



# State Council appoints Ng Wai Han secretary for economy & finance

## Ng has impressive record of senior civil service positions

Tony Wong

The State Council, upon the nomination by Macau Special Administrative Region (MSAR) Chief Executive Sam Hou Fai, has appointed Ng Wai Han as the MSAR's secretary for economy and finance, effective from yesterday.

Ng's appointment came after the position of the MSAR's secretary for economy and finance had been left vacant for two months following Anton Tai Kin Ip's resignation on April 16 this year. It had been less than 16 months since he took office as the secretary for economy and finance on December 20, 2024.

Ng had headed the Gaming Inspection and Coordination Bureau (DICJ) since May last year.

Xinhua released a dispatch yesterday morning about the Central People's Government's decision to appoint Ng as the MSAR's secretary for economy and finance, according to which the "State Council decided on June 10, 2026 to appoint Ng Wai Han as the secretary for economy and finance, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Basic Law

of the Macau Special Administrative Region of the People's Republic of China and upon the nomination by Macau Special Administrative Region Chief Executive Sam Hou Fai".

The Central People's Government shall appoint or remove the MSAR's chief executive, principal officials and prosecutor-general, according to Article 15 of the MSAR Basic Law.

According to the MSAR Basic Law's Article 50, the chief executive "nominates and reports to the Central People's Government for the appointment" of the MSAR's principal officials and prosecutor-general, and recommends to the Central People's Government their removal.

The MSAR's principal officials comprise the government's five policy secretaries, anti-graft commissioner, audit commissioner, head of the Unitary Police Service (SPU), and chief of the Macau Customs Service.

Ng joined the civil service in 1999 when she started to work for the Labour Affairs Bureau (DSAL), where she became a deputy director in June 2017.



Newly-appointed Secretary for Economy and Finance Ng Wai Han (left) is sworn in by Chief Executive Sam Hou Fai at Government Headquarters yesterday morning. – Photo: GCS

Continued on p.5

## Toothless Spain held by Cape Verde on World Cup debut



Cape Verde's goalkeeper Vozinha celebrates with his national flag at the end of the 2026 World Cup Group H match against Spain at the Atlanta Stadium in Atlanta yesterday. – AFP

ATLANTA – Spain's ghosts of recent World Cup horror shows reappeared in Atlanta as the European champions were held 0-0 by debutants Cape Verde in their opening game yesterday.

Lamine Yamal was left on the bench as the Barcelona superstar is eased back to fitness after nearly two months out with a hamstring injury and even his appearance as a second-half substitute failed to break down Cape Verde's dogged defence.

Since winning the World Cup for the first time in 2010, Spain have not won a knockout game and their inability to make

dominance of possession count was reminiscent of their meek exits in 2018 and 2022.

Blessed with what coach Luis de la Fuente claimed is the best squad in the competition, Spain were considered among the pre-tournament favourites to go all the way and lift the World Cup on July 19.

But the importance of Yamal and Nico Williams to their chances of success was underlined by a flat performance.

Williams also had an injury-disrupted season at Athletic Bilbao and was not introduced until the 87<sup>th</sup> minute.

Ranked 67 in the world, Cape

Verde were making their debut on the global stage and did a nation of just over 500,000 people proud.

In stark contrast to the searing temperatures faced by some other sides, Atlanta's state-of-the-art air-conditioned stadium meant there was no excuses for the slow tempo of Spain's build-up.

Indeed, the mid-half hydration break was met by boos with fans frustrated at the break in play despite the cool conditions.

It took until six minutes before half-time for Spain to seriously threaten.

Continued on p.13



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### US, Iran electronically sign MoU to end war

WASHINGTON –The United States and Iran have electronically signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) aimed at ending the war, US media reported early today (Macau time). (More on p.10) – AFP



### Starmer announces ban on social media for under-16s

Children under 16 will be banned from using social media in the UK, Prime Minister Keir Starmer announced yesterday, saying such platforms were making youngsters "unhappy". – Story on p. 11

### Cuban priests ordered to ration mass wafers

To the never-ending list of scarcities in Cuba comes a new addition: communion for the Catholic faithful. Priests said on Sunday they had been ordered to ration the small wafers intended to symbolise the body of Jesus Christ during Mass. – Story on p. 12

# FOUR CONTINENTS, ONE LANGUAGE: MEMORIES OF A BRIDGE BETWEEN PEOPLES

Commentary by Manuel Silvério\*

On Portugal Day, Camões Day and the Day of Portuguese Communities, we celebrate not only the history, culture and Portuguese language, but also the unique ability that this language continues to have to unite peoples, geographies and different civilisations.

In Macau, this reality found a particularly symbolic expression in October 2006, with the organisation of the first edition of the Lusofonia Games. Nearly 20 years later, I continue to regard that moment as one of the most significant affirmations of Macau as a platform for encounters between cultures.

Under the motto “Four continents, one language, united through sport”, the Games brought together young athletes from Asia, Africa, Europe and South America, demonstrating that the Portuguese language could be much more than a historical or cultural heritage. It could also be a human bridge.

## When Sport Brings People Together

At that time, Macau was also experiencing an important phase in its international affirmation, accompanying the strategic vision launched by Beijing through the Forum for Economic and Trade Cooperation between China and Portuguese-speaking Countries. Yet while economics brings markets closer together, sport brings people closer together.

And this is perhaps one of the most important forms of contemporary diplomacy.

## Silent Diplomacy

Throughout my life connected to the Lusophone sporting movement, I have learnt that sport possesses an extraordinary capacity to create silent understanding among different peoples. Before agreements exist, trust must exist. Before political cooperation, there must be human understanding. Sport creates precisely this space for coexistence, respect and rapprochement.

## More Than a Competition

The Lusofonia Games represented exactly that. They were not merely a sporting competition. They were a tangible expression of friendship among young people from different continents, cultures and social realities. They also demonstrated what Macau does best: welcoming, connecting and fostering dialogue.

## The Value of Volunteering

There is, however, another aspect of these Games that equally deserves to be remembered and valued.

During the preparation and staging of the event, Macau benefited from the significant participation of volunteers from different nationalities residing in the Macau SAR. Young people and adults, Chinese and Portuguese, Macanese and members of other communities came together with a remarkable spirit of dedication, commitment

and shared purpose.

More than simply supporting a sporting event, these volunteers felt that they were contributing to a collective project representing Macau before the world.

## The Legacy of Social Cohesion

This human involvement was perhaps one of the most beautiful legacies of the Lusofonia Games. During those days, the city’s cultural diversity became a genuine force for social cohesion. People from different backgrounds worked side by side, shared responsibilities, built friendships and demonstrated that Macau possesses a rare capacity for harmonious coexistence among cultures.

Perhaps this was one of the greatest legacies of the Games: showing that diversity, when experienced through participation and mutual respect, does not divide; it strengthens. And Macau demonstrated this in an exemplary manner.

## Macau’s Multicultural Identity

As a Macanese, I have always felt that Macau’s true wealth lies precisely in its multicultural identity. Macau belongs neither solely to the East nor to the West. It belongs to the meeting point between both. Perhaps that is why it continues to have a unique vocation for building bridges in an increasingly fragmented world.

## Leo: A Symbol of Macau

Even today, I remember the symbolism

of the mascot “Leo”, inspired by the Chinese zodiac sign of the Dog. The name had a similar pronunciation in Portuguese and Mandarin and, in Cantonese, resembled an expression welcoming people to Macau. It was a small detail, yet one that revealed the very soul of the city: different cultures finding natural ways to communicate and understand one another.

## Twenty Years Later

Twenty years later, the world has changed profoundly. We live in times marked by geopolitical tensions, international mistrust and new divisions. Perhaps for this reason, the values represented by the Lusofonia Games are even more relevant today.

I continue to believe that sport can play a decisive role in bringing peoples closer together, particularly among younger generations. Cultural, linguistic and sporting exchanges remain among the most effective ways of promoting friendship, sharing experiences and creating opportunities for the future.

Macau can still lead this path.

The Lusophone world remains relevant.

Sport remains universal.

And young people continue to need new bridges.

*\*Independent Sports Analyst and Regional Development Consultant*

*(Former public sports administrator with international experience and a longstanding commitment to public policy and sports development)*

## MGM transforms Spectacle into summer-themed ‘Garden Wonderland’

Khalel Vallo

Integrated resort MGM COTAI launched “MGM Spectacle: Garden Wonderland” yesterday, a summer-themed immersive attraction transforming the Spectacle canopy into a fantasy garden featuring live performances, aerial displays,

robotic installations, and interactive experiences.

The attraction combines dance performances, visual installations and interactive entertainment beneath the integrated resort’s indoor LED canopy. The venue has been decorated with oversized

mushrooms, blooming flowers, beetle houses and hydrangea\* displays, creating a fairytale-inspired setting for visitors.

Performers dressed as forest animals and garden fairies interact with guests throughout the day, while robotic ladybirds add technological elements to the production. Visitors can also participate in spontaneous musical activities using miniature instruments provided on-site.

According to a statement by MGM yesterday, the immersive show is staged daily at 1:00 p.m., 3:00 p.m., 4:30 p.m. and 6:00 p.m. as part of MGM’s year-round programme of seasonal

performances at the Spectacle.

In order to complement the attraction, several restaurants surrounding the Spectacle have introduced seasonal dining promotions – “Anytime” is offering a summer-themed afternoon tea set featuring desserts made with seasonal ingredients such as mango, peach, coconut and watermelon, alongside savoury selections.

Meanwhile, “Chún” has launched a wellness-focused summer menu featuring dishes including Eight-treasured Winter Melon Soup and Steamed Tiger Grouper with Chinese Olive Seeds.

Moreover, “Grill 58” continues to offer its weekend lunch menu

with three-course and four-course options highlighting woodfire grilling techniques.

The “Garden Wonderland” programme will continue through August 23, combining entertainment, interactive activities and seasonal dining experiences as MGM seeks to provide family-friendly summer attractions for residents and visitors. ■

*\* A hydrangea is a widely cultivated deciduous shrub native to Asia and the Americas. It is best known for its large, rounded clusters of showy flowers that typically bloom from mid-summer through autumn. – Gemini*



A robotic ladybird navigates through the crowd during yesterday's show at MGM COTAI.



Performers pose during yesterday's “MGM Spectacle: Garden Wonderland” under the Spectacle canopy at MGM COTAI.

– Photos: Khalel Vallo

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FORCE 3 TO 5 SOUTHWESTERLY  
WINDS WITH GUSTS.  
RELATIVE HUMIDITY  
WILL RANGE BETWEEN  
80% AND 99%.**



**25°C~29°C**

Source: SMG

# Taipa civic association vows to focus on greenery & flood control

Armindo Neves

Macau's Urban Planning Council (CPU) has recently released a revised version of the Taipa Northern Zone Urban Development Plan on the official website of the Lands and Urban Construction Bureau (DSSCU).

The updated blueprint aims to transform Taipa's northern district into a vibrant, multi-functional community suitable for living, tourism, and business. By integrating cultural preservation, green mobility, innovative industries and public spaces, the project seeks to enhance residents' quality of life and inject new development momentum into the region.

The aim of achieving green mobility, according to the plan, refers to the movement of people and goods using energy-efficient, low-impact modes of transport that reduce environmental degradation.

Last week, the *Post* interviewed Choi Seng Hon (徐承康) and Marquis Li (李永健), both vice presidents of the Associação Promotora para o Desenvolvimento da Comunidade da Taipa ("Taipa Community Development Promotion Association"), to gather their insights into the recently unveiled plan.

## 4 major adjustments: from profit to liveability

Both noted that, compared to the high-density development model proposed in the 2013 plan, the 2026 version represents a fundamental shift in philosophy. Instead of prioritising land revenue, the new vision establishes four primary goals: "liveability first, higher green space standards, a balance between housing and employment, and prioritised flood control."

The most direct reflection of this shift is a significant reduction in development scale. The planned population has been cut from 36,500 in the previous version to approximately 20,000, while the total planned floor area has been scaled back from 1.26 million square metres to 1.05 million square metres. This reduction lowers development intensity at the source, easing the long-term burden on local infrastructure.

Furthermore, Choi and Li highlighted that the blueprint moves away from the outdated approach of "building houses first and patching up drainage later," opting instead for a logic of "water management first, city building second."

Ecological conservation has also been upgraded from a secondary supporting element to a binding requirement. The plan



Associação Promotora para o Desenvolvimento da Comunidade da Taipa ("Taipa Community Development Promotion Association") Vice Presidents Choi Seng Hon (right) and Marquis Li pose at Cheok Ka Chun ("Cheong Family Village") in Taipa recently. – Photo courtesy of the association

includes a clear commitment to preserving 23 native old trees by designating a dedicated old tree park. Additionally, features like the newly introduced "skywalk 2.0", a designated "Research and Development (R&D) Cluster", and a temporary activation mechanism for vacant land will help Taipa's "Northern Zone" break away from a purely residential model, balancing immediate livelihood needs with long-term economic diversification, according to the plan cited by Choi and Li.

## Infrastructure concerns: simultaneous construction is key

"Although the plan has lowered the expected population, adding 20,000 residents will still pose a major challenge to the surrounding infrastructure," the vice presidents admitted frankly, noting that current facilities cannot accommodate such growth without upgrades.

The local government must adhere to the principle of 'simultaneous planning, simultaneous construction, and simultaneous occupation' to avoid repeating past mistakes where housing was built well ahead of supporting facilities, both said.

Taking transportation as an example, the areas surrounding Avenida de Guimaraes, Caminho das Hortas, and Taipa's old districts have long suffered from peak-hour traffic congestion, with the entrance to the Friendship Bridge acting as a major bottleneck. Choi and

Li emphasised that Taipa's road network will only be able to handle future demand once the eastward extension of Avenida de Guimaraes and the widening of the Caminho das Hortas branch road are completed.

Regarding social infrastructure, they recommended optimising nearby schools, adding nurseries and childcare facilities, upgrading the local health centre, and establishing community clinics. They also suggested reserving small plots of land near the old tree park for an elderly services centre.

