

Sam rallies civil society behind 3rd 5-Year Plan

Tony Wong

In an interview with state broadcaster CCTV, Chief Executive Sam Hou Fai has underlined that the local government has drawn up Macau's 3rd Five-Year Plan in close alignment with the nation's 15th Five-Year Plan, pledging its commitment to accomplishing the tasks and goals listed in the 3rd Five-Year Plan as scheduled.

The Macau government announced and published the final version of the 3rd Five-Year Plan on Tuesday.

The Macao Special Administrative Region's (MSAR) 3rd Five-Year Plan, officially known as the 3rd Five-Year Plan for Economic and Social Development, covers the period between 2026 and 2030.

In the interview, which was conducted in Macau recently and broadcast on CCTV Channel 13 yesterday, Sam noted that the drafting of the 3rd Five-Year Plan is an important practice in upholding and improving Macau's executive-led governance and modernising the MSAR's governance system and capability.

Sam said that the drafting of the 3rd Five-Year Plan highlighted Macau's executive-led governance



Chief Executive Sam Hou Fai speaks during an interview with state broadcaster CCTV, which was broadcast on CCTV Channel 13 yesterday. – Video grab courtesy of CCTV

system, as there was close coordination between the executive, legislative, and judicial organs throughout the plan's drafting process. He also said that the plan has been drawn up in line with the institutional advantage of "One Country, Two Systems," because of which it includes the tasks and goals of ensuring Macau's roles

assigned by the nation as a "One Centre, One Platform, One Base" plus an international talent hub, in combination with Macau's unique advantages, he said.

The Macau government's "One Centre, One Platform, One Base" concept refers to Macau developing itself into a World Centre of Tourism and Leisure, a commercial and

trade cooperation service platform between China and Portuguese-speaking countries, and an exchange and cooperation base with Chinese culture as its mainstream and the co-existence of different cultures.

Adhering to the principle of serving the country's needs with Macau's strengths, Sam underlined the local government's commitment



to closely aligning with the nation's 15th Five-Year Plan, advancing Macau's high-quality development across all fronts, and integrating itself into and making greater contributions to the nation's overall development.

2 types of alignment

Sam also said that an overarching principle of the 3rd Five-Year Plan is two types of alignment. The first alignment consists of the requirements for Macau set out in the nation's 15th Five-Year Plan, and the nation's development planning in general.

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Woman dies after mauled by dog in HK shelter

HONG KONG – Hong Kong authorities are investigating the death of a woman who was believed to have been attacked by a dog in Ta Kwu Ling, North District, New Territories, yesterday.

Police said they last night they received a call after 4:00 p.m. that the woman was found unconscious on the lawn of a licensed dog hotel and canine training centre in Ping Yeung San Tsuen.

The 33-year-old was pronounced dead by paramedics at the scene, with visible wounds to her head, neck and arms.

Assistant Border District Commander Matthew Chan told a media briefing later that a mongrel was spotted in the area when first responders arrived.

Upon reviewing surveillance footage, officers believed the attack took place at around 2:00 p.m., when the woman had just fed the dog and wanted to lead it back into the cage.

But the dog refused and attacked the woman, who was alone at the time.

She was also the premises' licensee.

The male mongrel, which is about one year old and measures one metre in length, was brought to the facility by a volunteer last week and is awaiting adoption.

It has been taken away by the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD) for observation.

Forensic pathologists, as well as officers from the AFCD and the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, are now looking into the case.

– RTHK, MPD



A robot performs simulated emergency rescue operations at the 2026 World Robot Conference (WRC) in Beijing on Wednesday. (More on p.7) – Xinhua

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The Macau Post Daily

Wang Yi urges strategic cooperation, mutual trust in China-S Korea ties

Foreign Minister Wang Yi said in Seoul yesterday that China and South Korea should strengthen communication, enhance mutual trust and pursue strategic cooperation in political, economic, trade and security fields.

– Story on p. 7

Huge questions loom over Prince Harry's shock return to UK

Dozens of questions swirled yesterday as Prince Harry prepares to move back to the UK with his wife and children, six years after his departure sparked a bitter rift with the royal family.

