an administrative regulation (by-law) governing the modus operandi of the subsidy.

The amendment bill does not propose to increase the number of days for statutory paid paternity leave from the current five days. Lo said yesterday that the government has been aware of certain opinions raised during the public consultation earlier this year calling for an increase in paternity leave. He said that the government would address the matter when proposing another possible amendment to the Labour Relations Law.

Concerning the number of days for private-sector employees' statutory minimum paid annual leave, the amendment bill proposes that employees with up to two years of service for the same employers will continue to be entitled to six days of paid annual leave, with those with their length of service ranging between two and four years to be entitled to seven days of paid annual leave; those working for the same employers between four and six years to be entitled to eight days of leave; those working between six and eight years to be entitled to nine days of leave; those working between 8 and 10 years to be entitled to 10 days of leave; those working between 10 and 12 years to be entitled to 11 days of leave; and those working for the same employers for at least 12 years to be entitled to 12 days of paid annual leave. ■

Legislators pass outline of bill toughening anti-smoking rules

Tony Wong

The Legislative Assembly (AL) yesterday unanimously passed the outline of a government-initiated bill that proposes various amendments to Macau's anti-smoking law, including expanding the city's smoking ban to more outdoor public areas, prohibiting the use of e-cigarettes in all public spaces, and allowing anti-smoking inspectors to be equipped with body-worn video cameras (body cams).

The bill proposes amendments to Macau's Tobacco Prevention and Control Law.

Secretary for Social Affairs and Culture Wallis O Lam introduced the outline of the amendment bill during a plenary session in the legislature's hemicycle yesterday.

Following yesterday's passage of its outline, the amendment bill will be forwarded to one of the legislature's standing committees for an article-by-article review, after which it will be resubmitted to another plenary session for its second and final debate and article-by-article vote.

Since the Tobacco Prevention and Control Law came into force in

2012, it has been amended twice, in 2018 and 2022.

According to the current version of Macau's anti-smoking law, smoking is banned in all indoor public venues and facilities, except for smoking lounges in casinos and at the airport. In addition, smoking is prohibited in certain outdoor public areas such as public parks and gardens, beaches, footbridges, pedestrian underpasses, and within 10 metres of all public bus stops.

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

According to O, the amendment bill proposes to newly designate outdoor areas within 10 metres of the entrances to all schools, kindergartens, crèches, hospitals, and public health centres as statutory no-smoking zones, aiming to better protect children and patients from exposure to second-hand smoke.

The Health Bureau (SSM) rolled out a smoking ban in outdoor areas within 10 metres of the entrances to three schools and a crèche in November last year, where violators are fined 1,500 patacas. The measure was extended to eight more



Secretary for Social Affairs and Culture Wallis O Lam addresses yesterday's plenary session in the Legislative Assembly's (AL) hemicycle. – Photo: GCS

schools and four more crèches late last month.

Under the current version of the Tobacco Prevention and Control Law, the Health Bureau can, on a case-by-case basis, designate additional outdoor public areas as statutory no-smoking zones beyond those listed in the law, provided it obtains the green light from the respective public entities governing the areas concerned. Consequently, the outdoor areas within 10 metres of the entrances to the 11 schools and

five crèches are now also statutory no-smoking zones, meaning those smoking there also face a 1,500-pataca fine.

Once the government-proposed amendments take effect, the Health Bureau will no longer need to obtain permission from the respective public entities to designate outdoor areas outside additional schools and crèches as statutory no-smoking zones on a case-by-case basis.

O noted the ongoing implementation of a pilot no-smoking zone on pavements around Dr. Carlos D'Assumpção Park in Nape, which started in February this year.

The pilot no-smoking zone covers the pavements outside Dr. Carlos D'Assumpção Park, the pavements outside nine buildings on Alameda Dr. Carlos D'Assumpção (the two-way avenue outside the park), and the recreational area located between the park and the waterfront Kun Iam Ecumenical Centre. Smokers can use nine designated smoking spots set up within the pilot zone.

Because streets in general are currently not statutory no-smoking zones and the Dr. Carlos D'Assumpção Park

zone is being implemented as a pilot project, those caught smoking in the area will not be fined. Instead, they will merely be urged by anti-smoking inspectors not to smoke there.

O said that based on the experience gained from the pilot project, the amendment bill proposes that after gathering public opinion, the government can designate certain streets and squares with heavy pedestrian traffic as statutory no-smoking zones on a case-by-case basis through a chief executive order. This aims to better address the issue of non-smokers being affected by those who smoke while walking.

Moreover, O said the amendment bill also proposes to ban the use of e-cigarettes in all public spaces.

The 2018 amendments to the anti-smoking law barred the sale of e-cigarettes in Macau. The 2022 amendments further toughened regulations; since December 2022, Macau has banned the manufacture, distribution, sale, import, and export of e-cigarettes. In addition, travellers are prohibited from bringing e-cigarettes into or taking them out of Macau, O noted. ■

Advancing high-level development of China-DPRK relations

Commentary

BEIJING – Xi Jinping, general secretary of the Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Committee and Chinese president, yesterday wrapped up his two-day state visit to the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK). It was Xi's first overseas trip this year and his first state visit to the DPRK in seven years. During the visit, Xi and General Secretary Kim Jong Un reached important consensus on strengthening the top-level design and strategic guidance of China-DPRK relations in the new era.

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.

Friendship passed down from generation to generation, a shared future and mutual support have always been the defining features of China-DPRK relations. As stressed by Xi, 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.

This important declaration demonstrates that maintaining,



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), after planting a fir tree in the wooded area between teaching buildings of the Central Cadres Training School of the WPK in Pyongyang yesterday. – Xinhua

consolidating and developing China-DPRK relations has always been an unwavering policy of the CPC and the Chinese government.

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.

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

Firstly, the two sides should stay guided by the high-level exchanges and consolidate the foundation of political mutual trust; secondly, the two sides should stay committed to the goal of delivering benefits to the people and elevate the level of practical cooperation; thirdly, the two sides should uphold the inheritance of friendship as a driving force and strengthen the bonds between their peoples; fourthly, the two sides should uphold fairness and justice as a guiding principle to enrich the substance of strategic coordination.

At this new historical starting

point, these four proposals inject new contemporary connotations and strong impetus into the traditional friendship between China and the DPRK, while providing both intellectual guidance and practical pathways for the high-level development of bilateral relations.

The strategic guidance by the top leaders of both nations is the greatest strength of China-DPRK relations. In recent years, the two leaders held multiple meetings, maintaining close strategic communication and jointly drawing up a blueprint for the development of China-DPRK relations. Both sides should carry forward the fine tradition and leading role of high-level exchanges, further expand and invigorate friendly exchanges at various levels and in various fields between the two parties, deepen exchanges of experience and mutual learning on party and state governance, and enhance exchanges in diplomacy, law enforcement, military affairs and others.

Practical cooperation is an important driving force behind the development of China-DPRK



Xi Jinping, general secretary of the Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Committee and Chinese president, straightens the ribbons on a flower basket while paying homage to the China-DPRK Friendship Tower with his wife Peng Liyuan, in the company of Kim Jong Un, general secretary of the Workers' Party of Korea 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. – Xinhua

relations. In the face of new development opportunities, the two countries should strengthen the alignment of development strategies, expand practical cooperation in such areas as economy and trade, agriculture, construction, science and technology, as well as health care, and 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, so as to bring greater benefits to the two peoples.

The traditional friendship forged through a shared destiny constitutes the deep-rooted foundation of China-DPRK relations. The two sides should 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. They should 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.

High-level strategic coordination gives China-DPRK relations their contemporary significance. The two countries should strengthen strategic coordination, firmly safeguard their respective sovereignty, security and development interests, jointly uphold regional peace and development, and together follow the right path of peaceful development and win-win cooperation.

Standing at a new historical starting point, the implementation of the important consensus reached by the two leaders, and the continued advancement of China-DPRK relations in step with the times, will bring greater benefits to the two countries and their peoples, and make positive contributions to regional and global peace, stability, development and prosperity. – Xinhua

Xi's DPRK visit yields important consensus on bilateral ties

PYONGYANG – Xi Jinping, general secretary of the Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Committee and Chinese president, said yesterday that he reached important consensus with General Secretary Kim Jong Un on developing relations between China and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) in the new era.

The two sides also had in-depth discussions on safeguarding peace and stability in the region and the world, Xi said when he and his wife, Peng Liyuan, attended a luncheon hosted by Kim, general secretary of the Workers' Party of Korea and president of the State Affairs of the DPRK, and his wife, Ri Sol Ju.

Xi thanked Kim for the warm hospitality and thoughtful arrangements for the visit, noting that through the visit, the warmth and friendship extended by the DPRK party, government and people towards the Chinese party, government and people is felt even more deeply.

The mutual understanding between China and the DPRK has become deeper and more comprehensive, and the future development direction has become clearer and more definite, Xi said.

Xi said that he is ready to work with Kim to jointly lead China-DPRK relations to greater development and inject new and strong impetus into the socialist cause of the two countries.

For his part, Kim said that Xi's visit



Xi Jinping (front, right), general secretary of the Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Committee and Chinese president, waves as he concludes his state visit to the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) and departs from Pyongyang, the DPRK, June 9, 2026. Kim Jong Un (front, left), general secretary of the Workers' Party of Korea (WPK) and president of the State Affairs of the DPRK, and his wife Ri Sol Ju (rear, left) went to the airport to see Xi and his wife Peng Liyuan off and held a grand farewell ceremony in their honor. – Xinhua

was a complete success, sending a positive message to the world that the DPRK and China are further strengthening their friendly cooperation, and attracting widespread

attention from various sides.

Xi's visit was of great significance to bilateral relations and the future development of the region, Kim said, noting that the DPRK

side stands ready to earnestly implement the important consensus reached during the visit, promote new tangible outcomes in bilateral cooperation, and advance DPRK-China relations to a new and higher level.

The visit marked Xi's first overseas trip this year and his first state visit to the DPRK in seven years. Yesterday afternoon, Xi concluded his state visit to the DPRK and departed from Pyongyang. Kim and his wife went to the airport to see Xi and his wife off and held a grand farewell ceremony in their honor.

Early yesterday, Xi and Kim also agreed that the two countries should carry forward their great traditional friendship from generation to generation. Xi paid homage to the China-DPRK Friendship Tower with his wife, in the company of Kim and his wife.

Xi and Kim also agreed that the years when China and the DPRK fought side by side in the 1950s are an eternal historical memory shared by both sides.