## Flood control and conservation: 'water-first' win-win

To resolve the long-standing flooding issues plaguing Cheok Ka Chun ("Cheok Family Village"), Choi and Li said that cross-district drainage connectivity should be ensured before any major construction begins. Prioritising the dredging of blocked trunk channels in Cheok Ka Chun is essential to clear the bottleneck connecting to Taipa's main rainwater drainage network, both said.

They also recommended utilising the area's low-lying topography to build underground flood detention and storage facilities within planned green spaces, alongside a separate rainwater and sewage pipeline system. This would fundamentally upgrade the current system, which relies heavily on pumping stations to move sewage

Regarding whether preserving the 23 old

trees would restrict local development, both remained optimistic. Because the trees are scattered across various points, creating the old tree park would only require localised adjustments to small plots of land.

They noted that enhancing the green environment could actually increase the value of surrounding real estate, achieving a win-win scenario for both ecology and development. While tensions between conservation and urban growth are inevitable given Macau's limited land resources, they expressed confidence that the two can run in parallel if the government continues to pursue integrated solutions.

## Complex land ownership and R&D cluster

Land ownership in northern Taipa is highly fragmented, consisting of a mix of government, private, and religious plots. Choi and Li suggested that the authorities adopt a "phased and rolling development" model, moving forward with individual plots as they become legally and logistically available.

Government-owned land should be utilised first for infrastructure construction, which will naturally incentivise surrounding private landowners to participate in the wider development, both noted.

As for the "R&D Cluster" designed to align with the government's "1+4" strategy\*, both civic leaders recommended a "small-scale, point-based layout", i.e., space and location planning using specific point coordinates. They recommended focusing initially on niche sectors such as small-scale cultural and creative enterprises, digital micro-businesses, and the Big Health sector.

With housing and community services serving as the development's foundation, commercial and industrial investments can be more effectively attracted once the residential population is established and community facilities are fully operational. ■

\*According to previous reports by the *Post*, the government's "1+4" strategy aims to consolidate Macau's position as a "World Centre of Tourism and Leisure" (1) while proactively developing four emerging sectors (+4): Big Health (including traditional Chinese medicine); modern financial services (such as bond markets and FinTech); high-tech and innovation (specifically scientific research and the digital economy); and international conventions, exhibitions, and cultural and sports events.

## Sam attends Q&A in legislature this afternoon



This file photo taken last month shows residents entering the Legislative Assembly (AL) building, when the legislature held its Open Day. – Photo: Tony Wong

Tony Wong

The Government Information Bureau (GCS) reminded the public in a statement yesterday that Chief Executive Sam Hou Fai will attend a plenary session of the Legislative Assembly (AL) in its hemicycle this afternoon where he will review the local government's administration and governance over the past six months and present his governance team's key tasks and policy initiatives for the second half of this year.

During the plenary session, which will start at 3:00 p.m., Sam will also answer questions from lawmakers about Macau's socioeconomic issues and various other matters concerning residents' daily lives, according to the statement.

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

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

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

The public can also choose to view the official YouTube channels of the Chief Executive Office at [www.youtube.com/c/gcegovmo](http://www.youtube.com/c/gcegovmo) or the Government Information Bureau at [www.youtube.com/macagocs](http://www.youtube.com/macagocs), as well as the Government Information Bureau's Facebook page at [www.facebook.com/macagocs](http://www.facebook.com/macagocs).

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

The proceedings will be simultaneously translated from Cantonese to Portuguese. ■



# Alexandre Marreiros offers glimpse into decade of artistic exploration at FRC gallery

**Khalel Vallo**

A solo exhibition by local architect and visual artist Alexandre Marreiros is showcasing nearly five dozen works at Rui Cunha Foundation's (FRC) gallery that examine his creative process and artistic development over the past decade.

Titled "The Studio of Alexandre Marreiros: Drawing and Painting", the exhibition is on display as part of the "June – Month of Portugal in Macau SAR 2026" programme, according to a recent statement by FRC.

The exhibition features 48 artworks spanning a variety of media, including drawing, painting, photography, collage, screen printing, engraving, and mixed media. Produced on materials ranging from paper and canvas to aluminium, the collection presents a broad overview of Marreiros' artistic output while highlighting recurring themes and visual elements that have shaped his work over the last decade.

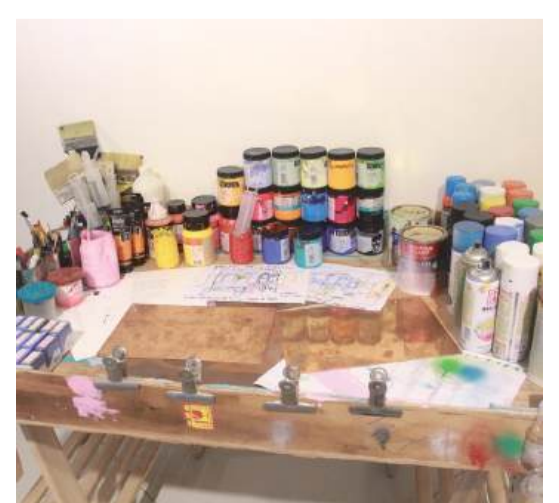
According to the exhibition's information board at the entrance of the gallery, the project functions as a visual essay, encouraging visitors to identify "aesthetic constants, conceptual ruptures and a visual lexicon" across different stages of the artist's career. Rather than following a chronological sequence, the exhibition groups pieces through thematic and formal connections, revealing continuities that might otherwise remain unnoticed.

The gallery space has also been transformed into a recreation of the artist's studio environment. Work tables, artistic tools, archival materials and other elements from Marreiros' creative workspace are incorporated into the display, allowing visitors to view each artwork not only as a finished piece but also as part of an ongoing process of observation, experimentation and development.

Born in Portugal, Marreiros lived in Portugal and Brazil before settling in Macau a decade ago. His artistic practice often explores themes related to human presence in urban environments, colour, texture, and the transformation of built spaces. Many of his works draw inspiration from locations ranging from Brazilian favelas (shantytowns) to Macau's rapidly evolving cityscape, the statement said.

"The Studio of Alexandre Marreiros: Drawing and Painting" will remain on display at FRC gallery through Saturday. With free admission, exhibitiongoers can visit the ground-floor venue at 749 Avenida da Praia Grande, Luen Pong Building, open Monday to Friday from 10 a.m. to 7 p.m., and from 3 p.m. to 7 p.m. on Saturdays.

*Photos: Khalel Vallo*



## State Council appoints Ng Wai Han secretary for economy & finance

Continued from p.1

Ng had been a deputy director of the Public Administration and Civil Service Bureau (SAFP) since June 2020 before being promoted to its director in September 2023.

The DSAL is overseen by the local government's Secretariat for Economy and Finance portfolio, while the SAFP is part of its Secretariat for Administration and Justice portfolio.

Ng returned to the government's Secretariat for Economy and Finance portfolio in May last year when she was appointed as the director of the Gaming Inspection and Coordination Bureau (DICJ).

Ng was sworn in by Sam yesterday morning as the secretary for economy and finance, according to a statement by the Government Information Bureau (GCS).

The oath-taking ceremony, which was held at Government Headquarters, was also attended by Legislative Assembly (AL) President André Cheong Weng Chon, Court of Final Appeal (TUI) President Song Man Lei, other principal officials of the MSAR government, members of the local government's top advisory Executive Council, and heads of government bureaux and other entities overseen by the Secretariat for Economy and Finance portfolio.

The GCS statement said that "after the national anthem of the People's Republic of China was played, Ng took her oath of office in the presence of Sam, in accordance with the provisions of the Law on Oath-taking".

Delivering a speech after being sworn in by Sam, Ng expressed her sincere gratitude to Sam for her nomination and to the Central People's Government for her appointment, according to a statement by the Secretariat for Economy and Finance.

The appointment, Ng said, represents



This file photo in August 2024 shows Ng Wai Han, the then director of the Public Administration and Civil Service Bureau (SAFP), addressing a press conference about the government's new e-services for applications for marriage and birth registrations via the Macao One Account app.

— Photo: Tony Wong

a vote of confidence but, above all, a responsibility. She said that she assumed the office of secretary for economy and finance with immense honour and profound respect.

Ng also thanked the Central People's Government and Sam for their trust and support.

The government did not invite the media to cover Ng's swearing-in ceremony.

According to the statement, Ng said that she is deeply aware that every decision made in the Secretariat for Economy and Finance portfolio is closely linked to Macau's future development and directly affects the daily lives of every family. In the face of the complexity and volatility of the current external economic environment, Ng said, she and her team, under Sam's leadership and guided by a problem-solving approach, will make every effort to deliver on various tasks and achieve governance objectives.

Ng pledged that the local government will vigorously promote and ensure the implementation of its ongoing plan to appropriately diversify Macau's economy, with the aim of enhancing its economic resilience.

Moreover, Ng said, the local government will ensure the implementation of the MSAR's 3<sup>rd</sup> Five-Year Plan, the draft of which is currently under a public consultation process, in close alignment with the nation's 15<sup>th</sup> Five-Year Plan.

"Nothing related to residents' well-being is insignificant", Ng said, adding that the fruits of economic development must, ultimately, translate into tangible benefits for all residents.

"The road ahead is full of challenges, but it also holds great opportunities", Ng said, pledging that she and her team will take the initiative to listen to views from all segments of Macau's civil society while performing all tasks with transparency, efficiency, and a sense of accountability.

Ng said she is confident that, with the joint efforts of all segments of civil society and all residents, Macau's economy will break new ground, moving forward to a higher level.

GCS yesterday also published a separate statement about Ng's CV.

Ng, born in 1976 in Macau, holds a bachelor's degree in Legal Studies and a master's degree in Criminal Law from Sun Yat-sen University in Guangzhou.

Ng joined the civil service in 1999 when she started to work for the Labour Affairs Bureau (DSAL). From November 2013, Ng successively served as head of the bureau's Research Division, head of the Labour and Employment Rights Division, and head of the Labour Inspection Department, before becoming a deputy director in June 2017.

Ng was appointed as a deputy director of the Public Administration and Civil Service Bureau (SAFP) in June 2020 before being promoted to its director in September 2023. She was appointed as the director of the Gaming Inspection and Coordination Bureau (DICJ) in May last year. ■

## 25,000 bait stations eliminate 2,894 rats in 2025: IAM



This undated file photo provided by directly-elected lawmaker-cum-unionist Ella Lei Cheng I yesterday shows her speaking in the Legislative Assembly's (AL) hemicycle.

Armindo Neves

The Macau Municipal Affairs Bureau (IAM) has outlined the "effectiveness" of its rodent control efforts and the measures in place.

The bureau elaborated on the efforts in its formal reply to a written interpellation raised by directly-elected lawmaker-cum-unionist Ella Lei Cheng I.

The bureau replied on April 29 to Lei's written interpellation she had submitted on April 4 about the government's rodent control and monitoring measures. The reply was released by Lei's office to the media yesterday.

The reply was signed by the bureau's acting president, Mak Kim Meng, who has worked as a civil service for 30 years and is retiring this month.

In its reply, the bureau said that Macau has been divided into 25 rodent control zones, each subject to intensive rat control operations, no fewer than three times a year, with each operation lasting five weeks.

These operations focus on areas such as flowerbeds, green belts, riverbanks, and drainage outfalls, the reply said, adding that last year a total of 25,000 rat baiting points were deployed.

According to the reply, the number of fixed rat bait boxes on public streets has increased from about 1,000 in 2020 to around 1,500 currently, covering streets across all districts. In 2025, IAM workers eliminated 2,894 rats, accounting for 11.5 percent of the total number of rat baiting points set up at that time.

To scientifically evaluate the effectiveness of its operations, the bureau said that it has commissioned third-party academic institutions to conduct sample surveys on rodent infestation in public places since 2019, in accordance with national standards and survey methods.

The bureau said that the results in recent years indicate that rodent infestation in public places has generally been maintained at a reasonably "well-controlled level."

The bureau noted that ageing building facilities, accumulated clutter, improper waste disposal and food remnants left from feeding animals are all factors that can easily lead to rodent infestations.

The reply said that IAM has already introduced electronic management for inspections of rat bait boxes on public streets, using an information system to

record inspection data, thereby providing a scientific basis for analysing rodent activity patterns in different districts.

In areas where rodent activity is high, the bureau will, based on inspection data, implement targeted prevention and control measures, the reply said, adding that it will also continue to monitor rodent control practices in other regions and, at an appropriate time, consider introducing new technologies, methods and equipment.

In the reply, the Municipal Affairs Bureau also emphasised that it consistently adheres to the principle of "prevention first, elimination second" in rodent control.

The bureau will continue to raise public awareness of rodent prevention and control through initiatives such as the "City cleanup campaign", community outreach, thematic exhibitions, rodent control information booths and sanitation inspections of low-rise buildings, the reply said, adding that, at the same time, the bureau is holding rodent prevention workshops and specialised training sessions for the property management, cleaning, catering, and construction industries, and also has developed rodent prevention guidelines, with the aim of strengthening these sectors' primary responsibility and practical capabilities in this area.

### Vacant land in Taipa becomes a rat den

Meanwhile, a report by the *Macao Daily News* yesterday indicated that several parcels of idle government land near the Nova Grand building in Taipa are heavily overgrown with weeds and littered with rubbish, leading to a serious rodent problem, with rats entering nearby residential buildings and schools, affecting residents' daily lives and public health safety.

The Municipal Affairs Bureau has placed rat bait boxes as a follow-up measure, but residents feel that this only treats the symptoms, failing to tackle the root cause.

*Macao Daily News'* reporters interviewed Lam Ka Chun, vice president of the Associação Promotora para o Desenvolvimento da Comunidade da Taipa ("Taipa Community Development Promotion Association"), who has suggested that the authorities convert the relevant sites into temporary sports grounds as soon as possible, in order to eliminate the rodent problem at its source while also increasing recreational space in the district. ■

## HK's visitor arrivals up 14 pct in first 5 months

HONG KONG – Hong Kong recorded approximately 23 million visitor arrivals in the first five months of 2026, up 14 percent year on year, the Hong Kong Tourism Board announced yesterday.

From January to May, visitor arrivals

from the Chinese mainland reached 17.67 million, representing a year-on-year increase of 16 percent.