– Story on p. 11

Honduras places 80 pct of country on El Niño drought alert

TEGUCIGALPA – The Honduran government on Wednesday placed 80 percent of the country, including the capital, on drought alert as El Niño scorches harvests and causes livestock to die of thirst.

– Story on p. 12

54 students honoured at Macao Student Fashion Creativity Competitions

Khalel Vallo

A total of 54 students from 22 schools took part in the “2026 Macao Student Fashion Creativity Competitions”, with the award ceremony held yesterday at the Seac Pai Van Vocational and Technical Education Activity Centre in Coloane, where students were recognised for their skills and creativity across four competition categories.

Organised by the Macao Productivity and Technology Transfer Centre (CPTTM) in conjunction with the Education and Youth Development Bureau (DSEDJ), the competitions combined four skills competitions – fashion technology, merchandising display technology, beauty technology and fashion illustration technology – following the WorldSkills competition model*.

Addressing the ceremony yesterday, CPTTM President Victoria Alexa Kuan Chan said the centre launched the competition three years ago, bringing the four competitions together to allow participants to understand international competition requirements and benchmark their skills against international standards.

This year’s competition adopted the theme “Green City”, aiming to encourage students to combine



Winners from the Macao Student Fashion Technology Competition pose with their awards alongside representatives during yesterday's “2026 Macao Student Fashion Creativity Competitions” award ceremony at the Seac Pai Van Vocational and Technical Education Activity Centre in Coloane.

– Photo: Khalel Vallo

fashion creativity with sustainable development by incorporating recycled materials and low-carbon production methods into their designs, according to a statement by the organisers yesterday.

The Macao Student Fashion Technology Competition covered pattern drafting, sewing and creative design, the statement said, adding that participants spent a total of 21.5 hours over four days, from August 11 to 14, creating a designated garment using calico**,

cutting and sewing a specified dress and developing a creative design based on the “Green City” theme.

The Macao Student Visual Merchandising Competition comprised window display design and production, the statement noted, underlining that participants first produced a full-colour design, together with a design concept and title, before using the provided materials to construct the display.

The Macao Student Beauty Technology Competition featured

nail techniques, face painting and beauty care, the statement said, while the Macao Student Fashion Illustration Technology Competition covered fashion design, colour application and garment production drawings.

Each competition awarded one champion, second place and third place as well as three excellence awards. Champions were awarded 3,500 patacas, while those in second place received 2,500 patacas, and the third-placed competitor got

1,500 patacas. All six winners received a trophy.

Kuan encouraged students to remain committed to their goals and continue improving their skills, saying that regardless of whether they won an award, they had gained knowledge and made friends through their shared experience.

The competition provided students with an opportunity to test their technical abilities against an international competition model while exploring sustainable approaches to fashion and design through the “Green City” theme, the statement said. ■

*The WorldSkills competition model is a global framework for assessing and benchmarking vocational excellence. It replicates real-world industry workflows through practical test projects, driven by international standards, structured age-eligible competitor tiers, and transparent, objective marking schemes tied directly to occupational competencies. – Gemini

**Calico is a coarse, heavy, plain-woven cotton fabric traditionally featuring bright printed patterns. The word calico derives from Calicut (now Kozhikode), a major port city on the Malabar Coast of Kerala, India, where European traders first sourced the fabric. – Gemini

Macao Customs seizes 100 smuggled prescription pills from HK man

Ida Cheong

A Hong Kong man was intercepted by Macao Customs officers at the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge checkpoint for smuggling controlled pharmaceutical products containing Zopiclone into Macau, Judiciary Police (PJ) spokesman Ho Ka Weng said during a regular press conference yesterday.

Ho identified the 51-year-old suspect as a Hongkonger surnamed Chan, who claimed to be a construction worker.

The case has been transferred to the Judiciary Police for further investigation.

According to Ho, customs officers stopped the suspect for a routine inspection around 6:00 p.m. on Tuesday as he was entering Macau via the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge. During a search of his luggage, officers found and seized 100 medicinal pills.

Subsequent testing confirmed the pills contained Zopiclone, a prescription-only controlled sedative commonly used for the short-term treatment of insomnia, Ho said, adding that possessing 100 pills far exceeds a standard personal medical dose.