The two leaders pledged to jointly maintain memorial facilities dedicated to the Chinese People's Volunteers martyrs, carry out distinctive programs on revolutionary traditions and youth education, and carry forward the great spirit of the War to Resist US Aggression and Aid Korea.

Yesterday morning, Xi, accompanied by Kim, also visited the Central Cadres Training School of the WPK in Pyongyang.

– Xinhua

How Pyongyang's Friendship Tower bears witness to enduring China-DPRK bond

PYONGYANG – Xi Jinping, general secretary of the Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Committee and Chinese president, and his wife, Peng Liyuan, paid homage to the China-DPRK Friendship Tower yesterday, opening the second day of his state visit to the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK).

Upon their arrival at the Friendship Tower, which stands at the foot of Moran Hill in downtown Pyongyang, the couple was greeted by Kim Jong Un, general secretary of the Workers' Party of Korea (WPK) and president of the State Affairs of the DPRK, and his wife, Ri Sol Ju.

The Friendship Tower was built in 1959 to honor martyrs of the Chinese People's Volunteers (CPV) in the War to Resist US Aggression and Aid Korea (1950-1953).

Three massive gilded Korean characters reading "Friendship Tower" adorned the façade of the stately monument, gleaming in the summer sunlight.

After the national anthems of China and the DPRK were played, and honor guards laid the flower basket, Xi approached the flower basket and arranged the ribbon, which read, "The martyrs of the Chinese People's Volunteer Army live forever."

In a solemn atmosphere, all present paid silent tribute to the martyrs. Afterward, Xi and Kim watched a march-past by the honor guard.

Since the tower's erection, it has been expanded by the DPRK and renovated several times. Commemorations have been held at the site on key occasions, including anniversaries of the CPV's entry into the DPRK to fight in the War to Resist U.S. Aggression and Aid Korea, the Korean War

armistice, and China's Qingming Festival, also known as Tomb-Sweeping Day.

In a previous state visit to the DPRK seven years ago, Xi and Peng also paid homage to CPV martyrs at the Friendship Tower, accompanied by Kim and Ri. Kim has also visited the tower on multiple occasions to lay wreaths and pay tribute to CPV martyrs.

Those past commemorations, along with Tuesday's ceremony, embody deep remembrance of the revolutionary martyrs, and underscore the importance both sides attach to preserving and carrying forward their traditional friendship.

The monument consists of 1,025 pieces of granite and marble, symbolizing October 25, 1950, the date on which the CPV entered the War to Resist US Aggression and Aid Korea.

Inside the Friendship Tower, an exhibition hall displays a rich collection of historical materials, photographs and oil paintings, depicting the friendship sealed in blood between the two peoples during the war.

At the center of the exhibition hall stands a one-tonne marble pedestal bearing volumes listing the names of fallen CPV soldiers, many of whose names are familiar to generations of Chinese people.

Xi examined the exhibits and carefully looked through the roster of the martyrs, briefing Kim on the fallen soldiers.

The two leaders agreed that the years when China and the DPRK fought side by side in the 1950s are an eternal historical memory shared by both sides.

More than seven decades ago, the CPV crossed the Yalu River and fought alongside the DPRK people. After two years and nine months of arduous fighting, they secured



Xi Jinping (left), general secretary of the Communist Party of China Central Committee and Chinese president, and 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), jointly plant a fir tree in the wooded area between teaching buildings of the Central Cadres Training School of the WPK in Pyongyang yesterday. – Xinhua

victory in the war.

"During the War to Resist U.S. Aggression and Aid Korea, the party, government and people of the DPRK cared for, supported and stood by the Chinese People's Volunteers," Xi said in an address at a meeting held in October 2020 to mark the 70th anniversary of CPV entry into the war.

Through shared hardships and life-and-death struggles, the peoples and armed forces of the two countries forged a friendship seeded in blood, he added in the address.

Also yesterday, Xi, accompanied by Kim,

visited the Central Cadres Training School of the WPK in Pyongyang. In the wooded area between teaching buildings, the two leaders jointly planted a fir tree. The fir tree remains evergreen throughout the year, symbolizing the enduring friendship between China and the DPRK.

As Xi has noted in his talks with Kim on Monday, 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. – Xinhua

Outdoor hospitals, shaken communities as Philippine quake toll hits 41

Pam Castro and Ferdinandh Cabrera

GENERAL SANTOS – Doctors treated patients in tents set up under a scorching Philippine sun yesterday – including helping a young mother give birth – as the death toll from a major earthquake that collapsed buildings topped 40.

Thousands remained displaced and more than 450 injured following the magnitude-7.8 quake that struck off the southern island of Mindanao on Monday, according to national and local disaster agencies, with four people now believed missing.

In hardest-hit Sarangani province, some areas remain accessible only by helicopter while fears of aftershocks were slowing rescue efforts, local officials told reporters at a briefing yesterday.

“There are still aftershocks, so the rescuers are very cautious in their approach. That’s a challenge,” said regional civil defence chief Rodrigo Sosmena.

A series of powerful aftershocks rocked the area from about two hours after the first quake, while hundreds of tiny tremors followed.

Infrastructure damage, meanwhile, means some communities will be cut off for at least a week because of the damage to roads and the collapse of a bridge.

At a hospital just outside General Santos, the region’s largest city, AFP reporters heard cries of “push” then an infant’s cries as a mother gave birth outdoors behind a makeshift screen.

In Glan municipality, where at least 13 people were buried in their homes by a landslide, staff at another hospital told AFP more than 60 patients were on beds outside the facility due to fears for the building’s structural integrity.

“The hospital sustained a lot of damage,” she said. “The municipal engineer decided we could not use the building.”

As of yesterday afternoon, the death toll from provincial sources contacted by AFP stood at 41.



Responders and rescue dogs conduct search and rescue operations in the collapsed building after a 7.8 magnitude earthquake in General Santos City yesterday. – AFP

‘Back to zero’

Residents who spoke to AFP described scenes of terror during the earthquake, with many saying the area was no longer safe enough to call home.

“I think everything needs to be demolished,” casino worker Eduardo Gutierrez Jr. said after returning to his apartment to retrieve belongings now covered in mud.

“When I got out the door, the entire apartment row was swaying,” he said of his experience during the quake.

“We saw walls collapsing, the floors opening up. And then water and mud began spurting up from underneath the flooring.”

Rosalynne Singson told AFP the earthquake had left her “no choice” but to move.

“It’s hard to accept. (Our house) probably needs to be demolished, because we were told we’re on top of a faultline,” she said.

“It’s really back to zero.”

At the hospital outside General Santos, Lourdes Camia said she believed her brother-in-law, who was being treated for a heart attack, was safer outside - despite the heat.

“I can see the cracks (of the wall) from here,” she said. “If there is another quake, I’m scared the hospital will collapse.”

Recovery efforts

Yesterday morning, rescuers at the ruins of what had been a

neighbourhood grocery, resumed efforts to recover two store employees who were inside when the building crumpled.

AFP journalists saw rescue dogs and their handlers scour the pile of broken concrete and jagged metal bars.

One rescuer told reporters the effort was now one of recovery rather than rescue, though a more senior official later insisted that a formal decision had yet to be made.

At a nearby beach resort, a high-speed Coast Guard vessel plied the waters for two people still missing after swimming in waters that churned violently as the quake struck.

Videos posted to social media and verified by AFP on Monday showed the catastrophic collapse of a shopping centre in General Santos, and an unoccupied school building crumpling.

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

The earthquake saw thousands of people ordered to evacuate in coastal areas of the southern Philippines and neighbouring Indonesia as tsunami warnings were issued by multiple countries and a regional warning centre.

But by midday Monday, the threat had passed and the alerts were cancelled. – AFP

Philippine ex-cop arrested in notorious drug war killing

MANILA – A fugitive ex-Philippine anti-narcotics officer was arrested yesterday over his conviction in the 2016 kidnapping and killing of a South Korean businessman who was strangled inside the national police headquarters in Manila, officials said.

The case of Jee Ick-joo, abducted by anti-narcotics police under the guise of a drug raid, was one of the most controversial cases of ex-president Rodrigo Duterte’s deadly drug war.

“According to a witness, they kidnapped the Korean, attempted to extort money from him, strangled him, cremated his body and flushed the remains down the toilet,” Interior Secretary Juanito Victor Remulla said as he announced the arrest of Rafael Dumlao.

“The killing of Jee Ick-joo was the result of the abuses of ‘tokhang,’” Remulla told a news conference, using the local codename for anti-drug operations that killed thousands during Duterte’s 2016-2022 presidency.

“The tokhangs gave too much licence to the (police) operatives to do things at their whim without the process of law,” he added.

A lower court in 2023 acquitted Dumlao, the alleged mastermind, of kidnapping and

homicide while convicting two other defendants.

An appellate court annulled Dumlao’s acquittal in 2024, saying the lower court had committed a “grave abuse of discretion”.

Dumlao, a former top official of a now-defunct police anti-illegal drugs task force, was sentenced to a minimum 30 years in prison.

He went into hiding after the Supreme Court affirmed the appellate court’s verdict last year, Remulla said.

Police found him asleep with a handgun near him at a northern Manila property early yesterday, the national police chief General Jose Melencio Nartatez told the news conference.

The authorities are investigating who helped the fugitive evade the law, Remulla said.

Manila has relayed news of Dumlao’s arrest to the South Korean ambassador and to Jee’s widow, and the South Korean president “has sent his congratulations” to Manila, Remulla added.

Ex-president Duterte was arrested last year and handed over to the Netherlands-based International Criminal Court, where he is to stand trial from November 30 for the crime against humanity of murder. – AFP

Japanese city relieved as bear caught after roaming streets for days

UTSUNOMIYA – A bear that roamed the streets of a Japanese city for four days, forcing mass school closures, was caught yesterday, capping a search involving dozens of hunters and police.

Terrified families in the city of Utsunomiya, north of Tokyo, peered through windows as a search mission that included helicopters tried to track down the animal following multiple sightings, including in a shopping arcade, at a university and at a wholesale market.

Yesterday dozens of police officers, hunters and city officials surrounded a private home where the bear was spotted, an AFP photographer witnessed.

After a successful tranquiliser shot, they captured the animal.

AFP images showed the sedated bear loaded onto a truck.

Issei Okabe, a 37-year-old house painter who lives in an apartment next to the house where the bear was caught, told AFP he was “so relieved”.

“My kid goes to the primary school nearby... and news reports said a bear appeared around there,” he said.

“Then I watched the news, and our house was shown (in the

footage) ... I was so surprised.

“This is the first time I heard of a wild bear in Utsunomiya.”

The bear sightings had forced the closure of all 94 public primary and middle schools in the city on Monday and yesterday.