In May alone, visitor arrivals reached approximately 4.46 million, up 9 percent compared with the same period last year. — *Xinhua*

# China deploys first 24-hour rapid intensification forecast model for typhoons

SHENZHEN – The deployment of a new 24-hour rapid intensification forecast model for typhoons and its 12-hour rapid intensification forecast service now offer China significantly enhanced forecasting performance, according to Shenzhen-based researchers.

The model, developed at the Shenzhen Institutes of Advanced Technology (SIAT), Chinese Academy of Sciences, recently completed operational deployment and real-world application testing at the country's National Meteorological Center.

In meteorology, a typhoon is defined as undergoing rapid intensification when its maximum sustained wind speed increases by more than 15 meters per second within 24 hours, or by more than 10 meters per second within 12 hours.

The weather events can be highly destructive. Typhoons such as Rammasun in 2014, Hato in 2017, and Yagi in 2024 all underwent rapid intensification before landfall, causing significant casualties and economic losses.

In 2025, forecasting typhoon rapid intensification was selected as one of the top 10 frontier scientific problems by the China Association for Science and Technology.

The new model, "Machine Learning Ensemble Model for Tropical Cyclone Rapid Intensification Forecast," was developed by the SIAT team led by Li Qinglan.

According to Li, the evolution of typhoon intensity is controlled by multiple interacting factors that include inner-core structure, environmental background and land-sea surface interactions, making accurate forecast extremely difficult.

Conventional statistical-dynamical methods

also fail to capture the nonlinear characteristics of intensity changes. As a result, forecasting typhoon intensity, especially rapid intensification, remains a persistent challenge in the field.

To solve this, the team established two quantitative indices – the sea-land ratio, which captures variations in land-sea distribution along a typhoon track, and the symmetric ratio, which describes inner-core convective symmetry. The indices reveal physical links between inner-core symmetry and rapid intensification.

"Prior to rapid intensification, a typhoon's inner core typically develops a highly symmetric ring-like structure. A more symmetric inner core indicates a higher likelihood of rapid intensification occurrence," Li explained.

As part of this innovation, the research team integrated four machine-learning algorithms into an ensemble forecast model. When more than half of the sub-models predict rapid intensification, the system issues a rapid intensification forecast, effectively improving forecast accuracy.

The team tested the new model by simulating 24-hour rapid intensification events of tropical cyclones in the North Atlantic from 2016 to 2020 and compared its performance with the operational forecast system from the US National Hurricane Center. The results showed that the new model achieved a higher probability of detection and a lower false alarm rate, demonstrating enhanced forecasting performance and operational viability.

The National Meteorological Center's senior engineer Lyu Xinyan said 24-hour rapid intensification forecast technology now provides an important reference for China's typhoon intensity forecasting. – Xinhua

# Chinese firms reshape global industrial cooperation as overseas footprint grows

## Analysis

BEIJING – "A great economic and industrial opportunity." This is how Maria Jesus Lorenzana, regional minister of economy and industry of Spain's Galicia, described a planned electric vehicle factory project by Chinese automaker SAIC Motor in the region, which could become the company's first such facility in Europe.

Hailed as one of the "most significant industrial investments Galicia has seen in decades," the project is expected to involve an initial investment of about 200 million euros and create over 2,300 jobs with an annual capacity of approximately 120,000 vehicles, local authorities announced earlier this month.

Beyond investment, officials see the project, which will also include an industrial zone for vehicle assembly and transportation, as a catalyst for broader industrial development. Lorenzana said it could help foster advanced manufacturing, expand local component supply and strengthen logistics capabilities in a region with a long automotive tradition.

Such optimism is not without precedent. In Barcelona, a partnership between Chinese automaker Chery and Spanish brand Ebro has brought a former Nissan plant in the Zona Franca industrial zone back to life, which sat idle for years after the Japanese auto manufacturer's 2021 exit left local workers waiting for reemployment opportunities.

Rather than erasing a local brand, the partnership is built around it. Chery brought its manufacturing expertise while Ebro retained its Spanish identity, with part of production carried out under the Ebro brand. The joint venture has employed at least 1,000 workers and has been rolling out new-energy vehicles tailored to the European market since 2024.

"Thanks to cooperation among institutions, unions, investors and Chery, we are giving life to a new generation of vehicles that blend historical legacy with innovation," said Rafael Ruiz, president of Ebro EV Motors.

These developments come amid recurring concern that the overseas expansion of Chinese companies could intensify competition in global markets. Industry experts, however, say Chinese companies are increasingly acting not only as investors and manufacturers, but also as partners in job creation, industrial upgrading and economic transformation.

By the end of 2025, China had more than 50,000 overseas enterprises operating across 190 countries and regions, according to the commerce ministry. In 2024 alone, overseas Chinese companies generated a combined revenue of US\$3.6 trillion and paid US\$82.1 billion in taxes to host economies, while employing 5.02 million people at year-end, of whom about two-thirds were local hires.

A structural shift is also underway: a survey report by the National Autonomous University of Mexico, for instance, revealed that the share of manufacturing in China's direct investment in Latin America and the Caribbean had risen sharply from 1.94 percent in 2000-2004 to 25.82 percent in 2020-2025.

Meanwhile, greenfield investments, which build new facilities and generate more jobs per transaction, have increased from less than a quarter of Chinese

investment in the region during 2015-2019 to more than half in 2020-2025, reflecting a deeper and more productive engagement with host economies, the survey found.

Wei Jianguo, China's former vice minister of commerce, said outbound Chinese firms have moved beyond isolated factories and standalone projects toward industrial clusters, coordinated supply chains and localized operations.

Increasingly, a model combining "Chinese technology, global creation and local services" is gaining traction in host countries as companies deepen integration with local economies and development strategies, Wei noted.

In Thailand's Eastern Economic Corridor, an air-conditioner factory of Chinese home appliance giant Midea Group rolls out a finished unit every six seconds for markets across Southeast Asia, Europe and North America, with annual capacity exceeding five million units.

Such scale is made possible by a 5G-enabled production network, autonomous mobile robots and advanced digital management systems, which helped the facility earn recognition as a World Economic Forum-certified "lighthouse factory" in 2025, a designation for manufacturers that excel in deploying advanced technologies.

The factory has established partnerships with 691 local suppliers, and 97.8 percent of its workforce comes from Southeast Asia, according to Midea. It built an AI-powered training system for local employees to tackle language barriers, and cut energy consumption per unit by 40.2 percent and carbon emissions by 68.3 percent via a solar microgrid.

"Through cooperation with Chinese companies, we have learned the application experience of 5G new technology," said Asnee Wipatawate, an executive at Thai mobile operator AIS, which helped build a dedicated 5G network for Midea, while expecting to apply this experience to help more Thai companies in their digital transformation process.

In the digital sphere, the role of Chinese companies is becoming more visible. In Kenya, a digital payment platform built with Chinese technology has reached around 70 percent of its adult population, promoting financial inclusion while helping small businesses and rural communities participate in the digital economy.

Chinese cloud and AI providers are also expanding their footprint, particularly in emerging markets, giving local businesses access to digital infrastructure that was previously out of reach. As of January, Alibaba's Qwen family of AI models had recorded 700 million downloads on the Hugging Face collaborative AI platform, making it the most popular open-source AI system worldwide.

China's expanding overseas corporate presence is likely to shape the next phase of globalization, said Wei, who expects the global trade and investment landscape to become more balanced and inclusive in the future.

"Chinese companies are evolving from participants to pacesetters, and from simply going abroad to becoming more deeply integrated into local economies," he said. "In doing so, they are writing a new chapter in their globalization journey."

– Xinhua



A Lijian-1 Y14 carrier rocket blasts off from a commercial space innovation pilot zone in Jiuquan City, Gansu Province, yesterday. The rocket blasted off at 11:44 a.m. from the zone and successfully sent eight satellites into the planned orbit. – Xinhua

# China hopes for early resumption of safe, free passage in Strait of Hormuz

BEIJING – China hopes the safe and free passage in the Strait of Hormuz can be resumed as soon as possible, a foreign ministry spokesperson said yesterday, adding China is ready to maintain communication with regional countries and the international community on relevant issues.

Spokesperson Lin Jian made the remarks at a daily press briefing in response to a related

query, adding that China has noticed the reopening of the Strait was included in the first phase of the memorandum of understanding finalized between Iran and the United States.

The Strait of Hormuz is an important strait for international navigation. Restoring stability in the Strait serves the common interests of regional countries and the international community, Lin added. – Xinhua

## China's AI, robotics make splash from nearshore to open sea

### Analysis

JINAN – Ten meters below the ocean surface off Wuzhizhou Island of the south China island province of Hainan, a small robotic inspector glided silently among branching corals. Seen via its cameras were hawksbill turtles, parrotfish and a reefscape that, a decade ago, was nearly dead.

The island's marine ranch once faced coral collapse. Since 2010, artificial reefs have helped restore this habitat, but monitoring it had remained a problem.

"We used to rely on manual diving. It's inefficient and risky," said Wang Aimin, a professor at Hainan University and chief scientist of the Hainan Provincial Engineering Research Center for Modern Marine Ranching.

The turning point came through collaboration with Robotfish, a marine technology firm based in Qingdao, a coastal city in China's eastern Shandong Province.

Its underwater robot can operate for hours with minimal disturbance, capturing close-up, multi-angle images of coral health. Today, seven information monitoring stations form a round-the-clock surveillance network in this area of Hainan, tracking water temperature, salinity and live reef activity.

"If something goes wrong, we can act immediately," Wang said.

China's homegrown marine "black tech," from intelligent robots to ocean AI models, is rapidly entering real-world applications such as ecological protection, disaster forecasting and shipping services, as the country steps up efforts to strengthen marine strategic science and technology and promote intelligent and digital transformation in the marine sector.

Monitoring a coral reef is benign compared to what the ocean can throw at a machine. GPS signals do not penetrate seawater. Pressure rises one atmosphere every 10 meters. Biofouling, corrosion and unpredictable currents degrade equipment within weeks.

One cannot simply adapt land-based tech, but must rebuild it from first principles, said Wang Fan, director of the Institute of Oceanology under the Chinese Academy of Sciences (IOCAS).

Wang Fan added that the ocean remains one of the least instrumented places on the planet, while marine data is sparse and expensive to collect.

This is precisely the logic behind a new wave of marine AI models being developed in coastal hubs like Qingdao, also known as the "capital of marine science" in China, for hosting nearly one-third of the country's high-level marine research institutions.

At a recent Digital Earth conference held there, the IOCAS on June 6 unveiled LangYa 2.0, an ocean AI model that forecasts typhoons, precipitation, sea ice, storm surges, internal solitary waves and mesoscale eddies.

This new model's six vertical models put predictions into forms that policymakers and coastal residents can actually use.

The engineering model behind LangYa 2.0 correctly predicted

several sudden-turning typhoons last year, improving 24-hour forecast accuracy by more than 10 percent, said Wang Fan.

"With lightweight versions of large models, we can deploy them locally. That offers a low-cost forecasting option for less developed countries and regions," he said.

The IOCAS also plans to carry out collaborative research with more countries and regions within the framework of the United Nations Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development (2021-2030), he noted.

If AI helps humans understand the sea, intelligent robots provide sharp "eyes" and dexterous "hands and feet" to see and move beneath the waves.

In the Strait of Malacca, one of the world's busiest shipping lanes, multiple fourth-generation underwater cleaning robots from ZhiZhen Marine Science and Technology (Weihai) Co., Ltd. in Shandong Province are scraping barnacles and algae off vessel hulls.

"Biofouling increases drag and fuel consumption, and can shorten a ship's lifespan. Traditional manual cleaning is inefficient, risky and no longer fits modern shipping," said Qin Mingda, head of the company's cleaning robot project.

ZhiZhen's robots operate at depths of up to 150 meters, cleaning 2,000 square meters per hour, work which would have required four skilled divers. In 2025, these robots cleaned over a thousand ships in Malacca waters, becoming the only type of equipment capable of stable operation there, according to Qin.

"Singapore clients keep ordering as many units as we can make," he revealed.

Such niche breakthroughs, however, do not scale by themselves. They demand policy coordination and this is exactly what China's central government has set out to provide.

China has made marine technology a national strategic priority as its marine economy had exceeded 11 trillion yuan in 2025, up 5.5 percent year on year. In March, a senior National Development and Reform Commission official, Yuan Da, told a State Council briefing that China's 15<sup>th</sup> Five-Year plan (2026-2030) dedicates a separate chapter to improving maritime capabilities and accelerating the construction of maritime power.

Yuan laid out priorities including strengthening marine strategic science and technology to promote innovation-driven growth, and promoting digital and intelligent transformation in the marine sector.

The Ministry of Natural Resources has echoed this urgency, calling in March for "using green and digital-intelligent technologies to transform and upgrade traditional marine industries."

For Qin, ZhiZhen is not resting on its market success. A fifth-generation cleaning robot is now being tested, with optimized designs for better cleaning efficiency and sea-state adaptability. "Innovation is the key to go deeper in the sea," he said. —Xinhua

## Mongolia, China should continue strengthening trust, support to maintain correct direction of bilateral ties: Wang Yi

ULAN BATOR – Mongolia and China should continue strengthening mutual trust and support to maintain the correct direction of bilateral ties, said visiting Foreign Minister Wang Yi here yesterday.

In a meeting with Mongolian Prime Minister Nyam-Osor Uchral, Wang, who is also a member of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Committee, said both sides should maintain mutual trust and support as strong guarantees for collaboration across various sectors.

During the meeting, Uchral emphasized that maintaining good-neighborly relations with China and strengthening bilateral cooperation remain Mongolia's top foreign policy priorities. He noted that Mongolia and China have consistently respected each other's independence, sovereignty, territorial integrity, and chosen paths of development.

Uchral reaffirmed Mongolia's firm adherence to the one-China principle, stating that matters related to Taiwan, Xinjiang, Xizang, and Hong Kong are China's internal affairs. He underscored that the Government of the People's Republic of China is the sole legitimate government representing all of China and reiterated Mongolia's opposition to "Taiwan independence."