The suspect claimed that he purchased the medication in Hong Kong and intended to bring it to Macau for his family member's use. His drug test result was negative.

At the time of the press conference, the Judiciary Police were still tracing the origin and intended destination of the medication. ■



This undated handout photo provided by the Judiciary Police (PJ) yesterday shows packs with a total of 100 pills containing Zopiclone, and 2 mobile phones.

– Photo: Ida Cheong

Local female loses 460,000 patacas in online dating scam: police

Ida Cheong

A middle-aged local female has fallen victim to an online romance scam, losing 460,000 patacas after being duped into a fraudulent crypto-investment scheme, Judiciary Police (PJ) spokesman Ho Ka Weng said during a regular press conference yesterday.

According to Ho, the victim met a man on a social media platform in mid-May. The man claimed to be a soldier in the Chinese mainland nearing retirement, and they quickly entered a romantic relationship online.

The man later alleged that a metal investment platform linked to “China Aerospace” had a system vulnerability, and military intervention was required to

process the system, convincing the victim that she could secure substantial profits by exploiting this loophole, Ho said.

Following the suspect's instructions, the victim purchased cryptocurrency worth a total of 460,000 patacas across two separate transactions on June 18 and July 6 and deposited the funds into a fake investment account, after which the suspect abruptly cut off all contact. The victim received zero return.

Meanwhile, the victim discovered that her mainland Chinese bank account had been frozen. Suspecting fraud, she reported the case to the police to pursue criminal charges on August 12, Ho added. ■



Judiciary Police (PJ) spokesman Ho Ka Weng looks on during yesterday's regular press conference.

– Photo: Ida Cheong

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MACAU POST

Macau Weather

MAINLY CLOUDY.
A FEW SHOWERS.
A FEW THUNDERSTORMS AT FIRST.
FORCE 3 TO 4 SOUTH TO
SOUTHEASTERLY WINDS WITH
GUSTS.
RELATIVE HUMIDITY
WILL RANGE BETWEEN
75% AND 98%.



26°C~30°C

Source: SMG

UM to host world universities public speaking championship next week

Khalel Vallo

The public University of Macau (UM) will host the World Universities Public Speaking Invitational Championship 2026 on August 28–29 as part of its 45th anniversary celebrations, bringing together students from 26 leading universities worldwide for an international English public speaking competition, according to a UM statement yesterday.

The statement said that the two-day championship will take place at the UM University Hall (N2), with the semi-finals scheduled for 2:30 p.m. on August 28 and the final contest and awards ceremony at 2:00 p.m. on August 29.

Participating universities include Peking University, Tsinghua University, Britain's University of Oxford, and the US's Stanford and Harvard Universities, the statement highlighted.

Through English public speaking, the event aims to promote intercultural exchange while showcasing students' communication skills, critical thinking, and global perspectives, the statement noted, adding that the championship is open to the public.

Those wishing to attend the semi-finals can register through <https://umac.questionpro.com.au/t/ARsbaZSFAG>, while registration for the final and awards ceremony is available through <https://umac.questionpro.com.au/t/ARsbaZSFAJ>, the statement noted.

UM will also host two public speaking workshops at the Student Activity Centre Theatre (E31-G001) on August 29, according to the statement.

The first workshop, "How to Tell Engaging Stories," will take place at 10:00 a.m., with registration available through <https://umac.questionpro.com.au/t/ARsbaZSFAH>.

The second workshop, "Speak with Confidence, Not Perfection: Managing Nerves in High-Stakes Moments," will be held at 11:00 a.m. Registration is available through <https://umac.questionpro.com.au/t/ARsbaZSFAI>.

Experienced trainers and professional speakers will share practical techniques covering speech delivery, persuasive communication, and competition preparation, with the workshops designed to help participants strengthen their public speaking and presentation skills, the statement noted.

The championship is one of the events marking UM's 45th anniversary, the statement said, seeking to provide an international platform for exchange, encourage students to engage with global issues while developing their communication and leadership skills, and promote international cooperation and cultural exchange in higher education. ■



This poster provided by the University of Macau (UM) yesterday promotes the upcoming "World Universities Public Speaking Invitational Championship 2026".