Public broadcaster NHK and other major media reported the bear’s capture as breaking news.

The *Shimotsuke Shimbun* daily, based in Utsunomiya, said the first and second tranquiliser shots missed the target but a third successfully hit the animal.

A city official told AFP Monday it was not clear whether there was one bear or more roaming the city.

Separately, an “extremely intelligent” bear that injured four people in Fukushima in northern Japan has remained at large after apparently unlatching a window while evading capture, NHK reported.

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

Bears are thriving thanks in part to an abundance of food – including acorns, deer and boars – under the influence of a warming climate, experts say. – AFP

Thailand officially frees Thaksin after royal pardon

BANGKOK – Thailand’s former prime minister Thaksin Shinawatra is officially a free man, less than a week after receiving a royal pardon, the Department of Corrections said yesterday.

Thaksin, 76, served eight months of a one-year sentence for corruption and abuse of power before being released on parole last month due to his age and health.

The Department of Corrections said the former premier was required to wear an electronic monitoring device as a condition of his release.

The telecoms billionaire was among those eligible for a royal pardon on June 3, Queen Suthida’s birthday, because he had less than one year remaining on his sentence.

The corrections department said yesterday Thaksin’s electronic

monitoring device had been removed.

“The prison issued the official release documents and certificate of discharge to Thaksin,” it said in a statement.

It said Thaksin was “no longer subject to criminal punishment, supervision or related conditions”, noting that the same standards were applied to other eligible parolees.

Thailand regularly grants royal pardons to prisoners with good conduct to mark major royal occasions, including the birthdays of the king and queen.

Thaksin is one of the most influential figures in modern Thai politics and served two terms as prime minister.

His second term was cut short by a military coup in 2006, after which he spent more than a decade in self-

imposed exile, largely in Dubai, before returning to Thailand in 2023.

Thai media reported that Thaksin was expected to travel to Dubai this month, although no reason for the trip has been disclosed.

A legal representative for Thaksin did not respond immediately to AFP’s request for comment.

His Pheu Thai Party and its predecessors have been among Thailand’s most successful political movements of the 21st century.

The Shinawatra family has produced four prime ministers and has long enjoyed strong support among rural voters.

However, Pheu Thai recorded its worst election result in February, falling to third place and raising questions about the future of Thaksin’s political influence. – AFP



Singappen Special Task Force personnel march during the launch of the elite all-women police unit formed to strengthen women and children safety in Chennai, India yesterday. — AFP

Acid attack on woman doctor sparks fear, protests in Pakistan

QUETTA, Pakistan — An acid attack against a woman doctor has sent shockwaves through Pakistan's medical sector, sparking strikes and a protest yesterday demanding safety and justice for the victim.

A man threw acid at Mahnoor Nasir at her hospital in the southern city of Quetta on Saturday, causing burns to seven percent of her body, according to the provincial chief minister's office.

Officers killed the suspected perpetrator, Humayun Shah, a lift operator at the medical facility, at a bus station as he tried to escape, authorities said.

Nasir was receiving specialised treatment in Pakistan's largest city of Karachi and may require skin transplant abroad, said Shahid Rind, spokesman for the chief minister of Balochistan province.

The case has highlighted the risk of violence and social disparities women face in Pakistan, where fears of harassment and attack have exacerbated a fast-growing doctor shortage.

Surveys suggest around a third of women drop out of the profession after graduating despite outnumbering men in medical schools.

"It is a tragic incident but will have negative effects on female education as when the hospitals are not safe, who will dare to send their daughters for medical practice and education," Balochistan-based doctor Zeenat Shawani told AFP.

While the South Asian nation has criminalised acid attacks—which often target women—with heavy penalties, an organisation representing early career doctors decried a "catastrophic security failure".

"The incident took place due to insufficient security arrangements in the hospital, and it should thoroughly be investigated how a lift operator brings acid and throws it on a lady doctor in daylight," Hai Baloch, chairman of the Balochistan branch of the Young Doctors Association, told AFP.

'State of fear'

Members of the association stopped work and protested at the hospital where the attack took place yesterday, with dozens sitting beneath a banner that read "Justice for Dr Manoor".

They said they would strike

from non-emergency care until their demands for better security and an investigation were met.

Quetta's police inspector general Imran Shaukat told AFP that an investigation was underway.

But the official inquiry or the suspected assailant's death have done little to quell many women's concerns over violence at work.

"Female doctors and paramedics are in a state of fear of being harassed, raped, subjected to violence in these hospitals," Quetta-based doctor Shazia Khapulwak told AFP.

"One Mahnoor is fighting for her life in Karachi while hundreds of Mahnoors are forced to live under exploitative systems," she said.

The Human Rights Commission of Pakistan organised a protest in Quetta, demanding security for women working in government hospitals and stricter regulation of acid sales.

"Why doesn't the government take action against the free sale of acid in the open market?" said Kashif Panezai, vice-president of the organisation's Balochistan chapter.

'Survival mode'

The United Nations also condemned the "brutal" violence.

"Acid attacks are among the most devastating forms of gender-based violence, leaving survivors with lifelong physical and psychological scars," UN Women Pakistan said in a statement.

Far from Quetta, news of the attack on social media left Islamabad-based medical officer Naima Arshad in tears.

"I couldn't sleep that night. The moment I saw the video I imagined myself," said Arshad, a private clinic employee who has gone into what she called "survival mode".

"No one in the world should feel that unsafe in their profession," she added.

Around 70,000 women—almost a fifth of Pakistan's 370,000 registered doctors—are listed in official registries but not practicing, according to medical associations.

There is no recent reliable data on the exact number of acid attacks in Pakistan, but advocacy group Acid Survivors Foundation reported around 1,180 violent incidents involving acid and other burn-causing substances such as petrol and boiling water between 2011 and 2018. — AFP

Modi to attend G7 summit

NEW DELHI - Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi will attend next week's G7 Summit in France, as well as a technology conference in Paris, New Delhi's foreign ministry said yesterday.

Modi's attendance is part of a two-nation trip to France and Slovakia, starting Saturday in Nice, where he will meet with French President Emmanuel Macron.

He then heads to Slovakia on Sunday, where he will meet with Prime Minister Robert Fico, the first visit by an Indian premier since its independence in 1993.

Modi then returns to France to attend the G7 summit in the Alpine

lakeside resort of Evian on June 16-17.

The Group of Seven countries are Britain, Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan and the United States.

US President Donald Trump has confirmed his attendance, and India's foreign ministry said Modi is expected to meet with "several world leaders" on the sidelines, without giving further details.

India and the United States are "about 99 percent" done with the first tranche of a trade deal, New Delhi has said this month.

After the G7 summit, Modi heads to Paris, the foreign ministry said, to attend the VivaTech

Summit, Europe's largest technology and startup event.

Modi's visit will "spotlight India as a global hub for innovation, digital transformation and entrepreneurship", the ministry added, saying the trip would support "new partnerships" with Europe.

Last month, Modi wrapped up a multi-nation tour to the United Arab Emirates and four European countries.

The conflict in the Middle East and knock-on energy supply disruptions has piled pressure on India's economy, with Modi urging Indian citizens to reduce fuel consumption. — AFP

Afghan police disperse women's rights rally in Herat

HERAT — Afghan men held a rare rally yesterday in the western city of Herat over new restrictions against women, with police denying witness accounts to AFP that protesters were dispersed with live fire.

Dozens of men gathered in response to a crackdown three days earlier by the Taliban government's morality police, who detained women not wearing the body-cloaking chador or burqa.

A 33-year-old protester said the security forces "used sticks, whips and firearms to disperse the crowd. They even fired shots into the air."

Along with other residents, he spoke to AFP on condition of anonymity due to safety concerns.

The city's police force denied that any weapons were used when asked by AFP, accusing demonstrators of seeking "to disturb public order".

Protests are incredibly unusual in Afghanistan, where the Taliban authorities have ruled according to a strict interpretation of Islamic law since August 2021.

The protester told AFP he saw people wounded, which AFP was unable to verify independently.

"People are extremely frightened," he said.

A photographer at the rally said he saw the security forces "striking protesters and firing weapons in the direction of the crowd".

"Based on what I personally witnessed, a significant number of people were injured," the photographer said in a statement shared with AFP.

Richard Bennett, the UN special rapporteur on human rights in Afghanistan, said in a post on X he was "alarmed by (the) excessive use of force against seemingly peaceful protesters in Herat".

A third witness told AFP they saw dozens of people protesting in support of women.

One resident said people returning from the rally site "appeared very worried".

"They said that female police officers could also be seen inside the vehicles patrolling the area," the 32-year-old said.

People gathered at the site after a social media announcement calling for residents to "defend the rights of our sisters".

Saeed Masoud Hussaini, spokesman for Herat police, said people "attempted to gather and create tensions under the pretext of protesting issues related to the observance of the hijab" dress code.

"Thanks to the timely presence of security forces, the situation was brought fully under control, and further escalation of tensions was prevented," he told AFP.

Across Afghanistan, women must be almost entirely covered when they leave home, with many wearing a flowing abaya robe, a Muslim headscarf and a face covering.

The Ministry for the Propagation of Virtue and the Prevention of Vice, which deploys morality police officers to enforce the law, did not comment on women in Herat being detained over the dress code when contacted by AFP. — AFP

Sri Lanka jails ex-minister in anti-graft drive

COLOMBO — Sri Lanka sentenced a former deputy minister to 16 years in prison for graft yesterday, as it intensifies a corruption crackdown after the toppling of its powerful political clan.

Sarana Gunawardena, who served as a junior minister under former president Mahinda Rajapaksa, is the latest member of the ousted Rajapaksa administration to be jailed this year.

He was convicted of four separate charges and was sentenced to four years on each count to be served consecutively for a total of 16 years in jail, a court official said.

Sri Lanka is waging an anti-graft campaign targeting political figures, particularly allies of the Rajapaksa family that dominated the South Asian island country's politics for years.

Mass protests in 2022 toppled then-president Gotabaya Rajapaksa, who was accused of mismanagement and corruption.

Sarana Gunawardena was

charged with financial misconduct for pocketing kickbacks from vendors after overpaying them 11.5 million rupees (US\$115,000 at the time) for renting vehicles and buildings nearly two decades ago.

The High Court rejected appeals by Gunawardena's lawyers for leniency and said that a jail sentence was necessary to deter public sector corruption.

It also fined him 1.8 million rupees.

Gunawardena is the latest member of the Rajapaksa administration to be jailed in the past year, following the imprisonment of former ministers Mahindananda Aluthgamage and Nalin Fernando, who received lengthy prison terms ranging from 20 to 25 years.