The prime minister expressed Mongolia's willingness to work closely with China to effectively implement the important consensus reached by the two heads of state, maintain high-level exchanges, deepen political mutual trust, enhance connectivity, advance cooperation agreements and major projects, and promote the continued development of the Mongolia-China comprehensive strategic partnership.



Mongolian Prime Minister Nyam-Osor Uchral (right) shakes hands with visiting Foreign Minister Wang Yi, also a member of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Committee, in Ulan Bator, Mongolia, yesterday. —Xinhua

Describing China as Mongolia's most important economic and trading partner, Uchral noted that bilateral trade is expected to reach the target of US\$20 billion this year.

He expressed hope that both sides would introduce additional measures to facilitate trade, diversify trade structures, strengthen connectivity through infrastructure projects such as ports and railways, and expand cooperation in the mining sector.

He also stated that Mongolia is committed to providing a more business-friendly and law-based environment for Chinese enterprises investing in the country.

For his part, Wang said China highly appreciates Mongolia's commitment to prioritizing relations with China in its foreign policy and its support for China's positions on issues concerning its core interests.

He noted that the CPC and the Mongolian People's Party could further enhance exchanges on governance and development

experience, thereby contributing to national development, improving people's livelihoods, and deepening the traditional friendship between the two countries.

Wang added that development and national revitalization are shared goals of both China and Mongolia, while stronger cooperation reflects the common aspirations of both peoples. Given the strong complementarity of the two economies and their shared interests, he said there remains significant potential for expanded cooperation.

China, he said, is willing to strengthen the alignment of development strategies with Mongolia, jointly advance high-quality Belt and Road cooperation, and support Mongolia in making full use of bilateral cooperation mechanisms, as well as regional platforms such as China-Mongolia-Russia cooperation and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, in pursuing a modernization path suited to its national conditions. —Xinhua

## Li Qiang calls for strengthening implementation of functional zoning strategy

BEIJING – Premier Li Qiang yesterday called for efforts to coordinate and optimize the spatial layouts of agricultural, ecological and urban spaces, and further improve the country's functional zoning system.

Li made the remarks while presiding over a State Council group study session on strengthening the implementation of the functional zoning strategy and promoting coordinated regional development.

These efforts should promote the formation of a new pattern for the development and protection of territorial space featuring clearly defined functions, complementary strengths and high-quality development,

providing strong support for promoting coordinated regional development and optimizing the layout of major productive forces, said Li.

Li said efforts should be made to optimize functional zoning and make spatial governance more targeted and refined, while improving the policy and institutional system suited to functional zoning to guide different regions in pursuing differentiated and coordinated development.

Stressing that the coordinated regional development strategy, major regional strategies and the new urbanization strategy are all major strategies based on territorial space, Li called for

efforts to promote the coordinated implementation and integration of the functional zoning strategy with other major national strategies.

Li also stressed the need to improve implementation mechanism for the functional zoning strategy, strengthen coordination among departments and localities, improve supporting systems, enhance policy integration, and form greater synergy in this work.

At the session, Fan Jie, an academician of the Chinese Academy of Sciences, gave a lecture. Vice Premiers He Lifeng and Liu Guozhong and State Councilor Shen Yiqin also delivered speeches.

—Xinhua

## 6.2 magnitude quake strikes off southern Philippines

MANILA – A 6.2 magnitude earthquake struck off the southern Philippines yesterday, the US Geological Survey (USGS) said, a week after a stronger quake in the same region killed at least 65 people.

The quake hit off the coast of Mindanao island at 5:18 p.m. [local time] at a depth of 112 kilometres, the USGS reported. The national seismology agency said no tsunami warning was issued.

There were no immediate reports of injuries or damage, Kaiser Cadiz, of the Davao Oriental provincial disaster office, told AFP, calling it a “moderate” quake.

“Our priority now is to monitor the coast to determine if there are indications the water had receded (an indicator of an impending tsunami),” she said, adding that none had been observed so far.

The 7.8 magnitude tremor that hit

Mindanao on June 8 brought down buildings, triggered landslides and displaced thousands on the southern island, while also setting off tsunami warnings across the region.

A series of powerful aftershocks rocked the area from about two hours after the first quake, including a 6.5 magnitude tremor.

The national disaster agency raised the death toll from that quake to 65 yesterday, with at least 36 still missing.

The environment department said on Sunday the June 8 quake had also forced the seabed upwards by two metres in one coastal area, pushing previously submerged coral above the water and extending the shoreline by as much as 200 metres.

Earthquakes are a near-daily occurrence in the Philippines, which is situated on the Pacific “Ring of Fire”, an arc of intense seismic activity stretching from

Japan through Southeast Asia and across the Pacific basin.

The Cotabato Trench, which lies as close as 50 kilometres off the coast of southern Mindanao, is the site of frequent seismic activity, including a “swarm” of thousands of mostly small earthquakes recorded in January.

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

## Starbucks Korea to close outlets for history lesson after ‘Tank Day’ fiasco

SEOUL – Starbucks stores across South Korea will shutter for half a day next week for staff to attend a history lesson following a disastrous promotional campaign that evoked a deadly 1980 crackdown, the coffee giant said yesterday.

The chairman of Shinsegae Group, which operates Starbucks under a licensing agreement, and other senior executives will sit for a similar lesson two days later.

Starbucks Korea, with more than 2,000 stores nationwide, found itself embroiled in public uproar last month when it ran a “Tank Day” promotion evoking a deadly military crackdown on a 1980 pro-democracy uprising.

The day of the reusable cup promotion – May 18 – coincided with the 46th anniversary of the Gwangju uprising in which 165 civilians were killed, according to

the official toll, though many believe the real figure to be much higher.

South Korea is the company’s third largest market after the United States and China.

Shinsegae Group fired its Korea chief executive the very day news of the scandal broke, and apologised.

Yesterday, the company said its chairman Chung Yong-jin “is set to undergo training alongside the CEOs of each affiliate” on Wednesday next week.

Two days earlier, all employees at Starbucks Korea stores will “receive education in historical awareness and social sensitivity through watching videos”.

Stores countrywide will shutter at 3:00 p.m. [local time] for three hours of training and will not reopen – the first such simultaneous closure since Starbucks opened in South Korea in 1999.

The only exclusion will be for a handful of outlets at airports, a Shinsegae representative told AFP.

The group said it had identified a series of negligent acts leading up to the promotion, including officials signing off without checking the design file.

There had also been no legal review.

Koo Jeong-woo, a professor at Sungkyunkwan University who will lead part of the training, told AFP he plans to explain the “meaning of social sensitivity” among other topics.

The controversy, which sparked protests in Seoul and Gwangju, sparked a “sharp decline in sales” in the early days of the scandal, according to the operator.

President Lee Jae Myung had expressed outrage “by this inhumane and disgraceful conduct” on X amid the backlash. – AFP

## Study finds copper drug restores memory, cuts toxic Alzheimer’s proteins

MELBOURNE – Researchers in Australia have found that a drug which delivers copper to the brain significantly reduces toxic Alzheimer’s proteins and improves long-term spatial memory in laboratory experiments.

The study shows Cu(ATSM), a brain-penetrating copper compound that helps clear toxic proteins, repairs a vital waste-clearing pump at the blood-brain barrier, opening a new avenue for treating neurovascular dysfunction caused by Alzheimer’s and other dementias, Australia’s leading cause of death, according to a statement from Australia’s Monash University released yesterday.

In Alzheimer’s disease, this

system, driven by P-glycoprotein (P-gp) pumps, becomes impaired, allowing toxic amyloid-beta proteins to build up in the brain, researchers said.

The findings, published in *ACS Chemical Neuroscience*, establish a strong foundation for exploring biometal therapies such as Cu(ATSM) to combat blood vessel dysfunction and memory loss in Alzheimer’s disease.

Lead author Jae Pyun, lecturer at Monash Institute of Pharmaceutical Sciences (MIPS), said the treatment successfully engages the brain’s blood vessels to lower toxic protein levels, resulting in behavioral benefits.

The study showed that Cu(ATSM) increased P-gp levels by 24.1 percent

in an Alzheimer’s model, “effectively linking the repair of the blood-brain barrier to a reduction in toxic proteins and improved cognitive function,” Pyun said.

“By improving the pumps, the brain can finally clear out the trapped waste. Over 56 days, the treatment reduced toxic amyloid-beta by 42 percent and improved spatial learning by nearly 44 percent,” he added.

Senior author Professor Joseph Nicolazzo at MIPS said Cu(ATSM), a copper compound with anti-inflammatory and neuroprotective properties, has already been tested safely in clinical trials for Parkinson’s and ALS, potentially speeding its path to Alzheimer’s human studies. – Xinhua

## Thai Navy announces seizure of over 6 million meth pills on Mekong River border

BANGKOK – The Royal Thai Navy yesterday announced the seizure of over 6 million methamphetamine tablets smuggled across the northern border along the Mekong River, according to the government’s public relations department.

Royal Thai Navy Spokesperson Rear Admiral Paraj Ratanajaipan said that the Mekong Riverine Unit received intelligence about an

attempt to smuggle narcotics into the kingdom on Sunday, and operational forces were promptly deployed to monitor the tracked area.

During the operation, officers observed a boat from a neighboring country docked along the Mekong River bank. Items were thrown ashore before the boat quickly departed. Officers, together with local security and administrative

agencies, then inspected the area.

The inspection uncovered 17 sacks containing Category 1 narcotics. Although the perpetrators escaped across the border, law enforcement secured the contraband and collected forensic evidence. The seized narcotics were transferred to investigators at the local police station for further legal action. – Xinhua



Students protest against a rise in non-subsidised fuel prices and call on the authorities to halt the free school meals programme (MBG), in Surabaya, Indonesia yesterday. – AFP

## Cambodian opposition politician appeals conviction

PHNOM PENH – An outspoken Cambodian opposition politician asked the country’s highest court yesterday to overturn his four-year jail term for incitement to cause social unrest.

Nation Power Party adviser Rong Chhun was convicted of the offence last year, sentenced to prison and banned from voting and holding office.

The charge is frequently used by Cambodian authorities against activists. The case was brought against him in 2024 after he met victims of land disputes and commented on Prime Minister Hun Manet’s visit to the border area with Vietnam.

An appeals court upheld his conviction earlier this year, and the Supreme Court heard his further appeal yesterday.

About 200 supporters rallied outside the building.

“We hope that the court will render justice to me and will give

me freedom so that I can continue my political life in the future,” Rong Chhun told the crowd after the hearing.

The court will issue its ruling on Friday, he added.

He was “not worried” about going to prison if he lost the appeal, he said, adding that as “an opposition party, we always meet obstacles”.

Rong Chhun was previously sentenced to two years in jail in August 2021, but was released three months later by an appeals court.

Rights groups have long accused Cambodia’s government of using legal cases as a tactic to silence opposition voices and legitimate political dissent.

Opposition leader Kem Sokha, who had been sentenced to 27 years for treason, was pardoned last month, but his political rights including holding office and voting remain revoked. – AFP



Revellers dance during a performance by South Korean indie rock band “Peace Truck Hijackers” at the DMZ Peace Train Festival in Cheorwon near the North Korean border on Sunday. – AFP



Pakistanis participate in the Chinese Dragon Boat Festival, organised under a cultural exchange between the two countries, in Pakistan's Charsadda on Sunday.

— AFP

## UN renews Afghan mission for one year

UNITED NATIONS, US — The United Nations Security Council voted unanimously yesterday to renew the organisation's UNAMA mission in Afghanistan despite questions about its objectives and methods from Washington.

The UN mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), key to coordinating aid in the country, was extended for a full year to June 17, 2027 according to a copy of the resolution seen by AFP.

In March the mission's mandate was extended by just three months at the behest of the United States which argued that the United Nations needed to do a broader review of the mission before committing to longer extension.

The resolution adopted yesterday requires "a strategic review of UNAMA and... a written report on the results to the Council by March 31, 2027."

"A streamlined, fit-for-purpose

UNAMA mandate is essential. We look forward to the strategic review of the mission requested in this resolution," said the US representative to the meeting.

The UNAMA mission dates back to 2002 and since the Taliban returned to power in 2021 with the fall of the US-backed government, it has played a role in coordinating humanitarian aid and political dialog, plus monitoring human rights.

The resolution adopted yesterday expressed "serious concern about the increasing and widespread erosion of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, in particular for women and girls."

"The resolution demonstrates firm support for the work of UNAMA, the resolution maintains and strengthens UNAMA's core mandate, including coordinating international assistance," said Fu Cong, UN ambassador of China which submitted the resolution.

— AFP

## Police mistakenly shoot, kill Australian child in Pakistan

LAHORE — Police shot and killed an Australian child in eastern Pakistan, authorities said, with Canberra calling yesterday for an investigation into the incident that also wounded two of the girl's family members.

Police in Pakistan's most populous eastern province, Punjab, said that officers responding to a robbery exchanged fire with the suspects who were holding the passengers of a family's car at gunpoint last Wednesday.

"In the ensuing chaos, the officer involved mistakenly assessed that the suspects were attempting to flee in the victims' vehicle and discharged his weapon," said the Punjab Police's Crime Control Department in a statement on Sunday.

"This erroneous decision resulted in the tragic death of 10-year-old Hania and injuries to her father and brother," it added.

Punjab police said they had registered a criminal complaint from the victim's father and had arrested the officer involved, who appeared before a court and was remanded in custody.

Australian media reported the family, from the western city of Perth, were visiting relatives in Pakistan when the incident took place.

Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese — who said the child killed was nine years old — told journalists that his government "expects there to be transparency and a proper investigation of these circumstances."

"My understanding is that not only has a young girl lost her life but there have been other members of the family injured as well in circumstances which are dire indeed," he said.

Australia's foreign affairs ministry said it was providing assistance to the family of an Australian citizen who been killed and two others injured.

Punjab Police said it was conducting "a thorough, impartial investigation to ensure that justice is served."

"We are deeply saddened by this tragedy. While our personnel operate in high-risk environments, there is no justification for a departure from our protocols," it added.

— AFP

## Nepal tea factories halt after India's testing rules

KATHMANDU — Nepali tea producers temporarily shut down dozens of processing factories yesterday following stiffer quality testing requirements by India, causing disruptions to the country's exports.