Yoho Gold Coast Hotel to soft-launch in November

Armindo Neves

Yoho Group announced in a statement yesterday that the Yoho Gold Coast Hotel, operated by the group, will launch its first-phase opening in November.

The Yoho Gold Coast Hotel site in Taipa was originally the New Century Hotel. Its owners appointed Yoho Group through an open tender last July to carry out renovation works and launch hotel operations. The project has proven more challenging and required greater investment than initially expected, and is now anticipated to be fully completed by February next year, the statement said.

It added that the aim is to transform a landmark that had long stood silent, and holds many stories, into an integrated destination combining premium accommodation, dining, shopping, and community leisure activities.

The statement indicated that the hotel's 243 economy guestrooms are expected to open first, by the end of this month.

The first phase of the hotel and its associated "The Gold Coast Shoppes" – which includes the hotel's retail mall, banquet hall, bar, most of the dining and retail outlets, a food court, and street-level shops – will begin partial trial operations in November alongside 317 five-star guestrooms and suites on the 3rd to 7th floors (including the swimming pool and health club), the statement said.

The second phase, comprising 383 guestrooms and suites on the 8th to 13th floors, is expected to be completed and begin trial operations by February next year, the statement said. It added that the project will then be fully completed, forming an integrated complex that combines hotel accommodation, banquet facilities, dining, retail, leisure, entertainment, and community consumption, i.e., spending by local residents at the hotel. ■



This artist's rendition of the exterior view of Yoho Gold Coast Hotel. Photo courtesy of Yoho Group



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Exhibition aims to guide students on core life values: curator

Armindo Neves

An exhibition featuring award-winning entries from the “10th Xu Beihong Cup International Arts Competition for Youth & Children (Macau Division)” aims to guide students on core life values.

Funded by the China Red Cross Foundation Liao Jingwen Charity Fund, the exhibition is being hosted at the Chun Cao Tong Exhibition Hall in Lou Lim Ioc Garden.

Curator Liang Jiajie said the event aims to guide students towards appreciating the core values of “truth, goodness, and beauty.”

According to a news article published by the *Post* on Wednesday, Xu Beihong* (1895–1953) was a master painter, art educator, and pioneer of modern Chinese art who synthesised traditional Chinese ink painting with Western realist techniques. Widely recognised as the father of modern Chinese painting, he is celebrated for his dynamic ink paintings of galloping horses and monumental historical works.

According to a statement released during Tuesday’s opening ceremony, this marks the first time the competition has been held in Macau. It attracted more than 700 submissions from numerous local schools and art training institutions.

The statement also said that 235 students entered the finals, and the winners of the contest include six Golden Horse Awards, six Silver Horse Awards, nine Bronze Horse Awards, 50 First Prizes, 89 Second Prizes, and 81 Third Prizes.

In addition to exhibiting award-winning works, the exhibition also features invited entries from schools and art organisations in Beijing, Chengdu, Dalian, Kaiping, Nanning, Shanghai, Shenzhen, Suzhou and the Guangdong-Macau In-Depth Cooperation Zone in Hengqin, highlighting the event’s cross-regional artistic exchange. Over 300 artworks are on display.

The displayed works cover a wide range of themes. Some students paid tribute to Xu’s artistic spirit through traditional imagery such as galloping horses and ink-wash landscapes, while others drew inspiration from Macau’s streets, urban scenery, natural ecology, family bonds, and imaginative concepts.

Leaving a message at the venue, Art Teacher Communication Association of Macau President Leong Hong Si noted that Xu remains one of the most significant figures in modern Chinese art.

The horses Xu depicted in ink wash have become a unique cultural and spiritual symbol of modern China, Leong said, adding that their strong, graceful forms embody the noble, unyielding spirit of the Chinese people and their enduring pursuit of self-improvement.

Leong expressed hope that the exhibition would carry forward Xu’s legacy. Rooted in Macau - a centuries-old meeting point for Chinese and Western cultures - the event aims to immerse local youth in art and inspire meaningful reflection.