President Anura Kumara Dissanayake's leftist government, which came to power after Sri Lanka's crippling financial meltdown, has strengthened the powers of the Commission to

Investigate Allegations of Bribery or Corruption.

Anti-Rajapaksa protesters blamed entrenched corruption within state institutions for contributing to the 2022 economic crisis.

The International Monetary Fund's US\$2.9 billion bailout programme requires governance reforms and stronger action against financial misconduct.

Authorities have also stepped up investigations into several high-profile criminal cases allegedly involving former political leaders.

A court imposed a foreign travel ban last week on toppled president Gotabaya Rajapaksa over allegations linked to the 2019 Easter Sunday bombings, which killed 279 people.

Gotabaya's intelligence chief Suresh Sallay is already in custody, accused of masterminding the attacks to create chaos and pave the way for Gotabaya's return to power, an allegation Sallay has denied. — AFP

Trump says peace deal with Iran in final stages

WASHINGTON, DC – US President Donald Trump yesterday said negotiations over a peace deal to end the Middle East war were in their final stages, after Iran and Israel halted attacks that threatened to reignite the months-long conflict.

Iran fired missiles at Israel on Sunday in response to strikes against Lebanon's Hezbollah in the southern suburbs of Beirut, before Israel struck back despite Trump's efforts to dissuade Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu from doing so.

The Israeli leader said of Iran that the "fire on that front is contained" hours after Tehran said it had stopped its military action, while both sides warned they could resume hostilities despite diplomatic efforts gathering pace.

Iran and Israel "were going back and forth and now they both agreed through me to stop and we're in the final throes of what will be a very, very good deal," Trump told reporters on his return from an NBA Finals game in New York.

When asked whether a deal would be a matter of days or weeks, he said it would take "two or three days."

The flare-up came after weeks of negotiations seeking to bring about a definitive end to the regional war sparked by US and Israeli strikes on Iran on February 28, with Tehran insisting a halt to the conflict must include a truce in Lebanon.

Trump, who has reportedly grown increasingly exasperated with Netanyahu, had earlier urged both sides to stop "shooting" and said that "final negotiations"



Israeli settlers look at a fallen rocket, outside a farm on the outskirts of Israeli-occupied West Bank city of Jericho yesterday, following Iranian and Iran-backed Houthi rebel attacks. – AFP

towards peace would proceed "subject to ignorance or stupidity getting in its way".

US Vice President JD Vance told Fox News on Monday that while the United States and Israel shared interests, their positions did not always align.

"The Israelis and the United States, we have a lot of shared interests," Vance said. "But we also have some situations where our interests diverge."

Lebanon city evacuates

In the recent escalation of attacks, Iran fired nearly 30 missiles at Israel, according to the Israeli military, while Israel struck military sites in the Islamic republic.

Iranian state media reported

yesterday that two members of the "Army Air Defence Force" were killed in Israeli strikes a day earlier. No casualties were reported in Israel following the exchange.

And despite Iranian demands, Israel has kept up its attacks on Lebanon, where it is fighting the Iran-backed group Hezbollah.

Yesterday, Lebanese state media reported an Israeli strike on the southern city of Tyre after the Israeli military urged residents to evacuate, the first time it had done so for the entire city and its surrounding areas.

"Enemy warplanes launched a heavy strike on Tyre," the state-run National News Agency (NNA) said.

The news sent residents of Tyre including its Christian quarter fleeing for safety, an AFP

correspondent said, reporting heavy traffic heading north.

"For your safety, we ask you to immediately evacuate your homes... and move north of the Zahrani River," the Israeli military's Arabic-language spokesman Avichay Adraee said on X.

Last week, Israel's military alleged that Hezbollah members were operating in the Christian quarter and said it would warn people to leave if the group remained there.

Lebanon was drawn into the war when Hezbollah militants fired rockets at Israel on March 2 to avenge the US-Israeli killing of Iran's supreme leader.

Israel responded with an extensive campaign of airstrikes and a ground invasion that have killed

nearly 3,600 people. Exchanges of fire with Hezbollah have not stopped despite an ongoing truce.

The heads of the Pakistani and Lebanese armed forces meanwhile agreed to boost cooperation on Tuesday as they met in Pakistan with peace talks over the Middle East war dragging on.

On another front of the war, Israel's military said early yesterday it had intercepted an aerial target from Yemen, but there were no injuries.

Oil eases

Fears had grown that the recent flare-up would put at risk a fragile Middle East truce – in place since April 8 – and ruin efforts for talks to reopen the Strait of Hormuz, through which about a fifth of global oil usually passes.

The conflict has severely disrupted shipping through the Hormuz strait, while Washington has imposed a blockade on Iranian ports.

Trump said yesterday that two pilots were uninjured after reports that a US military helicopter went down near the Strait of Hormuz.

It was not immediately clear whether the Apache helicopter was shot down, experienced mechanical failure or encountered some other problem, *The New York Times* reported, citing two sources briefed on the incident.

In better news for Iranians, local media reported early yesterday that Tehran's international airport – closed during the missile exchanges – had reopened, allowing flights carrying hajj pilgrims from Saudi Arabia to land. – AFP

In Lebanon's Tyre, Christian quarter emptied out after Israeli warning

Bilal Kashmar

TYRE – The Christian quarter in south Lebanon's city of Tyre, the last pocket of the coastal city spared from Israeli threats, was emptied out yesterday, after an unprecedented warning for the city's residents.

"We've packed our things, and we're leaving," resident Elias Barbour told AFP.

"What have we done wrong? What are we supposed to do?" he added, saying that he would go to his sister's home in Beirut "for a few days to see what happens".

Behind him, fishing boats lay moored along the narrow docks of the historical neighbourhood, while traditional restaurants and cafés were closed.

This district of Tyre's Old City – usually filled with visitors wandering its colourful narrow streets and sunbathing at the nearby beach during summer – was nearly deserted.

It had served as a shelter for thousands of displaced people from border villages during the latest round of fighting between Israel and Hezbollah.

One of the oldest cities on the Mediterranean coast, and one of the south's largest, Tyre is home to

UNESCO World Heritage-listed ruins.

Israel has heavily bombarded the city since Hezbollah drew Lebanon into the Middle East war on March 2.

But yesterday was the first time the Israeli army explicitly told residents of the Christian-majority neighbourhood to leave.

After the Israeli warning, Lebanon's state-run National News Agency (NNA) reported Israeli airstrikes on the city.

A strike on Tyre before the warning killed eight people, according to Lebanon's health ministry.

The Israeli military had previously issued repeated evacuation warnings for most of the Shia-majority city, also home to multiple Palestinian refugee camps, including after an April 17 ceasefire that was meant to stop the fighting.

'Liars'

"The neighbourhood is empty, some people are packing their belongings to leave, and others have already left... and only a few people remain," municipal council member Walid al-Tawil said.

Most people left for Sidon or Beirut, he added.

Some residents, not knowing

where to go, stayed in their cars, parked by the beach, according to an AFP correspondent.

In Sidon, around 30 kilometres north of Tyre, another correspondent saw people arriving in the city, many with mattresses and other belongings tied to their cars.

"Today they threatened the Christian quarter... we were scared and fled," said Ahmed Haidar after setting up his tent in Sidon.

"They threatened all of Tyre, there is no safety there anymore."

Last week, Israel's military alleged that Hezbollah members were operating in the Christian quarter and said it would warn people to leave if the group remained there.

Israeli attacks have killed more than 3,600 people in Lebanon since March 2 and displaced more than a million, according to Lebanese authorities.

"I'm going to Sidon," said Mohammad Mustafa, another Tyre resident, as he and his daughter rode a motorcycle out of the city.

"It's a lie when they say Hezbollah is here... This is a lie to scare people. They're liars," he added.

"I don't want to go. This is my home, my soul. We're fishermen. Where else would we go?" – AFP

Hezbollah urges Lebanon authorities to mend ties with Iran

BEIRUT – Hezbollah yesterday urged Lebanese authorities to mend their relationship with the group's backer Iran and benefit from Tehran's support, days after Iran struck Israel in response to bombardment on south Beirut.

Last week Lebanon's president and prime minister issued pointed calls for Tehran to stop interfering in their country's affairs, after Hezbollah rejected a conditional ceasefire with Israel.

"We call on the Lebanese authorities to seize the opportunity available and correct their official relationship with the Islamic republic in a way that serves the interest of both states," a Hezbollah statement said.

Hezbollah drew Lebanon into the Middle East war on March 2 with rocket fire at Israel to avenge the killing of Iran's supreme leader in US-Israeli strikes.

Iran insists a halt to the wider Middle East conflict must include a ceasefire in Lebanon.

Iran launched missiles at Israel on Sunday in response to

Israel bombing Beirut's southern suburbs, a Hezbollah stronghold.

Iran warned it would resume attacks on Israel if the latter kept striking Lebanon.

Iran and Israel, which fired back, on Monday halted the fresh hostilities.

Hezbollah said Iran's attack on Israel "in defence of our Lebanese people is a message of the Islamic republic's commitment, morally, politically and on the ground, towards Lebanon".

It urged Lebanese authorities to "use this Iranian support to achieve our national objectives, particularly in light of the formation of a new regional umbrella that has emerged from the Islamabad negotiations".

Hezbollah rejects recent direct talks between the Israeli and Lebanese authorities, mediated by Washington.

Pakistan has been mediating between the United States and Iran to end the regional conflict.

On Tuesday, the heads of the Pakistani and Lebanese armed forces agreed to boost cooperation as they met in Pakistan. – AFP

Belgian PM slams Germany, France over abandoned jet project

BRUSSELS – Belgian Prime Minister Bart De Wever yesterday blasted Germany and France for their “pure stupidity” after the EU powerhouses abandoned a joint fighter jet programme after disagreements.

Berlin and Paris agreed to ditch the Future Combat Air System (FCAS) programme that was seen as a key test of European efforts to work together in the face of a hostile Russia.

“I was extremely disappointed to read that France and Germany cannot reach agreement on the development of a European sixth generation airplane,” De Wever told a conference in Brussels.

“What a waste of time. What arrogance. This is that we have chosen – to be irrelevant in a crucial part of air defence, not only now, but in a decade as well.”

The Belgian premier, known

for his no-nonsense style, called the move “pure stupidity”.

“Whoever suggests that we can do it alone, by developing a fighter plane alone, or that we can do it more quickly, is simply ignoring reality,” he said.

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 on Monday 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”.