About 86 percent of Nepal's tea exports are sent to India, according to the National Tea and Coffee Development Board.

In May, India made quality testing mandatory for Nepali tea imports, stopping sales until samples are inspected. The move created a backlog, meaning that storage is full at many sites.

"This new situation impacts on Nepal's tea export cycle, affecting everyone from farmers and factory workers to the broader country's economy," said Deepak Khanal, director of the National Tea and Coffee Development Board.

Gopal Kattel, general secretary at the Suryodaya Orthodox Tea

Producers Association, told AFP that more than 50 factories were forced to close because sales have paused and storage facilities had reached maximum capacity.

"More than 200,000 kilograms of Nepali tea already shipped in India are stranded in warehouses because of prolonged testing procedures, and over 900,000 kilograms are piled in the factories here," Kattel said.

Kattel said that other factories may also have to close.

The eastern Himalayan foothills, particularly Ilam, is one of the country's oldest and most important tea-growing regions.

The association warned that the disruption could have a significant financial impact on more than 3,000 families in Ilam district who depend on tea farming for their livelihoods, as well as hundreds of labourers involved in picking across the region.

Netra Prasad Subedi, a

spokesperson at the Ministry of Industry, Commerce and Supplies, said Nepal's government "is looking for a diplomatic solution for this issue".

The Himalayan nation exports approximately 15,600 tonnes of tea annually to India, generating around US\$27 million in revenue, according to the board.

India has not publicly responded to the complaints by Nepali tea producers.

Nepal, a landlocked Himalayan nation of 30 million people, must ensure a delicate diplomatic balance between its two giant neighbours, India and China.

India has long considered Hindu-majority Nepal as a traditional ally, with open borders along the plains.

India is also Kathmandu's largest trading partner, accounting for 63 percent of imports, or US\$8.6 billion, followed by China at 13 percent, or US\$1.8 billion, according to World Bank figures.

— AFP



Fresh flowers are displayed at a flower market in Kabul, on Sunday. Deeply woven into Afghanistan's cultural heritage, flowers symbolize beauty, peace, and renewal. As hot weather arrives, booming flower markets and exhibitions reflect Afghans' enduring love for nature and greenery.

— Xinhua

## Bangladesh summons Indian envoy over adviser row

DHAKA — Bangladesh summoned India's envoy yesterday to protest against the treatment of an adviser to Prime Minister Tarique Rahman in the latest spat between the South Asian neighbours.

Foreign Minister Khalilur Rahman called it an "unexpected and unfortunate incident".

Dhaka's state-run BSS news agency reported that the foreign ministry had summoned Indian Deputy High Commissioner Pawan Badhe.

BSS said that government strategy adviser Zahed Ur Rahman was

stopped at New Delhi's airport, where he had travelled for a conference, and questioned for several hours.

"Although Indian authorities later allowed him to proceed with his visit, he decided to return to Bangladesh," BSS said.

India has not commented publicly about the incident.

Relations between the neighbours have been strained since a 2024 uprising toppled the government of Sheikh Hasina in Dhaka.

Ties improved after Tarique Rahman won a landslide election victory, taking

over from the interim administration that had led the country of 170 million people since Hasina was ousted.

Hasina has been in hiding in India ever since she fled the revolution and Bangladesh has repeatedly requested her extradition.

Bangladesh is surrounded by India and shares a 4,096-kilometre land border with its neighbour.

Relations have further deteriorated along their border, with India sending those it accuses of being illegal migrants across the frontier to Bangladesh.

— AFP

## Pakistan military aircraft crashes, killing 2 pilots

ISLAMABAD — A Pakistani military aircraft crashed in the northwest of the country yesterday killing both pilots, officials said.

The crash, near the city of Mardan, was the second deadly military air disaster in less than a week after an army helicopter crashed in Pakistan-administered Kashmir last Wednesday, killing all on board.

"Pakistan Air Force trainer aircraft on a routine training sortie has crashed

near Mardan today," the military's media wing said in a statement.

Two pilots on board — one from the Air Force and the other from the Navy — were killed, the statement said, without specifying the type of aircraft.

"A board of inquiry has been constituted by Air Headquarters to ascertain the cause of accident," it added.

Pakistan's military is also

investigating the helicopter crash near the capital of Pakistan-administered Kashmir, saying it was due to a technical fault.

Officials have not said how many were onboard when it went down.

Pakistan has a chequered military and civilian aviation safety record, with frequent plane and helicopter crashes over the years especially in its mountainous areas to the north.

— AFP

# What we know about Iran-US deal to end war

TEHRAN – Iran and the United States have reached an agreement to end nearly four months of war, paving the way for detailed negotiations on the Islamic republic's nuclear programme and sanctions relief.

Few details have been officially released, but Iranian media have published what they say are elements of the 14-point agreement.

Before the deal was announced, Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi said the details would only be disclosed once the agreement is signed.

## Frozen assets

Following the announcement, Iran's Mehr news agency republished what it said was the contents of the framework, adding that it was not the final text.

According to Mehr, the agreement provides for a "permanent and immediate cessation of war on all fronts, including Lebanon".

It also envisages the release of US\$24 billion in frozen Iranian assets during a 60-day negotiation period, with half the amount to be made available before the talks begin.

The draft calls for the suspension of sanctions on the sale of Iranian oil, petrochemical products and their derivatives.

Under the agreement, the US would lift what Iran describes as a naval blockade on its ports and coastlines, in place since April 13, and "withdraw its forces" from the vicinity of Iran.

Iran's deputy foreign minister Kazem Gharibabadi said final talks would only start after the US fulfils key commitments under the framework, including ending the naval blockade, ending military operations and releasing Iran's blocked funds.

"Once these urgent commitments are executed, we will immediately enter negotiations," he told state television.

Araghchi said he would reveal the contents of the framework once it was finalised.

"Once finalised, I undertake to explain the details to the public," he said on Friday.



An Iranian woman waves a national flag next to a billboard depicting slain supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei at Valiasr Square in Tehran yesterday.

– AFP

## Strait of Hormuz

Upon announcing the agreement, US President Donald Trump said on social media that the crucial Strait of Hormuz would be open "toll free".

Mehr reported that Iran would reopen the waterway "within 30 days under Iranian arrangements", without elaborating.

Yesterday, Iran's Fars news agency said Tehran had added the imposition of maritime service fees in Hormuz in the final moments of negotiations.

"The use of the term 'maritime services' means that the United States has accepted that fees will be paid to Iran," it said, quoting what it said was an informed source.

On Friday, Araghchi said charging tolls would not be acceptable under international law but that Iran would charge service fees, adding that any future arrangements would be implemented in cooperation with Oman.

"Iran has made a firm decision that the administration of the Strait of Hormuz will no longer be the same as before," he said, adding that the waterway remained an Iranian "instrument of deterrence".

## 60-day negotiations

The framework is intended as a precursor to 60 days of negotiations on key disputes, including Iran's nuclear programme.

Issues including Iran's enrichment activities, its stockpile

of highly enriched uranium, and longstanding US and UN sanctions are expected to be discussed during that period.

Another issue to be discussed is post-war "reconstruction and economic development", according to Gharibabadi, although he did not elaborate.

He added that a mechanism ensuring compliance with the deal would also be discussed.

Araghchi said on Friday that Iran's preferred approach to its stockpile of highly enriched uranium would be "to dilute it inside Iran".

The New York Times reported yesterday on a phone interview with Trump in which he said talks were ongoing over whether Iran would suspend its enrichment for 20 years but hinted that he might settle for a 15-year suspension.

He also insisted that Iran's uranium enrichment levels could never be used by the military and that it "can never go beyond a certain amount".

## What's missing?

It remains unclear whether the negotiations will address Iran's missile programme or its support for groups known collectively as the "Axis of Resistance" opposed to Israel.

Both issues have long been central concerns for Israel.

In its report, Mehr had said that Iran's "missile programme and support for resistance groups have been definitively removed from the agenda." – AFP

# US-Iran deal leaves major Lebanon questions unresolved

Acil Tabbara

BEIRUT – A deal between Washington and Tehran that ends the Israel-Hezbollah war leaves many issues in Lebanon unresolved, failing to mention Israel withdrawing from the country or an end to Tehran's support for the militant group.

Under US pressure, Lebanese officials have been holding direct talks with Israel aimed at reaching a separate agreement on ending the hostilities, but Beirut appeared to have been sidelined with the overnight announcement on the regional conflict.

AFP looks at the deal and the questions it raises in Lebanon.

## What does the deal involve?

Details of the agreement to end the Middle East war on all fronts have not been made public, but Iran and mediator Pakistan have both said it includes Lebanon.

Hezbollah drew the country 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.

Israel responded with airstrikes and a ground invasion that Lebanon says have killed more than 3,700 people and displaced more than one million others.

An official source told AFP that "Lebanon was not informed of the terms of the agreement or the time of the ceasefire".

Lebanese parliament speaker Nabih Berri, a Hezbollah ally and intermediary for the group, thanked Washington and Tehran for their "insistence on including... an essential and binding clause on halting the Israeli aggression on all of Lebanon".

Hezbollah yesterday had so far not claimed any fresh attacks on Israeli targets.

## Israeli withdrawal?

Information circulating about the deal does not mention any Israeli withdrawal from south Lebanon, and Israeli Defence Minister Israel Katz yesterday said forces would remain in the country indefinitely.

Karim Bitar, a lecturer in Middle East Studies at the Sciences Po university in Paris, said that "the deal does not seem to involve Israel, which immediately meant that it wasn't a party to it... So it's very unlikely that there will be an Israeli withdrawal from south Lebanon."

Israeli forces control a strip of Lebanese territory running along the entire border.

A Western military source told AFP that Israeli forces had crossed the Litani River at several points, referring to the waterway running about 30 kilometres from the frontier but closer in some areas.

"Tens of thousands of Israeli soldiers" are in south Lebanon where they hold some established positions, the source said, adding that Hezbollah still had a presence there.

"It's the biggest invasion since their withdrawal in 2000," the source said, referring to Israel's previous pullout after some two decades of occupation.

Hezbollah says it sent reinforcements south of the Litani after the latest war erupted.

Under a 2024 ceasefire that followed a previous round of hostilities, Hezbollah fighters were supposed to withdraw from the area.

## What future for Hezbollah?

Washington has pressured Lebanese authorities to disarm Hezbollah for months, but the accord makes no mention of the militants.

"Iran doesn't seem to have committed to ending its support and financing for Hezbollah," Bitar said.

Military expert Riad Kahwaji said that "Hezbollah will not agree to give up arms... and this crisis will be protracted."

He said this could lead to political instability and even unrest, "especially now Hezbollah believes that through Iran it has emerged victorious from this agreement, and therefore is going to try and dictate its terms on who rules."

## Israel-Lebanon negotiations?

Lebanon and Israel have been holding direct talks in Washington since April, seeking to end the hostilities and to separate Lebanon from the regional war.

A new round is scheduled for later this month.

Lebanese Prime Minister Nawaf Salam said yesterday that "we will redouble our efforts" through the Washington negotiations "to secure a full Israeli withdrawal."

But after the Iran-US announcement, some cast doubt on the effectiveness of the bilateral negotiations.

Bitar said that "Lebanon could find itself once again as a scapegoat that pays the price both of American amateurism, Iranian cynicism, Israeli hubris and... the lack of a clear strategy from its own political class." – AFP

# Somaliland opens embassy in Jerusalem

JERUSALEM – Somaliland opened its embassy in Jerusalem yesterday, Israel's foreign ministry announced, months after Israel became the first country to recognise the breakaway African state's independence.

"Honoured to host my dear friend President @Abdirahmanirro at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, during his historic State Visit to open Somaliland's embassy in

Jerusalem," Israeli Foreign Minister Gideon Saar posted on X, during the first-ever state visit of President Abdirahman Mohamed Abdullahi.

"I'm proud of the privilege I had to write the first pages in the story of the Israel-Somaliland relationship," Saar added.

Somaliland is the eighth country to open its embassy in Jerusalem, following the United States, Guatemala, Honduras,

Kosovo, Papua New Guinea, Paraguay, and Fiji.

Most foreign diplomatic missions to Israel are located in Tel Aviv, as the status of Jerusalem is one of the thorniest issues in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

In December, Israel became the first country to recognise the independence of Somaliland since it declared its autonomy from Somalia in 1991 following a civil war. – AFP



A man inspects his house destroyed by Israeli airstrikes, upon return to his home village of Tibnin in southern Lebanon yesterday.

– AFP

# Starmer announces ban on social media for under-16s

*Helen Rowe and Peter Hutchison*

LONDON – Children under 16 will be banned from using social media in the UK, Prime Minister Keir Starmer announced yesterday, saying such platforms were making youngsters “unhappy”.

Some children’s charities welcomed the sweeping change, which is likely to trigger a major fight with US tech giants, but others warned it could make teenagers less safe online.

Starmer, likely to face a leadership challenge in the coming weeks, said social media sites were exposing children to content that is “dangerous” and “designed to be addictive”.

The ban will “include platforms like Snapchat, TikTok, YouTube, Instagram, Facebook and X” but not messaging services such as WhatsApp, the government said.

Starmer said the upcoming ban was influenced by the experience of Australia, which in December became the first nation to ban people under 16 from social media.

He added during a press conference in Downing Street that he hoped to pass the regulation by late December and for the ban to come into force in spring next year.

He suggested that YouTube Kids, Lego Play and Google Classroom would not be prohibited.

The government said in a statement it would also be considering overnight curfews and breaks in infinite scrolling for minors, and would announce more detail next month.

## Blocking ‘harmful functions’

Australia’s Prime Minister Anthony Albanese welcomed the move in a post on X, saying: “Social media giants operate



*Britain's Prime Minister Keir Starmer gives a press conference at Downing Street in London yesterday, announcing a ban on social media for under-16s. – AFP*

across borders. By standing together, we can do more to hold them accountable and keep children safe online.”

Canada and France are among other countries considering similar bans, while Indonesia began enforcing its ban for users under 16 in March.

Britain’s ban could anger US President Donald Trump after the US embassy in London earlier this month came out against “broad social media bans”.

Starmer’s announcement follows a government-led consultation where British teenagers trialled social media bans and time limits on apps.