By leveraging Macau’s unique position as a cultural bridge between China and the world, the exhibition seeks to nurture artistic achievements that are both deeply grounded in tradition and internationally minded, Leong added.

Liang emphasised that the showcase is about more than technique and presentation; it aims to encourage students to observe life, feel genuine emotions, discover beauty, and express themselves through art.

In his view, aesthetic education for children lies in respecting each child’s natural rhythm and innate nature, allowing them to develop personal sensibilities through seeing, thinking, and creating. Through art, children can experience life, understand themselves, and gradually build a positive inner world, Liang concluded.

* Xu Beihong (徐悲鸿) is a towering figure in modern Chinese art, celebrated as the “father of modern Chinese painting” for his pioneering fusion of Eastern and Western artistic traditions. Born into a poor family in Yixing, Jiangsu Province, Xu began learning traditional Chinese painting from his father as a child. He first worked as a portrait artist before moving to Shanghai, where he met the influential reformer Kang Youwei, who inspired his vision to modernise Chinese art. In 1919, Xu won a government scholarship to study in Paris. He spent eight years in Europe, mastering academic realism at the École des Beaux-Arts (School of Fine Arts) and visiting Germany and Belgium.

Returning to China in 1927, Xu championed a “Sino-Western fusion.” He respected tradition but argued for reform, famously stating: “Keep what is good in ancient methods... add what is insufficient, and merge what can be adopted from Western painting”.

A museum in Beijing is dedicated to his life and work. - DeepSeek



Photos taken by Armindo Neves yesterday at the Chun Cao Tong Exhibition Hall in Lou Lim Ioc Garden



A love for reading needs fostering – and it starts at home

Commentary by Rui Pastorin

He quietly sat on the floor reading after choosing from the sea of books on display. It was a busy bookshop, rife with activity even early on a weekday afternoon.

Opening his newfound book, he started reading as if he were right at home, fully engrossed in the literary world unfolding before him as I walked past.

Eventually, he stood up. The search was over, and he made his way to join others at an efficient, quick moving queue. That day, he was far from the only one on a quest for a new book.

This bookshop in Singapore was full of activity in each corner, jam-packed with people perusing the aisles or lost in a chapter just as he was. The smell of new books and the sounds of pages flipping were ever present, as were a mixture of whispers and loud conversations about a book, author, or a topic ranging from wartime atrocities to cheesy romance novels and, of course, self-help.

Here, to say that it felt encouraging to pick up a book you found most riveting is an understatement, more so as book discussions, whatever the topic, seemed fruitful for whoever they engaged. It all promoted an exchange of thoughts and ideas, and, coming from Macau, to be in an environment where all these factors are ubiquitous felt somewhat different.

This was a real, healthy reading culture. Books were as exciting as new toys, and finishing one felt rewarding – not like having a good habit punished with a longer prison sentence, as so many feel



Photo courtesy of Unsplash

While I am speaking of one place, this is also true of the bookshops that I have visited each time I travelled. That is the type of environment that I tend to miss and is one that I feel is sorely needed. And while bookshops in Macau do see customers, I can't help but feel that times have changed.

I remember trips to Livraria Wan Tat on Rua do Campo with my mother at various points in my life. As a child, it seemed as exciting as visiting a toy shop. We would walk down the stairs to the basement, swiftly making our way to the children's section. I remember other parents and their children

were there too, some busy with toys, while many were engrossed in whatever title they found interesting. Although I don't remember if any of them read to their kids on the spot, I can imagine that they did at a small table that I vaguely remember.

Among the many titles I remember picking out were a large, hardcover book of compiled fairy-tales that detailed everything from Rapunzel and how her troubles started with a pregnant mother's cravings for lettuce to Hansel and Gretel and why walking to a house made out of sugary delights is apparently a bad idea.

Later, the bookshop runs continued as a reward or treat via sufficient funds. It became about picking up James Lee's (the pseudonym of Australian author Jim Aitchison) "Mr Midnight" for a good scare and to discuss the latest read with friends, or finding other youth-orientated novels like Christopher Paul Curtis's "Mr. Chickee's Funny Money". This was a fostered love for books that started at home, and it proved to be an important, core part of my life.