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

– AFP

Airbus-led group proposes alternative to Franco-German jet project



This photo taken on June 18, 2023 shows a mock-up of the European New Generation Fighter (NGF) for the Future Combat Air System (FCAS) at the Paris-Le Bourget Airport. The Franco-German joint fighter jet programme was formally abandoned by the two countries on Monday, due to long-running disagreements between the companies involved. – AFP

FRANKFURT AM MAIN – A consortium led by Airbus has proposed developing a next-generation fighter jet after a high-profile Franco-German warplane project collapsed, one of the firms involved told AFP yesterday.

The news came a day after Chancellor Friedrich Merz and French President Emmanuel Macron pulled the plug on the original programme after long-running disagreements between the firms involved.

Munich-based defence electronics firm Hensoldt said that it had teamed up with Airbus Defence and Space, Autoflug, Diehl Defence, Rohde & Schwarz, Liebherr, MBDA and MTU Aero Engines to come up with an alternative plan.

The proposal had been sent to German Defence Minister Boris Pistorius, a company spokesman said. The *Financial Times*, which first reported the development, said it had also been sent to Merz’s office.

The companies had “jointly drawn up a position paper on the

Future Combat Air System (FCAS) and the associated Next Generation Weapon System (NGWS)”, the Hensoldt spokesman said.

Further information on the proposal would come on tomorrow in an announcement at the Berlin ILA Air Show, the spokesman added.

A spokesman for the German defence ministry confirmed the proposal’s existence to AFP.

Speaking at a press conference yesterday afternoon, Pistorius said the proposal from the eight firms was one of a number of options Berlin was examining.

“It is conceivable and one possibility,” he said, adding that purchasing American F-35 fighter jets or participating in other ongoing projects were also possible.

Britain, Japan and Italy are working on a new fighter system known as the Global Combat Air Programme (GCAP), but joining the project late could present a host of technical challenges.

Speaking to the *Handelsblatt*

newspaper, Holger Neumann, commander of Germany’s Luftwaffe (air force), said he was in favour of F-35 jets as a stop-gap solution until the next generation of European jets was online.

The original FCAS project, started in 2017, came to be seen as a key test of European unity on defence.

But it was dogged by bitter disputes between France’s Dassault Aviation and Airbus, representing German and Spanish interests.

The German side had bristled at Dassault’s efforts to take greater control of building the aircraft.

Merz had said that Germany, unlike France, did not need jets that could carry nuclear weapons or fly from aircraft carriers.

Earlier in the day, Pistorius said the failure of the Franco-German project had “pained” him.

“I know how important Franco-German cooperation is in Europe, but ultimately you have to draw a line between head and heart,” he said. – AFP

Mexican president calls pre-World Cup protests ‘provocation’

MEXICO CITY – Mexican President Claudia Sheinbaum yesterday called protests by teachers ahead of this week’s launch of the 2026 World Cup a “provocation.”

The left-leaning leader called the decision by the teachers’ union to camp out near Mexico City’s central fan zone “unexplainable” and a “provocation – as if to say, ‘Look at how bad the situation is in Mexico.’”

Sheinbaum said tomorrow’s opening game between Mexico and South Africa “is guaranteed” despite planned protests.

Teachers called for a mass demonstration across Mexico City that will also include families of

so-called “disappeared” people, who are alleged to have been killed or kidnapped by the authorities or criminal gangs.

The CNTE teachers union has been on strike since last week to demand a salary raise and the reversal of a pension law – which the government considers unfeasible.

On June 1, police dispersed protesting teachers with rubber bullets and teargas at metal barricades near the fan zone in the capital city’s Zócalo square.

“They want to make it seem like there is mass social turmoil in Mexico, and that’s not true,” Sheinbaum said of the protests.

– AFP

EU orders Meta to open WhatsApp to rival AI chatbots for free

Raziye Akkoc

BRUSSELS – The EU ordered Meta yesterday to give rival AI chatbots access to its WhatsApp platform for free within five working days as it carries out an antitrust probe, or risk a heavy fine.

Meta said it would appeal the order, which follows the launch in December of an EU investigation into the US firm’s policy of blocking access for AI providers other than Meta AI.

The European Commission, the EU’s digital watchdog, said Meta will have to maintain access to competitors until Brussels wraps up its probe.

“Today, we require Meta to restore access to WhatsApp for competing AI assistants while we investigate whether the restrictions may infringe EU competition rules,” EU antitrust chief Teresa Ribera said in a statement yesterday.

“This will prevent serious and irreparable harm to competition in this growing market by Meta’s conduct, which at first sight infringes EU competition rules,” the commission said.

A Meta spokesperson said the measure would allow “OpenAI and some of the largest companies in the world” access for free, adding: “This is regulatory overreach subsidised by the many European companies that pay”.

The EU had warned Meta it faced interim measures if it did not open WhatsApp to rival AI assistants in February. The company then introduced an access fee – a remedy the EU rejected in April as unsatisfactory.

Traditional antitrust probes can take years and European officials believe the decisions, often fines, come too late to see any positive change to address the

harm already done.

The last time the EU used such interim measures was in 2019, Ribera said.

The EU’s goal is that Meta reinstates third-party AI assistants’ access to WhatsApp under the same conditions as before its October 2025 policy change when it “effectively” barred them.

The commission said it has the power to impose a fine of up to 10 percent of the company’s total turnover in the business year preceding the infringement if Meta “either intentionally or negligently” contravenes the decision on interim measures.

Protecting a ‘growing market’

Brussels said the fee offered earlier this year “at first sight” was “in practice equivalent to the previous access ban”.

The commission described an “urgent need” to protect a “growing market for general-purpose AI assistants” and give space for smaller players and new entrants to challenge large incumbents.

“We cannot let large digital incumbents leverage their dominance of the past to dictate who in Europe gets to compete and who gets to innovate in AI,” Ribera told a press conference in Brussels.

She said the EU order would ensure EU citizens choose which AI chatbots they would prefer to use on WhatsApp.

There is no legal deadline for the EU’s investigation to end.

The commission has had several run-ins with Meta as part of a broader clampdown on abusive Big Tech practices.

In April, EU regulators found Meta was failing to keep under-

13s off its Facebook and Instagram platforms in breach of the bloc’s digital content rules.

As part of that same probe, EU regulators are looking into how Meta protects users’ physical and mental wellbeing, as well as the “addictive” design of Facebook and Instagram.

Meta has also appealed a 200 million euro (US\$231 million) fine imposed last year by the EU under the online competition law, the Digital Markets Act (DMA).

The DMA is not popular across the Atlantic, with neither the US administration under President Donald Trump nor the American giants themselves.

Apple criticised the law on Monday when it blamed the DMA for its delayed rollout of the AI-enhanced voice assistant Siri, which the EU flatly rejected.

– AFP

Cabo Verde looks to ocean for growth, climate resilience

Analysis

PRAIA – At the port of Praia, the capital of Cabo Verde*, fishing boats unload the day’s catch as vendors sort fish on the dock and women carry plastic basins of fresh fish toward the market.

A few kilometers away on Gamboa beach, visitors walk along the shoreline while young people play football on the sand. Across this Atlantic archipelago, the ocean shapes daily life, from food and transport to tourism and drinking water.

As this year’s World Oceans Day was marked on June 8 under the theme “Reimagine: Beyond the World We Know, a New Relationship with Our Ocean,” Cabo Verde offers a close look at how a small island state is trying to balance the use and protection of the sea.

According to Cabo Verde’s Climate Portal, an online platform that provides information on the country’s efforts to address the challenges posed by climate change, more than 99 percent of the country’s territory is ocean, while about 70 percent of the water consumed nationwide comes from the sea.

For Tommy Melo, a marine biologist and president of Biosfera Cabo Verde, an environmental non-governmental organization (NGO), the ocean should no longer be seen merely as a border, a route, a storage space, or an endless source of fish.

“The ocean regulates the climate, feeds communities, absorbs carbon, connects economies, and holds biodiversity that is still largely unknown,” Melo recently told Xinhua.

For island countries, he said, the ocean is “territory, economy, culture, food security, water, energy, and identity.”

Ana Veiga, a biologist and executive director of the environmental NGO Lantuna, said climate change is one of the most urgent threats facing marine and coastal ecosystems, as rising temperatures, ocean acidification, sea-level rise, and more frequent extreme weather events are affecting habitats and species.

She said marine pollution, especially plastic waste, is another serious problem, while overfishing and poorly planned coastal development are also putting pressure on marine resources.

“We are exploiting the oceans



This photo taken on May 13, 2026 shows Cabo Verde’s city of Mindelo on São Vicente Island. – Xinhua

beyond their own capacity,” Veiga said, adding that the situation calls for stronger policies and closer international cooperation.

For Cabo Verde, the issue is not abstract. Data from the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations show that fisheries account for about 2.0 percent of Cabo Verde’s gross domestic product (GDP), provide around 10 percent of animal protein intake, and support more than 5,800 jobs in coastal fishing.

Tourism is another major link between the country and the sea. According to Cabo Verde’s National Institute of Statistics, the country’s hotel sector received more than 1.24 million guests in 2025, up 6.0 percent year on year. Beaches, diving, surfing, and kitesurfing have helped make the islands a popular destination for international visitors.

But the ocean is not only a source of fish and tourism. For a country with limited freshwater resources and recurrent droughts, seawater desalination has become an important part of the water supply system.

A seawater desalination and water supply project on Santiago Island is currently under design. Chen Junjun, deputy project manager of the Cabo Verde branch of China Machinery Engineering Corporation, said the project is expected to start construction in November.

The project will include two new desalination plants with a combined designed daily output of 15,000 cubic meters, mainly serving Praia and Calheta, along with five reservoirs with a total capacity of 17,000 cubic meters, about 19.4 km of pipelines from the desalination plants to the reservoirs, and a further 5.6 km linking new reservoirs to existing ones, Chen said.

Veiga said cooperation with China

in water resources and seawater desalination is valuable for Cabo Verde, saying China’s technological, human, and financial resources can help train Cabo Verdean technicians and adapt suitable technologies to local conditions.

Cabo Verdean President José Maria Neves said in an earlier interview with Xinhua that the blue economy is the future of Cabo Verde, noting that the two countries could strengthen cooperation in transport, fisheries, desalination, pharmaceuticals, and food industries.

Desalination, especially when combined with renewable energy, could help provide enough water for the country’s development, he said.