The National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children called the ban “a win” for children and parents, but insisted that it must be followed up with “robust age checks on platforms” and “an effective enforcement regime”.

Save The Children UK’s senior adviser Jeffrey DeMarco said his charity was concerned a ban “pushes children into less regulated spaces, where they are less likely to seek help when something goes wrong”.

A spokesperson for YouTube responded with a warning that such a blanket ban would push children towards “less safe services”.

The government also said it would block

“harmful functions” on gaming services and live streaming platforms allowing strangers to contact children.

“Is there a situation in the offline world where you would just let your child pair up with a stranger? An adult that you don’t know about? No. So we’re taking action on that,” Starmer said, without giving details.

## Self-generated content

The UK government’s consultation on the issue, which closed in late May, attracted about 116,000 contributions, making it the second-largest response ever received.

More than 83 percent of parents who responded said the risks posed by social media outweighed the benefits for children, with 91 percent backing a minimum age of 16.

The UK announcement comes a week after the government said tech giants must stop children in Britain from being able to send and receive nude images on their devices.

Britain’s Home Office (interior ministry) said it was giving companies, including Apple and Google, three months to introduce safety features to block children from taking and accessing naked photos on phones and tablets.

If they failed to do so, the government would introduce legislation forcing them to activate the technology, it warned.

A law change would stop children from being able to access pornography, while also making it more difficult for child abusers to target children, it said.

According to analysis by the Internet Watch Foundation charity cited by the government, 91 percent of online child sexual abuse reports recorded in 2024 contained self-generated content from children themselves.

– AFP

# Norwegian crown princess’s son gets 4-year jail for rape

*Pierre-Henry Deshayes*

OSLO – An Oslo court yesterday sentenced Norwegian Crown Princess Mette-Marit’s son to four years in prison on two counts of rape and 32 other offences, in a high-profile scandal that has rocked the monarchy.

Marius Borg Hoiby, 29, Mette-Marit’s son from a relationship prior to her 2001 marriage to Crown Prince Haakon, was accused of 40 offences, from rape to traffic violations, carrying a maximum possible sentence of 16 years in prison.

One of the rapes for which he was convicted took place at the crown prince couple’s official residence in 2018.

Hoiby, who is not formally part of the royal household and has no steady job, was acquitted of two other counts of rape, and convicted of repeated domestic abuse against an ex-girlfriend, traffic violations, issuing threats, a drug offence and others.

The prosecution had asked for a seven-year, seven-month jail term.

Hoiby, in custody since February, had denied the most serious allegations, including the charges of rape, which the prosecution said took place while the women were asleep or unconscious.

His lawyers had called for him to serve 18 months for the charges to which he had pleaded guilty.

Hoiby was not present in court yesterday but followed the reading of the verdict by video link.

The only rape victim in the courtroom collapsed in tears when the judge read out a guilty verdict in her case.

After conferring with Hoiby in custody, his lawyers said they would appeal the two

rape convictions and that for domestic abuse.

“I think this verdict is a victory for our justice system, that shows that no one is beyond the law, despite who you are and who you are related to,” prosecutor Sturla Henriksbo told AFP.

## Life of excess

The trial, held February 3 to March 19, laid bare the life of excess lived by Hoiby, who was thrust into the public eye at the age of three when his mother’s romance with the crown prince began.

“I’m mostly known as my mother’s son, not anything else. So I’ve had an extreme need for recognition my whole life,” he testified during the trial.

“And that manifested itself in a lot of sex, a lot of drugs, and a lot of alcohol,” he said.

The rapes of which he was accused occurred between 2018 and 2024, after nights of partying where Hoiby consumed alcohol and drugs.

Prosecutors argued the cases involved consensual sex later followed by sexual acts when the women appeared to be asleep or passed out, and therefore unable to consent.

Much of the legal arguments centred on the women’s level of awareness, and what Hoiby would have been able to perceive at the time.

Hoiby had criticised the pressure put on him by the media, which he said painted him as “a monster” and made him “the hate target of all of Norway”.

## ‘Reign of terror’

The scandal erupted on August 4, 2024, when police arrested Hoiby on suspicion of assaulting his then-girlfriend in her Oslo



*This unlocated file photo taken on June 16, 2022 in Oslo, Norway, shows Marius Borg Høiby, son of Norwegian Crown Princess Mette-Marit. – AFP*

apartment the previous night.

The media published photos of a knife stuck in the wall and a shattered chandelier on the floor.

One of his former partners, influencer Nora Haukland, then came forward and said he had also subjected her to physical and psychological abuse – described by prosecutors as a “reign of terror”.

During the trial, Hoiby acknowledged that jealousy sometimes made him lose control.

The women themselves did not file rape charges against Hoiby.

Instead, police investigating the August

2024 incident discovered videos on his phones and computers which they said constituted rapes, and contacted the women, who were unaware of the events depicted.

The scandal has embarrassed Norway’s monarchy and contributed to a fall in support, though it remains broadly popular.

It follows earlier revelations of Mette-Marit’s friendship with the late convicted US sex offender Jeffrey Epstein.

Mette-Marit, 52, suffers from an incurable lung disease that causes breathing difficulties and her condition recently took a turn for the worse. Doctors have placed her on a waiting list for a lung transplant.

– AFP

# Colombians face stark choice on economy as runoff vote nears



Colombia's rightwing presidential candidate Abelardo de la Espriella gestures as he speaks to supporters behind a bulletproof glass during his closing campaign rally in Buga, Valle del Cauca Department, Colombia on Sunday. – AFP



Colombia's leftist presidential candidate Iván Cepeda raises his clenched fist during his closing campaign rally in Barranquilla, Colombia, on Sunday. – AFP

## Alba Santana

BOGOTÁ – Colombians eyeing a runoff election face two starkly different economic models against a backdrop of messy government finances.

Rightwing candidate Abelardo de la Espriella wants a leaner state with pro-business policy while leftist Iván Cepeda is pushing for greater government spending on social programmes in the runup to the June 21 election.

Outgoing leftist President Gustavo Petro is finishing his four-year term with high approval ratings among low-income people because he has reduced poverty, supported public education, cut unemployment and raised the minimum wage.

But Colombia's first leftist president has also been criticised for heavy public spending, nasty remarks to the business community and what UN economic experts call the worst fiscal deficit in Latin America after Brazil.

Diego Soler, a businessman in the textile sector, said Petro was downright anti-business. Soler runs a company called American Tactical, which imports and markets tactical equipment such as for protecting police and soldiers.

"We went from paying a 15 percent tariff in the case of textiles to 40 percent," he told AFP.

In Latin America's fourth-largest economy, his company survived a 23 percent increase in the minimum wage without having

to fire anyone. But it has been unable to expand.

In the runoff election on June 21, Cepeda proposes pushing on with Petro policies to put priority on social spending and the transition away from fossil fuels.

De la Espriella wants to encourage private investment to stimulate the free market and is big on exploiting Colombia's oil and other natural resources.

Laura Valverde, a 34-year-old accountant, backs Cepeda. She said she is happy with the increase in the minimum wage, a cut in daily working hours and government aid money for her disabled son.

"It frightens me how people can support someone who wants to take a step back after we made progress for four years," Valverde said.

## Without a 'saw'

While many in Colombia are worried about a wave of guerrilla and other violence that has swept the election campaign, experts say the greatest challenge facing the next president will be the economy.

Ana Fernanda Maiguashica, an economist who runs the Private Competitiveness Council, a business think tank, said people "are going to feel the deterioration of the fiscal deficit."

Cepeda says he wants to go even further with the Petro social spending programmes in a country with one of the world's most glaring gaps between rich and poor.

Petro's social spending policy has "all but eliminated extreme poverty" in Colombia, said Jorge Restrepo, a professor at Xaverian University.

But Petro is leaving with a fiscal deficit of nearly seven percent of GDP and a slim coffer for government money.

De la Espriella, an admirer of Argentina's President Javier Milei, says he will cut the size of the state by 40 percent and impose fiscal austerity.

Experts say this is a challenge because he would need approval from Congress.

"He is Milei without the details, a Milei without the buzz saw," Restrepo said, alluding to the Trump-backed Argentine leader's gimmick for depicting himself as a spending slasher.

Then there is the issue of cocaine, of which Colombia is the world's largest producer. It accounts for four percent of its GDP, according to a study by Los Andes University.

De la Espriella has made the novel suggestion that drug cartels be able to keep 10 percent of their revenue if they give the rest to the government. This would be in exchange for incentives like protection against extradition.

Cepeda proposes negotiating with armed groups involved in drug trafficking, having them give up their weapons and providing compensation to victims of decades of war and other violence in Colombia. – AFP

# Mayor shot dead in southern Mexico: prosecutors

MEXICO CITY – A mayor was shot dead in an area of southern Mexico where drug cartels are battling to control trafficking routes, local authorities said on Saturday.

Joel Bravo – the mayor of San Miguel Amatitlán, a town of nearly 7,000 residents – died in an armed attack, prosecutors in Oaxaca state said in a statement, without offering further details about the incident.

"In Oaxaca, we will not allow violence to prevail over the law or over the will of our communities,"

state Governor Salomón Jara said in a post on X, condemning the killing.

Prosecutors said the police presence in the area had been stepped up and a tactical team deployed, in cooperation with federal forces, in order to track down the assailants.

The Jalisco Nueva Generación and Sinaloa cartels are both active in Oaxaca, which borders the Pacific Ocean.

Nearly 100 mayors have been assassinated in Mexico since 2006, when drug violence exploded in the country. – AFP

# Sevilla's Mir sentenced to 8.5 years in jail for sexual assault

VALENCIA – Sevilla striker Rafa Mir has been sentenced to eight-and-a-half years in prison after being convicted of sexual assault and bodily harm, the Valencian Community High Court of Justice said yesterday.

Mir, who was tried on May 28, was found guilty of "one count of sexual assault and one count of bodily harm" by the provincial court of Valencia, the high court said on social media network X, noting the conviction could still be appealed.

A second defendant, a friend of the footballer, was also convicted, and sentenced to two-and-a-half years in prison for a count of sexual assault and an offence "against moral integrity", in addition to a small fine for a minor offence of bodily harm.

The court ordered Mir, who pleaded not guilty, to pay the victim 64,000 euros (US\$74,000) in compensation.

The offences took place on September 1, 2024, at the player's house in the Valencian town of Betera after Mir and his friend met two women at a nightclub.

Mir, 28, came through Valencia's youth academy and signed for Premier League team Wolves in 2018, before Sevilla bought him in 2021. The striker was loaned back to Valencia in July 2024.

Mir was arrested in September 2024 and suspended by Valencia for two matches, and spent the 2025-26 season on loan at Elche. The forward has represented Spain at youth level. – AFP

# Cuban priests ordered to ration mass wafers



George Payano, a friar of the Discalced Carmelites, celebrates Mass while giving communion to the faithful in the chapel of the Santa Teresa and San Jose Convent in the Vedado neighbourhood of Havana, on Sunday. – AFP

## Havana, Cuba

HAVANA – To the never-ending list of scarcities in Cuba comes a new addition: communion for the Catholic faithful.

On Sunday, several priests told AFP that they had been ordered to ration the small wafers intended to symbolize the body of Jesus Christ during Mass.

Communion wafer is made from a mix of flour and water pressed into flat discs that the priest places on worshippers' tongues during Mass.

All that wafer consumed by Cuba's Catholics is made at a Carmelite monastery in Havana, which like the rest of the city and country has been battling extended power cuts, made worse by a five-month-old US oil blockade.

In recent weeks, as Cuba's fuel supplies have begun to dry up, the outages have extended to over 24

hours at a stretch, causing misery for millions.

George Payano, a 35-year-old Dominican priest who officiated at a Mass at Saint convent on Sunday, said the nuns sometimes had around two hours' electricity a day to work the communion wafer presses.

"That means lower production and as they [the nuns] told the priests and bishops you have to ration them a bit so that there are enough for all," he said.

While the 20 or so worshippers at his service did receive communion, they were preparing for leaner times ahead.

On exiting the church to find the power out again in the neighbourhood, they vowed to keep the faith.

"People who don't receive communion can do so spiritually but let's hope it doesn't come to that," Mariela Shuman, a 70-year-old pensioner, told AFP. – AFP

# Amazonian tribal leader Raoni hospitalized in intensive care

BRASÍLIA – Brazilian indigenous leader Raoni Metuktire, a celebrated defender of the Amazon rainforest, has been admitted to intensive care after his health deteriorated, his doctors said yesterday.

Raoni, who is over 90 years old, was taken on Sunday to the Dois Pinheiros Hospital in Sinop, a city in Brazil's western region. He was previously hospitalised there in May after suffering from vomiting and abdominal pain.

"The patient is hospitalised in the intensive care unit under continuous monitoring," the

hospital said in a statement. "His condition is considered serious," it added, citing "changes in kidney function and indicators consistent with a severe infectious process."

Raoni, chief of the Kayapo people, has travelled around the world for decades to advocate for the Amazon rainforest and traditional indigenous communities, lobbying heads of state, monarchs and popes.

According to his doctors, Raoni is 94 years old. When hospitalised in May, he was initially treated for a hernia, and later for chronic bronchopulmonary disease and

heart problems.

Despite his advanced age, Raoni has remained active in recent months, although he appeared weakened. In April, he attended the Free Land Camp, the largest annual gathering of indigenous peoples, in Brasília, the capital.

The chief first gained prominence in the 1970s when he campaigned against the construction of a trans-Amazonian highway during Brazil's military dictatorship (1964–1985).

He made his first international tour in 1989 after meeting British musician Sting in the Amazon. – AFP

## Crystal Palace appoint Sage as manager

**Premier League** LONDON – Crystal Palace hired Pierre Sage as their new manager yesterday to replace Oliver Glasner after the Austrian left the UEFA Conference League winners at the end of the season.

Sage agreed a three-year contract with the Premier League club having impressed at French side Lens last term.

The 47-year-old Frenchman led Lens to a second place finish in Ligue 1, securing qualification for the Champions League, and won the French Cup for the first time in the club's history.

Sage was voted Ligue 1 Manager of the Year for his achievements in his debut season with Lens, which convinced Palace to move for him after Glasner's exit following the Conference League final victory over Raya Vallecano.