It was this fostered love that allowed me to not only progress into thicker, more complicated books, but attain skills that I believe are not only useful for school or even as someone who has to read and write a lot, but for life.

It goes beyond learning to comprehend and academics. It extends to analysing, focusing, creating, further learning and thinking, helping to form important thoughts and opinions that will help with views and navigating the world. And in a place where many might say no one is reading much anymore, a place that still recognises its value and strives toward becoming a city of reading through various initiatives, it will take more than the external part of the equation. In fact, it needs to start inwards, from one's home. And from then, maybe we'll be a few steps closer to achieving that goal.

When that happens, who knows, maybe the young minds fostered will be creating worlds that will engross someone enough to stop, sit on the ground and read before joining a queue to purchase the latest addition to their bookshelf. ■

2 Macau artists to present paintings at co-creation initiative



These images provided by Art For All Society Macau's (AFA) yesterday show artworks by artists Alley Leong (梁天兒) and Sin U Lam that will be displayed at the upcoming exhibition at Casa Garden.

Rui Pastorin

Local artists Alley Leong (梁天兒) and Sin U Lam will be presenting their paintings at the inaugural edition of Art For All Society Macau's (AFA) "The Collaboration Project - AFA Young Artist Development Programme", which opens next Thursday at Casa Garden, the Macau headquarters of the Lisbon-based Orient Foundation (FO).

The upcoming exhibition is titled "Soft Bodies, Hard Structures – Alley Leong x Sin U Lam".

According to an AFA statement yesterday, the co-creation initiative, founded by curator Chang Chan, aims to give young Macau artists a "space for mutual learning and exchange during the early stages of their careers, presenting their results locally and internationally to enhance the global visibility of Macau's artistic practices".



The statement said that Leong, a self-taught painter and tattoo artist who was born with a congenital limb difference, challenges bodily norms through art, with the exploration of bodily experience central to her art, which frequently feature colourful female figures, with a prominent red mark between the brows understood as the "third eye", the statement said.

London-based painter Sin U Lam, a University of the Arts London Chelsea College of Arts graduate with a background in sculpture, translates memory, lived experience, and environmental perception into structured, architectural abstract paintings, the statement noted.

The free-admission dual showcase will run through September 30, being open from 10:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. ■

Sam rallies civil society behind 3rd 5-Year Plan

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Concerning the second alignment, Sam said that as a member of the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area (GBA), Macau's 3rd Five-Year Plan also needs to align with the respective development plans of Guangdong Province and Hong Kong.

The 11-member GBA consists of nine cities in Guangdong Province and the nation's two special administrative regions of Hong Kong and Macau.

Residents' well-being the ultimate goal

Sam underscored the local government's commitment to taking residents' well-being as the ultimate goal of its governance. Over the next five years, Sam said, the local government will unite all segments of civil society to ensure the implementation of the 3rd Five-Year Plan, creating a new landscape for high-quality implementation of the "One Country, Two Systems" principle with Macau characteristics.

Sam reaffirmed the local government's efforts to enhance residents' sense of happiness, fulfilment, and security.

Meanwhile, Sam also elaborated on Macau's 3rd Five-Year Plan during an interview with *People's Daily*, which was published in its overseas edition yesterday.

Optimal choice for Macau

Sam underlined that closely aligning Macau's 3rd Five-Year Plan with the nation's 15th Five-Year Plan is not only a necessary move to integrate into and serve national development, but also the optimal choice for Macau to seize development

opportunities and leverage development momentum.

Sam pointed out that the 3rd Five-Year Plan has a dedicated section about advancing the development of the Guangdong-Macao In-Depth Cooperation Zone in Hengqin. This section outlines various targeted indicators measuring achievements in the level of Macau-Hengqin integrated development, he noted.

Sam also underlined the local government's commitment to advancing Macau's appropriate economic diversification with its four future large-scale projects and a government guidance fund as key drivers. Sam said that the government will leverage market forces and enterprise-based initiatives with the aim of advancing its 1+4 appropriate economic diversification.