For Cabo Verde, the relationship with the ocean is being tested in practical ways: how fish stocks are managed, how water reaches households, how tourism grows without damaging the coast, and how small island states can have a stronger voice in ocean governance. – Xinhua

**Cabo Verde is not only the Atlantic Ocean nation’s official Portuguese name, but it is also the official name in English and all other languages. Historically, English speakers anglicised the name to Cape Verde. However, in October 2013, the archipelago’s government officially requested that the international community – including the United Nations, foreign governments, and cartographers – stop translating the name and use the Portuguese form, Cabo Verde (or officially, the Republic of Cabo Verde), for all diplomatic and official purposes. The move was intended to establish a standardized, unified global identity for the country, much like how Côte d’Ivoire requested the world drop the English translation “Ivory Coast”. – Gemini*

Cabo Verde issues commemorative stamps to mark historic World Cup qualification

PRAIA – Cabo Verde’s postal company and football federation on Monday launched a set of commemorative stamps to mark the country’s first-ever qualification for the FIFA World Cup.

The stamps, issued in the capital Praia by Correios de Cabo Verde (CCV) in partnership with the Cabo Verdean Football Federation (FCF), come as the island nation prepares for its debut at the 2026 World Cup co-hosted by the United States, Canada and Mexico.

Displayed at the launch ceremony, the commemorative items include two stamps with denominations of 40 and 60 Cabo Verdean escudos (US\$0.42 and US\$0.63), as well as a 200-escudo souvenir sheet. The designs feature footballers in blue jerseys, a football, the national team emblem and a shark motif referring to the team’s nickname, the “Blue Sharks,” while yellow star-shaped elements echo the visual symbols of Cabo Verde’s national flag.

According to CCV, the 40-escudo and 60-escudo stamps are intended for domestic and international mail, respectively.

FCF president Mario Semedo said that the country’s World Cup qualification represents not only a “footballing breakthrough”, but also “a shared dream” of the islands.

In October 2025, Cabo Verde defeated Eswatini 3-0 in the African qualifiers to secure its first World Cup berth. – Xinhua

Portuguese share their China stories through short videos

LISBON – “Last year, I finally set foot in China and fulfilled a lifelong dream,” 78-year-old Portuguese learner Joaquim Albuquerque said in Mandarin (Putonghua) with a noticeable accent.

Albuquerque made the remarks when he shared his personal China story on Saturday at the award ceremony for the “My China Story” short-video competition and the 2026 Chinese Ambassador Scholarship, hosted by the Chinese Embassy in Lisbon.

Albuquerque’s fascination with China began in 2009 when he came across a page of Chinese text while reading a newspaper. Intrigued by the unfamiliar script, he decided to learn the language. What started as curiosity soon became a long-term commitment.

To mark his journey into the Chinese language, he even adopted a Chinese name for himself – Wang Long.

Despite the challenges, his persistence and dedication earned the admiration of teachers at the Confucius Institute where he studied.

Last September, he realized his dream of visiting China. From the dramatic sandstone peaks of Zhangjiajie to Beijing’s blend of ancient heritage and cutting-edge innovation, the trip left him a lasting impression.

Albuquerque’s story is just one among many featured in this year’s inaugural “My China Story” short-video competition, as the story of Portuguese theater professional Samuel Pascoal can serve as another example how Chinese language learning can shape a person’s life path.

Years ago, Pascoal became fascinated with classical Chinese poetry and the passion led him to study Chinese and eventually earned a scholarship to study at Nankai University in China with the support of the Confucius Institute at the University of Minho.

During his time in China, Pascoal immersed himself not only in language studies but also in campus cultural life, joining a student theater group and forging lasting friendships with Chinese classmates.

Now back in Portugal, he works with a theater company in

Porto as a stage assistant, actor and playwright. In his spare time, he is translating modern Chinese playwright Cao Yu’s drama “Thunderstorm” into Portuguese, with the hope of introducing more Chinese theatrical works to Portuguese-speaking audiences.

If the stories of Albuquerque and Pascoal reflect the growing appeal of Chinese language and culture among Portuguese adults, the experiences of siblings Keagan Ivan Oosthuizen, 11, and Skylar Theresa Oosthuizen, 9, suggest that such enthusiasm is also taking root among younger generations.

For the siblings, practicing conversations, writing Chinese characters, watching Chinese cartoons and reading children’s books in Chinese have become part of their daily lives, and Chinese cuisine, history and traditional culture are among their favorite topics.

Participants in the event, through personal narratives, travel experiences and everyday observations, offered diverse perspectives on China they have come to know through study, friendship and firsthand encounters.

Pedro Assunção, vice president of the Polytechnic University of Leiria, said initiatives such as the short-video competition and the Chinese Ambassador Scholarship provide valuable opportunities for Portuguese learners of Chinese to showcase their achievements while inspiring broader public interest in Chinese culture.

“Through these works, we can clearly see participants’ dedication to learning Chinese, as well as their genuine interest in and affection for Chinese culture,” he said.

For his part, Chinese Ambassador to Portugal Yang Yirui noted that the competition has attracted broad interest and enthusiastic participation across society in Portugal.

“Although the entries varied in theme and style, they all shared one common quality – sincerity,” Yang said. “Through these vivid and personal stories, people from our two countries gain greater understanding of one another, and friendship grows stronger.”

– Xinhua



Awardees pose for a group photo at the award ceremony for the “My China Story” short-video competition and the 2026 Chinese Ambassador Scholarship in Lisbon last Saturday. – Xinhua

Iran says US revoked World Cup ticket allocation for supporters

TEHRAN – Iran's football federation yesterday said the United States has revoked its allocation of tickets for its World Cup group games, accusing the co-host of obstructing the attendance of Iranian supporters under the shadow of a bitter diplomatic row.

The US has presented a number of bureaucratic hurdles for Iran at the global football spectacle, including refusing to issue visas for some of its support staff, as the two countries remain at war after the US and Israel attacked the country in late February.

"With less than three days remaining until the start of the 2026 World Cup... the United States has once again acted to obstruct the presence of Iranian supporters at the stadiums hosting the national team's three group stage matches," the federation said in a statement.

The Iranian football body said FIFA regulations dictate that it should be allocated eight percent of tickets for each match, which are given to participating federations for distribution to their supporters through official channels.

According to the statement, Iran had already begun ticket sales for group stage matches against New Zealand, Belgium and Egypt - all to be held in the US - after receiving its quota, with some fans having already made necessary arrangements.

"However, in an unexpected move, the allocation granted to the Iranian Football Federation has been withdrawn, and under the current circumstances, the federation is unable to provide even a single ticket to supporters of the national team," it said.

The federation described the move as "contrary to the spirit governing international competitions and the principle of equality among participating countries".

It also called on FIFA and tournament organisers "to uphold the principles of neutrality, fairness, and established regulations, to provide the necessary conditions for Iranian supporters".

Neither FIFA nor US organisers have publicly commented on the Iranian accusation.

The complaint is the latest dispute regarding Iran's participation in the World Cup, following visa issues that Tehran says have prevented some 15 administrative and management staff in its delegation from entering the United States.

Rising tensions also prompted Iran to announce that it was moving its World Cup training base to the Mexican border city of Tijuana rather than Tucson, Arizona, as originally planned.

Iran open their campaign against New Zealand in Los Angeles on June 15, before facing Belgium in the same city on June 21 and Egypt in Seattle on June 26. – AFP

Somali referee axed from World Cup after being denied entry to US

LOS ANGELES – Award-winning Somali referee Omar Artan has been dropped from officiating at the World Cup after being barred from entering the United States, world football's governing body FIFA said on Monday.

AFIFA spokesperson confirmed in a statement that Artan, who was refused entry to the US after arriving at Miami International Airport on Saturday, would play no part in the World Cup.

Artan would have been the first Somali to referee at a World Cup.

"FIFA can confirm that match official Omar Abdulkadir Artan will be unable to train and officiate at the FIFA World Cup 2026 after he was denied entry into the United States," the spokesperson told AFP.

FIFA emphasised that it was powerless to influence the decision, which it said was the sole preserve of tournament co-hosts the United States.

"FIFA is not involved in host country immigration processes, including visa adjudications, and has been informed by authorities that Mr Artan's status will not be changed at present," the spokesperson said.

"In line with previous FIFA events, a host government ultimately determines who receives a visa and who is admitted into their country."

A spokesperson for United States Customs and Border Protection (CBP) said Artan was denied entry following a routine inspection.

"During processing, the traveller underwent additional inspection, a routine part of CBP's

inspection process when officers need to verify information or determine admissibility," the CBP spokesperson said.

"Following inspection, the traveller, a referee for the FIFA World Cup, was determined to be inadmissible due to vetting concerns and was denied entry."

Somalia is one of several countries on a travel ban list introduced by President Donald Trump's administration as part of a broader immigration crackdown.

In a statement to AFP, Artan said he wanted to concentrate on the future.

"Despite the circumstances I am in a positive mood and I am focused on the next challenges in my refereeing career," he said.

"I want to thank the football family for their messages and wish my colleagues all the best success during the World Cup and I look forward to joining them again in future competitions."

'Inspiration'

A government adviser in Mogadishu told AFP earlier Monday that Artan had a valid visa for the US.

The tournament kicks off tomorrow.

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

Abshir said Artan flew back to Istanbul after being refused entry in Miami.

"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 for the 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, and refereed in the most recent edition of the Africa Cup of Nations.

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.

In a statement yesterday, Somalia's Ministry of Sports expressed "deep regret" over Artan's denial of entry, saying that despite diplomatic engagement with US authorities and world football governing body FIFA, it was "not possible to achieve a positive outcome".

A source at the Confederation of African Football (CAF) told AFP yesterday that the continental body could not intervene, but added: "We certainly feel sorry for Artan."

– AFP



Australia's Caitlin Foord (centre left) is tackled by Mexico's Alice Soto (centre right) during the women's international friendly between Australia and Mexico at the Western Sydney Stadium yesterday. Australia won the game 3-1. – AFP

Man Utd to face AC Milan in Poland friendly

LONDON – Manchester United will complete a busy programme of pre-season friendlies against AC Milan in Wroclaw, Poland, the English giants announced yesterday.

The game will take place on August 15, not long before the Premier League season starts later that month, with United looking to build on last term's encouraging third-place finish under manager Michael Carrick.

United open their pre-season against Wrexham in Helsinki on

July 18 before facing Rosenborg in Trondheim, Norway the following Friday.

They then play two fixtures in Sweden, taking on Atletico Madrid in the Snapdragon Cup in Stockholm on August 1 and European champions Paris Saint-Germain in Gothenburg one week later.

The Red Devils face bitter English rivals Leeds in Dublin on August 12 before completing their pre-season campaign against Italians Milan three days later.

"We're excited to be concluding our pre-season tour in Wroclaw, Poland, with a big game against AC Milan," director of football Jason Wilcox told United's website.