"It's amazing to be here at Crystal Palace. I am excited by the history of the club, and by recent seasons," Sage said.

"Oliver Glasner achieved some amazing things, and now I have to do the same. That's why we come here with a lot of ambition.

"The dynamic here is really positive, and we are in this mindset too. We won last year and we want to continue in this way, in a new club, a new project, but with a lot of winning habits."

Palace's Conference League triumph earned them a place in next season's Europa League, maintaining the south London club's progress in recent years.

They defeated Manchester City at Wembley to win the FA Cup for the first time in their history in 2025.

Eagles chairman Steve Parish hopes former Lyon boss Sage can continue the development put in place by Glasner, whose departure was announced earlier in the year.

"I am tremendously excited to welcome Pierre, who joins us off the back of a trophy-winning season at Lens as well as a fabulous second-place finish in Ligue 1," Parish said.

"As we move into another European campaign off the back of our success in Leipzig, I know he will give everything to target more success for our fantastic football club."

– AFP

# Greed or player health? 'Damaging' World Cup drinks breaks under spotlight



**Peter Stebbings**

DALLAS – Virgil van Dijk does not like them, fans have started booing them and the many critics say they are ruining the World Cup.

Hydration breaks last just a total of six minutes during a match, but they stand accused of fundamentally changing the nature of football at the sport's ultimate showpiece.

"Hydration breaks are a bit interesting," said Netherlands captain Van Dijk, whose side drew 2-2 with Japan in Texas on Sunday in an air-conditioned arena.

"I was watching almost all of the games up until today and every time going into a commercial is a bit... not really that I like it.

"I think for the neutral watchers on TV it's also not great."

Also Sunday, over at tournament co-host Mexico, spectators during Sweden's 5-1 thrashing of Tunisia in Monterrey made their disdain plain by booing loudly when the pause came in the first half.

Fans similarly jeered the break in yesterday's game between Spain and Cape Verde in the air-conditioned arena in Atlanta.

The scheduled drinks breaks, not normally part of football, last three minutes each about midway through both halves of a game at the tournament in North America.

Football's world governing body FIFA says they are designed to protect player health and will be used at all World Cup games no matter where or what the weather.

So during the clash between the

Netherlands and Japan, the game was halted even though the match was played in comfortable temperature-controlled conditions under a roof.

### 'Damaged for dollars'

During the first hydration break at the stadium usually home to the Dallas Cowboys, the NFL team's cheerleaders were shown performing on the giant screen that hovers over the centre of the pitch.

For people in the United States watching on television, broadcasters take the chance to cut away from the game and show commercials.

In American sports, there is nothing unusual in that.

But some critics have accused FIFA of greed, feeding into a narrative that has consistently dogged the tournament and its decision-makers.

The world governing body denies those accusations.

"This is the year when the game of two halves became the game of four quarters," prominent British football writer Henry Winter said.

"And the greatest sport and event was damaged for fistfuls of dollars."

In a warning that will send a chill down the spines of traditionalists, Winter warned that the stoppages - and the chance for a money-spinning ad break - could one day be rolled out everywhere.

In England, the BBC and ITV show World Cup matches but do not cut away from games during the stoppages.

"It's important that there is resistance to this from all over," he said.

"Because if we tolerate this, our TV games could be next."

### Momentum shift

And then there is the effect on the natural flow of matches.

It might be just a coincidence, but several games have seen a noticeable shift in momentum from one team to the other immediately after a hydration break.

Because while the players are drinking, coaches understandably use it as a chance to change tactics or give out instructions if the game is not going their way.

Debutants Curacao levelled for 1-1 after 21 minutes against the mighty Germany on Sunday in Houston, another game played under a roof.

Then came the pause, and with it went any Curacao momentum, the Germans running out 7-1 winners.

Not everyone is against the drinks breaks, however, with Spain coach Luis de la Fuente saying player welfare was paramount.

"It is difficult to sustain that level of physical exertion for long periods and I believe those breaks offer a brief respite to recharge and continue competing well," he said.

But he also noted that, while some World Cup cities are experiencing fierce temperatures, it is not true across all venues, including some outside ones.

For example in Los Angeles this week temperatures are forecast to be about 15-28C.

Van Dijk said there should be flexibility.

"If it's really hot, obviously it would be good to put them (breaks) in," said the Liverpool defender.

"But I think you have to look at it in every game separately in my opinion."

– AFP

**Group H**

Saudi Arabia

V

Uruguay

**Today 6:00 a.m. Macau time**

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**Group G**

Iran

V

New Zealand

**Tomorrow 9:00 a.m. Macau time**

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**Group I**

France

V

Senegal

**Tomorrow 3:00 a.m. Macau time**

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**Group I**

Iraq

V

Norway

**Tomorrow 6:00 a.m. Macau time**

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**Group I**

Argentina

V

Algeria

**Tomorrow 9:00 a.m. Macau time**



This combination of file photo created yesterday, shows Argentina's forward Lionel Messi in Buenos Aires on March 31 (left); and Algeria's forward Riyad Mahrez in Turin on March 31. (More photos on page 16) Argentina and Algeria will meet in a 2026 World Cup Group J match at the Kansas City Stadium in Kansas City today. – AFP

## Toothless Spain held by Cape Verde on World Cup debut

Continued from p.1

Marc Cucurella, fresh for sealing his move from Chelsea to Real Madrid, sent over a teasing cross that Ferran Torres turned onto the crossbar and Cape Verde goalkeeper Vozinha got back on his feet to turn Mikel Oyarzabal's looping header over the bar.

Torres tested Vozinha again moments later before Aymeric Laporte's header from a corner was also clawed away by the Cape Verde number one just before half-time.

The break came at a good time for the Blue Sharks and they comfortably held out in the second period until Yamal's entrance after the second hydration break.

Billed as one of the stars of the tournament, Yamal's appearance instantly lifted the crowd and injected life into the pedestrian Spanish attack.

His first involvement set up a decent opening for fellow substitute Mikel Merino which was too close to Vozinha.

Yamal also began the move that

saw Oyarzabal's effort deflected over with Spain's best chance of the second half.

Cape Verde nearly snatched a famous victory in the final minute of the 90 when Dani Borges planted a header too close to Unai Simon.

Spain's road to victory in 2010 also began disappointingly with defeat to Switzerland, but they have much to work on ahead of facing Saudi Arabia in Atlanta once more on Sunday.

Cape Verde next take on Uruguay in Miami.

– AFP

# NZ need collective effort to replace Williamson: Ravindra

## Cricket

LONDON – Rachin Ravindra admits it will take a collective effort from New Zealand's batsmen to replace Kane Williamson after his shock decision to retire from international cricket.

Williamson brought the curtain down on his illustrious New Zealand career following the first Test defeat against England at Lord's, leaving New Zealand with a huge hole in their line-up when the second Test starts at the Oval tomorrow.

The 35-year-old is New Zealand's all-time leading run scorer

across all formats with 19,346 runs, including 48 centuries and six double hundreds, in 378 appearances between 2010 and 2026.

Williamson, who captained New Zealand on 206 occasions, scored 9,515 runs at an average of 54.06 in 110 Tests for the Black Caps.

New Zealand all-rounder Ravindra conceded it will be impossible for one player to produce the wealth of runs amassed by Williamson.

Instead Ravindra hopes New Zealand's overall batting depth can help fill the void.

"I don't necessarily see it as pressure. Whenever a great moves on

there is always a hole in the team," Ravindra told reporters yesterday.

"But the strength and quality in our depth in our team is what we pride ourselves on. We have Henry Nicholls and obviously Will Young is here as batting back-up.

"We all share responsibility within our batting unit. It's not on one guy, it's pretty hard to fill in that gap and unfortunately I don't think many people can. So it will be a collective effort."

Ravindra said New Zealand's squad had no complaints about Williamson's decision to step away in the middle of the three-Test series.

"It's always tough when probably our greatest player calls time. We were all so supportive of his decision," he said.

"Kane is such an amazing player but more than that he's such an amazing bloke and has contributed so much to New Zealand.

"Personally I have looked up to him for a long time now. He's one of my biggest idols. I was very lucky to share the crease with him and enjoy some cool partnerships.

"Sharing the crease, he is in a zen zone. He's such a great mentor. Kane has done things in his own way and decided the time is right.

He has been so giving to the group."

New Zealand will look to bounce back after being thrashed by 115 runs at Lord's, where they found it difficult to cope with a treacherous pitch that made it hard for the batsmen.

"We take learnings from everything, whether it is success or failure. There were some balls keeping low and seaming around at Lord's. We do know it is a fresh start," Ravindra said.

"This will be a different surface, different conditions. We haven't played a Test at the Oval for a long time."

– AFP



A mural, part of the city of Berlin's campaign to host the Olympic Games in 2036, 2040, or 2044, reads: "Berlin wins with Olympia", in Berlin yesterday.

– AFP

## Broeders-Bol backed by coach to challenge the very best over 800m

### Athletics

OSTRAVA, Czech Republic – Femke Broeders-Bol will make her outdoor 800m debut at today's Golden Spike in the Czech city of Ostrava, her coach Laurent Meuwly backing the former hurdler to mix it with the best over two laps.

Broeders-Bol may only be 26 but she has packed a lot into her career thus far, winning two world gold medals over the 400m hurdles.

It is a discipline in which she has shone on the elite Diamond League circuit, last year completing an incredible sixth campaign unbeaten.

Her exceptional finishing pace has also seen her claim multiple medals as the anchor leg in 4x400m relay teams, notably a gold in the mixed event in the Paris Olympics.

But the Dutch athlete opted to step away from the hurdles, which has been dominated on the Olympic scene by US rival and world record holder Sydney McLaughlin-Levrone.

Broeders-Bol, whose name change is due her marriage to Belgian pole vaulter Ben Broeders, ran her first 800m since 2017 in February, clocking a national record of 1min 59.07sec before withdrawing from the rest of the indoor season to nurse a foot injury.

Coach Meuwly is under no illusion of his charge's capability.

"I think she'll surprise a lot of people in this first month of competition," Meuwly said.

"There's a lot of excitement because it's been a long period without racing. We're looking forward to a new challenge."

He also hinted that the oldest world record in athletics – the 1:53.28 for the outdoor 800m set by Jarmila Kratochvilova of the then-Czechoslovakia in 1983 – could be under threat.

"I've always said that if Femke switched to the 800 metres, it was because I also felt that the 800-metre world record was more within her reach than the 400m hurdles record," Meuwly said.

"It's a record that dates back a very long time, from an era when we know there were quite a few doping issues, so there's a bit of a

myth surrounding this 800m record.

"But when we started considering making the switch, I was absolutely convinced that it was possible for women to run 1:52, or even faster."

### On-form Werro awaits

There is a packed field awaiting in Ostrava, notably in the form of Switzerland's Audrey Werro.

Werro is fresh off establishing herself as the world's all-time number three after timing a sensational 1:53.98 to beat Britain's Olympic champion Keely Hodgkinson.

Given Broeders-Bol's impressive closing speed, Werro could well be pushed hard again towards a fast time.

Meuwly said Werro had been "improving very steadily over the past few years".

"She had a pacemaker, and then Hodgkinson acted as a luxury pacemaker for her," he said of her recent blazing run in the Stockholm Diamond League that saw her take two seconds of her personal best.

"It won't always play out like that, everything had to be perfectly in place, but physically I'm not surprised she's capable of doing it."

Comparing the profiles of Broeders-Bol, Werro and Hodgkinson, Meuwly said all three were capable of being extremely fast over the opening 600 metres given that they were not necessarily endurance athletes.

Hodgkinson, he added, was the one with "better qualities of aerobic endurance, and would be the winner of the three over 1,500m".

"Femke is really an ex-sprinter, 22.60sec over 200m and 49sec over 400m, both indoors. So an athlete who is more explosive and quick for the 800m.

"Audrey is a bit inbetween the two, but who has over the years managed to gain experience over 800m."

Other stand-out events at the Ostrava meet is American Olympic 100m champion Noah Lyles, also a four-time world 200m gold medallist, up against Australian teenager Gout Gout over the rarely-run 150m. – AFP

## Brazil's Splitter to become new NBA Bulls coach: reports



CHICAGO – Tiago Splitter, who guided Portland into this year's NBA playoffs as an interim coach, will be hired as the new coach of the Chicago Bulls, according to multiple reports yesterday.

The deal, reported by ESPN and The Athletic, would see Splitter leave a Trail Blazers team where he was the first coach with a winning record in his first Portland season since Maurice Cheeks in 2002.

The 41-year-old Brazilian, who became the first player from his homeland to win an NBA title with San Antonio in 2014, retired as a

player in 2018 due to a hip injury.

Splitter served as an assistant coach for four years at Brooklyn and another with Houston before becoming coach of Paris Basketball for the 2024-2025 campaign, guiding the squad to the French champion and French Cup before leaving to become an assistant with the Portland Trail Blazers.

When Portland head coach Chauncey Billups was arrested last October for alleged involvement in an illegal gambling scheme, he was placed on leave by the NBA and Splitter was elevated to interim head coach.

Splitter directed the Blazers to a 42-40 record and a playoff berth before a first-round loss to NBA runner-up San Antonio.

Chicago went 31-51 last season under coach Billy Donovan and missed the playoffs for a fourth season in a row. Donovan stepped down as coach just after the season after going 226-256 in six campaigns with only one playoff appearance.

That sets the stage for Splitter to revamp the Bulls, who have not won a playoff series since 2015 and haven't taken the title since Michael Jordan's 1998 squad. – AFP

## Zheng Qinwen rallies past Sakkari for 1<sup>st</sup> grass-court win of season

### Tennis

LONDON – China's Zheng Qinwen battled back from a set down to defeat sixth-seeded Maria Sakkari of Greece 4-6, 7-6 (1), 6-4 at the WTA 250 Nottingham Open here yesterday, claiming her first grass-court win of the season.

The victory marked a positive start to Zheng's grass-court campaign after a first-round exit at the French Open earlier this month.

"It was a really difficult match," Zheng said after the contest. "We both played at a high level and the score was close throughout. I'm happy to win those important points

because I wasn't able to do that in the last tournament, and I managed to do it today."