"With fixtures now confirmed across five countries and six fantastic cities, these matches will provide strong preparation for the 2026-27 season and a valuable opportunity to connect with our incredible fans across Europe. Their support will be vital as we build momentum."

– AFP

Success-starved China fans adopt 'Card Master' referee as World Cup rep

BEIJING – Chinese football fans left without a national team to support at the World Cup have turned to referee Ma Ning - nicknamed "Card Master" for his enthusiasm in booking players - as the country's representative for the tournament.

With China's team once again failing to qualify, the 46-year-old Ma has emerged as an unlikely viral star after he shared photos on social

media last month of him jetting off to the finals in North America.

A hashtag related to Ma's trip to the tournament has received more than 3.6 million views on social media platform Weibo, while the referee's RedNote account has gained 195,000 followers in less than two weeks.

Ma has also appeared in collaborations with brands such as laptop maker Lenovo, electronics

manufacturer Hisense and dairy product firm Mengniu.

Ma's first post on the RedNote app showed him drawing a little red book from his referee's front pocket in a play on the platform's Chinese name.

Another showed him at an airport in China as he prepared to depart for the footballing extravaganza in Mexico, Canada and the United States.

"His luggage is probably all filled with yellow and red cards,"

one Weibo user commented under Ma's airport post.

Ma gained his "Card Master" moniker after dishing out nine yellow cards and three reds in an ill-tempered Shanghai derby in 2015.

Others revelled in the prospect of Ma officiating a match between the United States and Iran, fulfilling China's role as a peace-broker in the conflict.

"The whole country is behind

you (though no one from the Chinese football team)," another social media user commented in a jibe at the national team's failure to qualify.

Ma is the only Chinese match referee at the tournament, where he is making his second World Cup appearance, having debuted as a fourth official in Qatar in 2022.

He is joined in North America by assistant referee Zhou Fei and VAR official Fu Ming. – AFP

Visma win Auvergne team time-trial but Baudin keeps yellow

Cycling

Benoît Noël

PERREUX, France – American Matteo Jorgenson led Visma-Lease a Bike over the line to win yesterday's 28km team time-trial at the Tour Auvergne-Rhone-Alpes as Frenchman Alex Baudin retained the overall leader's yellow jersey.

Baudin, who won Sunday's opening stage, led his EF Education-Easy Post team to a third-placed finish, 29 seconds off Visma's time.

That was enough to give him a 12sec lead over Frenchman Kevin Vauquelin and Briton Oscar Onley in the overall standings after they led Netcompany Ineos to a second-placed finish on the third stage around Perreux.

Jorgenson, a twice former winner of Paris-Nice, moved up to fourth overall at 15sec.

"It's seven times better than winning on your own because we get the moment right afterwards together, which in cycling you don't often get where you win together with your teammates," said Jorgenson in reference to the seven-man team.

"It's a really cool discipline and a really nice day."

But pre-race favourite Paul Seixas, the teenage French prodigy, lost 45 seconds with his Decathlon CMA CGM team finishing sixth, while overall contenders Juan Ayuso and Isaac Del Toro lost 32 and 61 seconds respectively.

Spaniard Ayuso and his Danish Lidl-Trek team-mate Mattias Skjelmose moved up to fifth and sixth overall at 47sec, with



TotalEnergies's riders cycle during the 3rd stage of the Tour Auvergne-Rhone-Alpes cycling race (formerly known as the Criterium du Dauphine), 28,4km team time trial departing and arriving in Perreux central France, yesterday. – AFP

Seixas now 12th at 1min and Mexican Del Toro 16th at 1min 16sec.

Australian sprinter Michael Matthews had set the early pace for Team Jayco Aulua with a time of 33:46 after a blistering finish to the race against the clock.

But Lidl, who finished fourth at 32sec, soon smashed that before Netcompany then set the new benchmark.

Baudin's EF were inspired by their bid to retain the yellow jersey and kept in touch through the two time checks.

Visma finished the strongest, in part due to Onley's troubles, and Jorgenson is now well-placed to push for overall victory once the race hits the high mountains at the end of the week.

"I think the last 10 kilometres we couldn't have gone any faster. I was given a free ride to the last climb," said Jorgenson, who crashed out of the Ardennes classics in April after a good start to the season where he was second at Tirreno-Adriatico and the Drome Classic.

"On a personal level, it feels good to win a race and it is really nice after the spring I've had to come back and be on top again."

Vauquelin and Onley are also well-placed but there is work to do for Seixas and Del Toro to claw back the time they lost.

Before the final three summit finishes, today and tomorrow's stages invite a battle between the breakaway and the sprint teams. – AFP

Bangladesh thrash Australia in rain-hit 1st ODI

Cricket

DHAKA – Mosaddek Hossain hit a career-best 86 not out and Nahid Rana took four wickets as Bangladesh trounced Australia by 86 runs in the rain-hit opening one-day international yesterday to go 1-0 up in the three-match series.

It was only Bangladesh's second ever ODI victory against Australia, following their famous 2005 upset in Cardiff.

Mosaddek capped a fine all-round performance, bagging two wickets to walk away with the man-of-the-match award.

Chasing 285, Australia were reeling at 191-9 in 42.2 overs, still needing 93 runs off 46 balls with one wicket in hand, when a fierce thunderstorm forced the players off the field at the Sher-e-Bangla National Cricket Stadium in Dhaka.

Bangladesh were declared winners via the Duckworth-Lewis-Stem (DLS) method.

Cameron Green top-scored for the visitors with an unbeaten 52 off 66 balls but found little support as Bangladesh's pace attack ran riot.

Taskin Ahmed struck on the first ball, bowling opener Matt Short for a duck.

Mustafizur Rahman then removed Marnus Labuschagne for just one off the second ball of the second over to leave Australia reeling at 2-2.

Cooper Connolly (35) survived a reprieve when Tanzid Hasan put down a chance at second slip off Mustafizur, and the opener steadied the innings briefly before being castled by an arm ball from Mosaddek.

Captain Josh Inglis fell for 19, edging a short ball from Rana to the keeper, while Alex Carey was bounced out by

Rana for 47 as he attempted to rebuild alongside Green.

Australia's lower order, including Matthew Renshaw, debutant Liam Scott and Xavier Bartlett, offered little resistance, leaving Green stranded at the crease.

Earlier, Mosaddek laid the platform with his 70-ball knock on his return to international cricket after four years, hitting seven fours and three sixes.

Bangladesh also benefited from six dropped catches by a sloppy Australia, four of them off Mosaddek.

Opener Tanzid Hasan and number three Najmul Hossain Shanto made vital contributions, with the left-handed pair hitting half-centuries.

Tanzid struck 54 off 44 balls before Nathan Ellis removed him in his second spell.

Shanto, continuing his rich vein of form, made 67 off 86 before a soft dismissal ended his innings.

The pair put on 96 runs for the second wicket off 91 balls after Australia struck early, with Ellis accounting for Saif Hassan (5) who edged to second slip where Labuschagne took a simple catch.

Australia threatened to seize control when Renshaw's part-time off-spin proved surprisingly effective, removing Litton Das (7) with a return catch before also accounting for Shanto.

But Mosaddek steadied the innings, first adding 75 with Towhid Hridoy, before late partnerships of 20 with Tanvir Islam and 45 with Taskin to ensure a competitive total.

Ellis was the pick of the Australia bowlers with 3-38, while Scott and Renshaw claimed two wickets each. – AFP



Bangladesh's Mosaddek Hossain watches the ball after playing a shot during the first one-day international (ODI) cricket match against Australia at the Sher-e-Bangla National Cricket Stadium in Dhaka, Bangladesh yesterday. – AFP

Sport in brief

Top seeds Jia/Zhang among Chinese 1st round winners at Australian Badminton Open

Badminton

SYDNEY – Chinese top seeds Jia Yifan and Zhang Shuxian advanced to the second round of the women's doubles with a dominant win on the opening day of the Australian Badminton Open here yesterday.

Jia and Zhang, the women's doubles champions at the Singapore Open in May, defeated Australian duo Sydney and Victoria Tjonadi 21-7, 21-5 in 22 minutes yesterday evening at Sydney's State Sports Centre.

They will be joined in the second round of the women's doubles draw by compatriots Wang Tingge and Luo Yi, who beat eighth seeds Yang Ching-Tun and Chang Ching-Hui of Chinese Taipei 21-14, 16-21, 21-17.

In the men's doubles draw, Chinese fourth seeds Chen Boyang and Liu Yi advanced to the second round by defeating South Korea's Kim Gi-jung and Kim Sarang 21-14, 21-14, while Huang Di and Liu Yang beat Singapore's Kubo Junsuke and Wesley Koh 21-16, 21-17.

Bao Lijing and Cao Zihan were the only Chinese pairing to lose on the opening day of the tournament, falling to Chinese Taipei's sixth seeds Hsu Ya-Ching and Sung Yu-Hsuan in three games.

The first round of the men's and women's doubles will continue today, with the mixed doubles and men's and women's singles first rounds also getting underway. – Xinhua

Federer to play in US Open exhibition event

Tennis

NEW YORK – Roger Federer will play in a US Open one-night exhibition event that also includes long-time rivals Andre Agassi, John McEnroe and Andy Roddick, the US Tennis Association said on Monday.

The 44-year-old retired Swiss superstar, who won five of his 20 Grand Slam singles titles in New York, will play in "Roger Federer: An Icon Returns to New York" on August 25 at Arthur Ashe Stadium.

Federer last played in the US Open in 2019, reaching the quarter-finals. He won at Flushing Meadows from 2004 through 2008, the only man or woman to capture five consecutive singles titles on the New York hardcourts.

"The US Open has always been one of the most special tournaments for me," Federer said in a statement. "So many unforgettable moments of my career happened in New York, and Arthur Ashe Stadium is a place that means a great deal to me."

"I've missed being part of that atmosphere and feeling the incredible energy that the fans bring every year. To return to Arthur Ashe and share the evening with Andy, Andre and John makes it even more meaningful."

"I'm looking forward to celebrating those memories, seeing the fans again, and enjoying a very special night together."

The event comes four days before Federer will be inducted into the International Tennis Hall of Fame in Newport, Rhode Island. – AFP

Spurs cut Knicks' NBA Finals lead to 2-1 with narrow win

NEW YORK – The San Antonio Spurs beat the New York Knicks 115-111 in Game 3 of the NBA Finals on Monday to cut the series deficit to 2-1.

Victor Wembanyama led the Spurs with 32 points, eight rebounds, six assists and three blocks. Stephon Castle added 23 points, while rookie Dylan Harper had 13 points and nine rebounds.