The past two seasons have been challenging for Zheng, who has struggled with injuries, and undergone surgery. She said she was sidelined for nearly eight months last year and initially put too much pressure on herself after returning to competition.

"I missed almost eight months last year," she said. "I had a lot of pressure at the beginning when I started trying to come back. I wanted to do more and do better, but somehow I wasn't able to deal with that pressure. Right now, I tell myself, 'OK, I'm around

No. 160 in the world. How could it get any worse?' Let's just keep fighting like I did at the beginning, when I had nothing."

Zheng added that she plans to focus on one match at a time during the grass-court season.

"On grass, anything can happen, and it's not an easy surface for me," she said. "I just hope I can enjoy tennis more and enjoy every competition because I really love playing here. Let's see how I do in the next match."

Zheng will next face Australia's Talia Gibson who beat Britain's Francesca Jones 6-3, 5-7, 7-6.

– Xinhua/MPD

## 2 new sex abuse complaints against French star Bruel

NANTERRE – Two women have filed new complaints of sexual abuse against French pop icon Patrick Bruel, prosecutors and their lawyer said Saturday, in the latest accusations against the singer under investigation.

The 67-year-old, a major figure in French popular culture with several top-selling albums and dozens of film appearances, denies any wrongdoing.

Bruel is the latest top French celebrity to face questioning in the wake of the #MeToo movement, after film star Gérard Depardieu was handed a suspended 18-month prison sentence last year for sexually assaulting two women on a film set.

In the latest two complaints filed on Friday, one woman accuses Bruel of attempted rape and sexual assault during a film festival in the overseas territory of La Réunion in 2007, the prosecutor's office in the Paris suburb of Nanterre and lawyer Jade Dousselin said.

The other woman alleges he committed rape and sexual assault against her in 2012, the same sources said.

Allegations have piled up against Bruel, some dating back to the 1990s.

Investigating magistrates on Wednesday charged him with rape, attempted rape, sexual assault and sexual harassment in four cases, three for alleged acts in France and one in Belgium.

They said he was to be investigated – but not charged – in four other cases, including two of suspected rape.

A ninth case of alleged rape was deemed to have happened too long ago to be prosecuted.

Another 13 people have accused him of rape, attempted rape, sexual assault and sexual harassment from 1992 to 2008, but prosecutors have yet to assess whether they are past the statute of limitations.

Three other complaints – two for rape and one for attempted rape – have also either been or will be filed against him.

Bruel is under judicial supervision, meaning he is not allowed to leave French territory. – AFP



French singer and actor Patrick Bruel poses upon arrival for the opening ceremony of the 19th Marrakech International Film Festival in Marrakech on November 11, 2022. – AFP

## Musical therapy: Classical concerts in New York for dementia sufferers

Maggy Donaldson

NEW YORK – In his early sixties, Rob Kaufman suffered a medical emergency that caused him to faint and hit his head on a wood floor, resulting in a traumatic brain injury.

He was put in a medically induced coma, his wife Ellen recounted to AFP, and was in intensive care for about a month. Nine weeks of extensive rehabilitation including speech therapy followed, and today he experiences significant short-term memory loss.

Music therapy proved invaluable in the rehab of the onetime studio musician who said he has played for the likes of Jimi Hendrix.

And today, the Kaufmans are regulars at a Manhattan concert programme designed for individuals experiencing dementia symptoms.

The couple recently attended a 10th anniversary performance of the programme that featured the Calidore String Quartet.

The musicians closed out the spring season to a packed house of some 100 people.

One audience member closed her eyes and mimed conducting as the artists played Mozart, while another tapped her caregiver's arm as if there were piano keys.

Lincoln Centre, the famed arts complex on New York's Upper West Side, began the series "out of a need," said Miranda Hoffner, the institution's accessibility director.

"We were hearing more and more from our subscribers at the Philharmonic and the Chamber Music Society that they weren't renewing their subscriptions because of dementia, as their family members were impacted," she told AFP.

"That was an audience that has really supported us for, in some cases, decades," she continued.

"We felt a responsibility to fill that gap."

### Ageing population

Dementia is an umbrella term for debilitating symptoms that can result in memory loss and impair movement and daily life.

Alzheimer's disease accounts for the majority of cases, but a range of risk factors and conditions can trigger it.

According to the World Health Organisation (WHO), as of 2021 some 57 million people had dementia globally, with about 10 million new cases each year. The condition is progressive, and there is no cure.



Attendees participate in "Lincoln Center Moments", a first-of-its-kind performance-based programme created specifically for people living with dementia and their caregivers at Lincoln Centre, in New York, on June 3. – AFP

Cases are rising in part because the Boomer generation – people born during the post-World War II population surge – have reached their senior years and generally are living longer than previous generations.

That means they're experiencing more of the chronic illnesses and health issues that can accompany old age.

Among them is dementia, said Emily Finkelstein, a geriatrics provider at the New York-Presbyterian medical centre.

And especially in the United States – with its expensive, sprawling healthcare system – the broader social structures to care for this growing population of people with dementia is lacking, the doctor told AFP.

"It's a huge issue," she said.

Finkelstein pointed to copious data supporting the value of art, music and dance therapy for people with cognitive impairment.

But in the US, such programmes are localised and for many people difficult to access.

"We don't have a national health programme. It's much more cumbersome to streamline these types of programmes, even though we know they're beneficial," Finkelstein said.

### 'Age in place'

At Lincoln Centre, the programming geared towards audience members with dementia and their caregivers is free.

An Alzheimer's caregiver support

nonprofit has trained staff on how best to accommodate audiences and develop accessible shows by world-class artists.

"You will see people holding hands, you will see people tapping their feet, you will see people vocally participating in the music," Hoffner said.

Concerts are less formal and subdued than traditional classical music performances and are followed by workshops led by music therapists and teaching artists to encourage participation and imaginative engagement.

Hoffner said part of the goal is providing resources for seniors to "age in place" despite living in a famously chaotic city.

For one-time math and science teacher Rob Kaufman, now 73, the concerts have provided a means to, as his wife puts it, "come out of his shell."

"All of us are different than almost everybody else out there, so when we're in a community like this, we get to be different, and everybody's accepting," he said.

Ellen Kaufman said when she was first navigating her husband's new reality, there were fewer programmes available.

"It means a lot for us to have this," she said. "For everyone here, it's not easy. I see what my friends are going through. They're watching their husbands change."

"But they do this with them – they come out with them, and they're part of it." – AFP

## Spielberg's 'Disclosure Day' debuts atop N American box office

LOS ANGELES – Steven Spielberg's latest sci-fi thriller, "Disclosure Day," debuted in first place at the North American box office with US\$44 million in ticket sales, industry estimates showed on Sunday.

With an ensemble cast led by Emily Blunt and Josh O'Connor, the action-packed film follows an effort to reveal a decades-long coverup of extra-terrestrial visitations.

Decades after making "Close Encounters of the Third Kind" (1977) and "E.T." (1982), Spielberg returns to the burning question of whether humanity is alone – but with a setting in our modern AI- and social media-altered world.

Industry analyst David A. Gross called the US\$44 million debut a "very good opening for an original sci-fi thriller."

"The film's success is going to depend on how well it holds," he said, adding that "reception is very good, but with Steven Spielberg, many people want great."

Second place went to Focus Features' indie horror hit "Obsession," which took in another US\$19 million in its fifth week out for a total domestic haul of US\$188.3 million, Exhibitor Relations reported.

Directed by 26-year-old Curry Baker

on a budget of less than US\$1 million, the film has ridden strong critical and audience reviews to a whopping global estimated haul of US\$286 million.

Variety said it represents Focus Features' highest grossing film of all time and noted that it has now had four consecutive weekends above its "already-impressive US\$17 million debut."

Inde Navarrette has earned particular plaudits for her leading role as a young woman who becomes hauntingly infatuated with a man, played by Michael Johnston, after he makes a magical wish for her affection.

Third place went to Paramount's reboot of the "Scary Movie" parody franchise, with US\$14.5 million in its second week out.

A24's horror film "Backrooms" came in fourth with US\$11.3 million, taking its domestic total to US\$160 million after a record-breaking debut two weeks ago.

The film is based on 20-year-old director Kane Parsons' viral YouTube series and has now earned over US\$262 million at the global box office on a budget of just US\$10 million.

Starring Oscar nominees Chiwetel Ejiofor and Renate Reinsve, the movie follows a furniture shop owner [Ejiofor] who discovers a mysterious, labyrinthine complex underneath his store.

Fifth place went to MGM's "Masters of the Universe" reboot, which took in just US\$8.7 million in its second week out – a 70 percent drop from its already modest debut.

With a production budget of over US\$200 million, Variety said, the adventure film based on a 1980s Mattel toy "will leave theatres as one of the year's biggest bombs." – AFP

### World Weather

CHINA	ASIA-PACIFIC	WORLD	LUSOPHONE
Beijing 19°C~28°C	Manila 25°C~34°C	New York 16°C~26°C	Lisbon 15°C~29°C
Shanghai 22°C~29°C	Bangkok 25°C~35°C	London 15°C~25°C	Rio de Janeiro 19°C~22°C
Hong Kong 25°C~28°C	Tokyo 17°C~27°C	Frankfurt 14°C~26°C	Luanda 19°C~25°C
Taipei 24°C~29°C	Singapore 25°C~31°C	Vancouver 12°C~23°C	Maputo 16°C~26°C
Guangzhou 23°C~29°C	Kuala Lumpur 24°C~33°C	Paris 15°C~28°C	Dili 22°C~31°C
Nanjing 20°C~31°C	Jakarta 23°C~33°C	Moscow 10°C~18°C	São Tomé 24°C~32°C
Guilin 23°C~33°C	Seoul 20°C~33°C	Las Vegas 27°C~42°C	Praia 21°C~29°C
Xi'an 22°C~35°C	Sydney 12°C~21°C	Monte Carlo 19°C~26°C	Bissau 23°C~33°C



# WORLD CUP



Tunisia's midfielder Anis Slimane (centre) is fouled by Sweden's forward Benjamin Nygren next to Sweden's defender Gustaf Lagerbielke during the 2026 World Cup Group F match between Sweden and Tunisia at the Monterrey Stadium in Guadalupe, Mexico on Sunday. - AFP



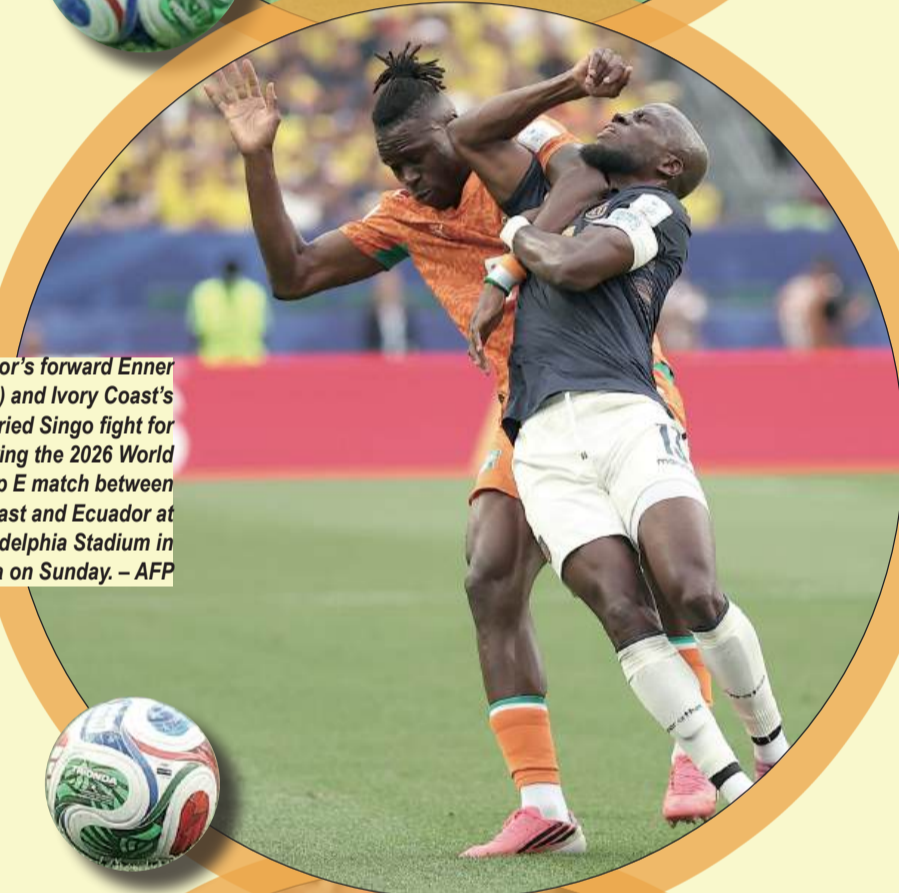
Japan's midfielder Keito Nakamura (left) fights for the ball with Netherlands' defender Micky Van de Ven during the 2026 World Cup Group F match between the Netherlands and Japan at the Dallas Stadium in Arlington on Sunday. - AFP



Ecuador's forward Enner Valencia (right) and Ivory Coast's defender Wilfried Singo fight for the ball during the 2026 World Cup Group E match between Ivory Coast and Ecuador at the Philadelphia Stadium in Philadelphia on Sunday. - AFP



Ivory Coast's forward Elye Wahi (from left to right) heads the ball past Ecuador's midfielder Pedro Vite, Ivory Coast's defender Emmanuel Agbadou, Ecuador's defender Piero Hincapie, defender Joel Ordonez, and forward Enner Valencia during the 2026 World Cup Group E match between Ivory Coast and Ecuador at the Philadelphia Stadium in Philadelphia on Sunday. - AFP



Curacao's midfielder Juninho Bacuna (second right) fights for the ball with Germany's defender Felix Nmecha during the 2026 World Cup Group E match between Germany and Curacao at the Houston Stadium in Houston on Sunday. - AFP



Haiti's forward Wilson Isidor (top) and Scotland's midfielder Lewis Ferguson fight for the ball during the 2026 World Cup Group C match between Haiti and Scotland at the Boston Stadium in Foxborough on Saturday. - AFP