In a game with U. President Donald Trump in attendance, the Spurs built an 11-point lead in the first quarter, but the Knicks responded with a blistering second period, in which they shot more than 70 percent from the field and outscored San Antonio by 18 points to take the lead. The Spurs then seized the momentum back with a series of scoring runs in the second half.

The defeat ended the Knicks' 13-game winning streak in this season's playoffs, as they lost for the first time since April 23 in Game 3 of their first-round series against the Atlanta Hawks.

Jalen Brunson paced the Knicks with 32 points, five rebounds and five assists. OG Anunoby added 28 points.

The Knicks continue to host Game 4 today. – Xinhua

French police extend custody of star Patrick Bruel accused of sexual abuse

Nanterre, France

NANTERRE – French police kept singer and actor Patrick Bruel in custody for a second day running yesterday, prosecutors said, as allegations of sexual abuse mounted against one of the country’s highest-profile figures to be targeted in the #MeToo movement.

The 67-year-old, a major figure in French pop culture with multiple top-selling albums and dozens of film appearances, has denied any wrongdoing.

He is the latest in a string of French celebrities to face sexual assault claims.

Film legend Gérard Depardieu was handed a suspended 18-month prison sentence last year for sexually assaulting two women on a film set in 2021. He has also rejected the accusations.

Bruel, a heartthrob whose face was plastered on teen magazines in the early 1990s, was detained on Monday to answer questions about 13 allegations of sexual assault and abuse, the prosecutor’s office in the Parisian suburb of Nanterre said.

It said he was still in custody yesterday.

Lawyer Myriam Guedj Benayoun on Tuesday said a new complaint would soon be filed against the singer for alleged attempted rape of a 19-year-old at his home in 2000.

Another lawyer, Corinne Herrmann, said two new complaints for rape would be filed in the coming days.

Herrmann told AFP on Monday two women had filed new rape complaints against him on May 27 and June 3.

Investigative news outlet Mediapart said the women were a former beauty queen who accuses Bruel of raping her in 2008, and a physiotherapist who alleged he committed rape in 2000. – AFP



French singer-songwriter Patrick Bruel speaks on stage during an evening against the rise of anti-semitism in Europe, organised by the Regle du Jeu (“Rules of the Game”) magazine, the Representative Council of French Jewish Institutions (CRIF) and other French institutions, at the Theatre Antoine, in Paris on June 3, 2024. – AFP

Between Homer and Hollywood: Troy a source of Turkish pride

Anne Chaon

ÇANAKKALE, Turkey – A gift from the film set of “Troy”, a giant Trojan Horse replica looms over the port of Çanakkale on the Dardanelles Strait in western Turkey.

First related by Homer, then retold for the silver screen in 2004, with Brad Pitt as Achilles, the legend of the ancient city travels to Rome’s Colosseum this week, where a major new exhibition opens on Friday.

Keen to showcase the city’s Anatolian roots, Turkey has loaned out more than 220 artefacts that will be on show at the exhibition, “Troy and Rome”, which runs until mid-October.

“When you read Homer, you don’t get a very clear idea of the Trojans’ identity. But at the time of the Trojan War, they were certainly among the Anatolian peoples,” said Reyhan Korpe, deputy head of the Troy excavations and an ancient history expert at Çanakkale University.

Located on Turkey’s Aegean coastline, the remains of Troy are a UNESCO-listed World Heritage site comprising 185 hectares of stones and crumbling ramparts dotted with poppies and scampering squirrels.

For 30 years, Korpe has walked every inch of this huge site, whose layers tell the story of nine different settlements, the remains of their ramparts intertwined and layered on top of one another.

Western flank of the east

“I spent a whole year just walking through the stones, maps in hand, trying to understand how they fit together,” he told AFP.

His passion is evident for the site, which was founded in 3,000 BC and was constantly inhabited until being abandoned in the sixth century AD.

“It was the most western part of eastern civilisation,” which is what gave Troy its significance, Korpe said.

The Trojan War, which took place around 1,200 BC and lasted 10 years, until the siege and the city’s defeat – parts of which are recounted in the Iliad – “was the first confrontation between the East and the West”, he said of the Anatolian world and its Greek equivalent, referring to it as “the first world war”.

It is an idea with strong resonance in these wooded hills, which several millennia later witnessed the World War I battles of 1915, when Allied troops suffered a bloody defeat trying to seize the Dardanelles from the Ottoman Empire.

Luwian hieroglyphics

Of the hundreds of artefacts Turkey has loaned to the Rome exhibition, more than 100 come from the Troy museum, some of which will be on display for the first time.

One piece is a bronze seal marked with



Çanakkale University excavations vice-president Reyhan Korpe poses in the ruins of the ancient city of Troy in Çanakkale last Tuesday. – AFP



A tourist walks past a model of the Trojan Horse in the ruins of the ancient city of Troy in Çanakkale last Tuesday. A gift from the film set of “Troy”, the giant Trojan Horse replica looms over the port of Çanakkale on the Dardanelles Strait in western Turkey. First related by Homer, then retold for the silver screen in 2004, with Brad Pitt as Achilles, the legend of the ancient city travels to Rome’s Colosseum this week, where a major new exhibition opens this Friday. – AFP

hieroglyphics that was discovered in 1995, which offers important clues about the city’s Anatolian roots.

“It’s the only trace of writing found at Troy that was written in an Anatolian language, which proves that the first language spoken there was that of the Luwian peoples,” explained museum director Sinem Duzgoren.

The Luwians were an ancient people who lived in western and southern Anatolia during the Bronze and early Iron Ages, whose language played a major role in the Hittite empire.

From Wilusa to Iliion

Although Troy was not a Hittite city, it was part of the Hittite empire, which referred to it as Wilusa. That became Iliion for the Greeks – or Ilios for Homer.

“These pieces may not be the most spectacular, but they are the most important from a historical point of view, because

they bear witness to the history of Troy,” Duzgoren told AFP.

Also sent to Rome are a large number of weapons for use in war – stones for use in a sling, knives, spears and arrowheads.

“These weapons are mentioned in the Iliad and date from the same period that they were mentioned by Homer,” she said.

But it is a reality that is a far cry from the epic, romanticised fighting that plays out in Wolfgang Petersen’s “Troy” (2004).

Apart from bequeathing the 12-tonne replica of the Trojan Horse looming over Çanakkale’s waterfront, the film did a lot to fuel renewed interest in Troy, Korpe said.

“Neither the producers nor the director came here, even though that was when we made some of the most significant discoveries,” he said sadly.

“But the number of tourists did grow, even if they were just looking for traces of Brad Pitt among the ruins!” – AFP

Pope Leo XIV meets Bad Bunny in Madrid: Vatican

BARCELONA – Pope Leo XIV held a surprise meeting with Puerto Rican music star Bad Bunny at Real Madrid’s Bernabeu stadium during his state visit to Spain, the Vatican said yesterday.

“Yes... I confirm it. He [Bad Bunny] was with his family and some other people”, and Leo “greeted them briefly before leaving the stadium”, Vatican spokesman Matteo Bruni told reporters of the encounter on Monday.

Spanish media said the papal team and Bad Bunny’s entourage were still deciding on the best moment to publish photos of their meeting.

Around 80,000 people packed the iconic football ground for a meeting between the pope and Madrid’s diocesan community on day three of Leo’s trip to Spain.

His stay in Madrid coincided with a series of

concerts by Bad Bunny at the Metropolitano stadium of Real Madrid’s cross-town rivals Atlético Madrid, part of his hit “Debi Tirar Mas Fotos” (“I Should Have Taken More Photos”) world tour.

Some observers pointed to modern youth being torn between spirituality and profane music in a historically Catholic country where traditional religious observance has declined for decades.

But as his plane headed to Madrid on Saturday, Leo told reporters he was “very pleased by the reports” that young people were increasingly interested in the Catholic Church.

“I think many will see Bad Bunny. But I think there will also be a few here to see the pope. And that says something,” Leo said of the conflicting loyalties. – AFP

World Weather

CHINA	ASIA-PACIFIC	WORLD	LUSOPHONE
Beijing 15°C~27°C	Manila 25°C~33°C	New York 22°C~28°C	Lisbon 16°C~28°C
Shanghai 19°C~32°C	Bangkok 26°C~34°C	London 9°C~16°C	Rio de Janeiro 19°C~25°C
Hong Kong 24°C~28°C	Tokyo 15°C~22°C	Frankfurt 9°C~17°C	Luanda 21°C~25°C
Taipei 22°C~26°C	Singapore 25°C~31°C	Vancouver 10°C~18°C	Maputo 14°C~25°C
Guangzhou 23°C~30°C	Kuala Lumpur 25°C~34°C	Paris 8°C~19°C	Dili 23°C~31°C
Nanjing 19°C~33°C	Jakarta 23°C~34°C	Moscow 17°C~29°C	São Tomé 24°C~32°C
Guilin 19°C~30°C	Seoul 15°C~26°C	Las Vegas 25°C~40°C	Praia 20°C~29°C
Xi’an 18°C~32°C	Sydney 13°C~21°C	Monte Carlo 18°C~29°C	Bissau 24°C~35°C



1. Awe inspiring!

A general view shows a traditional house on a hillside on the outskirts of the Parun district in Afghanistan's Nuristan province yesterday. – AFP

2. Walking on the Earth

US rapper and producer Kanye West performs on stage during a concert at the Ataturk Olympic Stadium in Istanbul Türkiye as part of his tour "YE Live in Istanbul" on May 30. – AFP



3. Just how?

This photograph shows the first "T-Rex leather" bag on display ahead of its auction at the Hotel Drouot auction venue in Paris yesterday. Tomorrow, as part of its sale at the Hotel Drouot, Giquello will present the world's first bag made from T-Rex Leather, estimated at between €300,000 and €500,000. – AFP



4. Third eye

Visitors look at 'Transformable Face', part of the 'Game Room' area, during a preview of an exhibition dedicated to the late Argentinian artist Julio Le Parc, at the Tate Modern in London yesterday. The exhibition "Julio Le Parc: Light. Colour. Action" is the first major retrospective in a British museum of the Argentinean, one of the benchmarks of kinetic and optical art of the 20th Century, a pioneer in the use of light, movement and the participation of the viewer. – AFP

5. Light at the end of the tunnel!

People drive a car through the Zojila tunnel, India's longest road tunnel project connecting Jammu and Kashmir with the Ladakh region, in Minamarg, India yesterday. – AFP

6. 17 metres of colour

Sculptures featuring various Hindu deities, including Lord Ganesha (bottom), decorate the Gopuram (monumental tower) of the newly-inaugurated Sri Ganesha Hindu Temple in Berlin on Sunday. – AFP