The local government's 1+4 model aims to consolidate and diversify the development of the city's tourism and leisure industry—i.e., the "1" element—while putting special emphasis on promoting the development of four new key industries—i.e., the "+4" elements—namely 1) big health, mainly driven by traditional Chinese medicine (TCM), 2) modern finance, 3) high-tech, and 4) MICE and commerce, as well as culture and sport.

Sam also said that advancing urban renewal and old district revitalisation is also a key task listed by the 3rd Five-Year Plan because this is a vital issue concerning Macau's urban image, safety, and resilience. It serves as a key measure to foster new drivers of economic growth, he said. ■

Chinese rocket team prepares to strive for more reuses after successful land recovery

Interview

BEIJING – For the team behind LandSpace's Zhuque-3 reusable rocket, the recent successful land recovery of the rocket's first stage was just the opening act. The real challenge lies ahead: building a comprehensive inspection and reuse system from scratch, one that can turn a recovered booster into a reliable, multi-flight workhorse.

Zhuque-3 blasted off on Wednesday at 7:35 a.m. from the Dongfeng commercial space innovation pilot zone in northwest China. After the liftoff, the first and second stages of the rocket separated. The first stage then entered its preset return phase, completed a series of maneuvers and successfully touched down.

"The final braking maneuver was executed beautifully, bringing the rocket to a stable stop on the

landing pad," commented Zhuque-3's chief commander Dai Zheng, adding that this launch mission "performed quite perfectly," and the entire team was greatly encouraged.

For China's space industry, this achievement means the country now has two independent rocket recovery technology routes: one for sea operations and another for land operations.

On July 10, the country successfully recovered the Long March-10B's first stage at sea using a net-capture system.

But recovery is only the first step. For a reusable rocket to succeed commercially, its recovered stage must be able to fly again at a relatively low cost. Achieving this requires complex and meticulous follow-up work.

"After the rocket is recovered, what standards must it meet to fly

again? Which components need immediate replacement? Which components need replacement after several flights?" Dai said.

He explained that a series of inspections must be conducted to detect potential problems, including product life testing, fatigue testing, and so on, and replace components accordingly. The team's goal is to establish both an assessment system and a reuse system, gradually increasing the number of times the first stage can be reused.

The Zhuque-3 rocket has an overall length of 66.1 meters, with a body diameter of 4.5 meters for first and second stages, and a fairing diameter of 5.2 meters. It features liquid oxygen-methane propellant, a stainless steel body, and a vertical landing system.

Dai said the team will examine the rocket's status data and use

this data for calibration. Through these data and ground-based test verification, they will develop estimates of how many additional flights the rocket can endure.

"In this way, we will identify weaknesses, make improvements in design, and develop a complete system for inspection, maintenance, and replacement. This will ensure that the rocket can still achieve sufficient reliability to meet the requirements needed for another launch," Dai said.

"This represents a blank slate in the domestic launch vehicle industry, requiring the establishment of a complete set of technical processes and systems from scratch," Dai added.

Generally speaking, liquid oxygen-methane propellant costs account for only 1 percent to 3 percent of launch costs, while the

rocket's first stage accounts for roughly 70 percent of the total rocket cost.

Dai said the cost of the rocket itself can be amortized through multiple uses.

He revealed that, from an engineering perspective, Zhuque-3 is initially expected to be reused 2 or 3 times. After data calibration, this may be extended to 5 or 6 times, and eventually to 10 times. "Ultimately, we hope to achieve the goal of 20 times, significantly reducing launch costs."

This process requires a robust technical system for reuse, more precise assessment of the rocket's weaknesses, and the elimination of potential failures. If this system can be properly established, rockets can be reused more reliably, achieving the expected number of reuses, Dai said.

— Xinhua



Fairgoers try a remote gimbal control product during the 33rd Beijing International Radio, TV & Film Exhibition (BIRTV 2026) in Beijing yesterday. The four-day 33rd Beijing International Radio, TV & Film Exhibition ends tomorrow. A gimbal is a pivoted support that allows an object – most commonly a camera – to remain stable and level regardless of the movement of whatever is holding it.

— Xinhua

Tibetan medical thangkas draw global spotlight at symposium in Xizang

LHASA – An international symposium opened in southwest China's Xizang Autonomous Region yesterday to shed light on the growing global interest in traditional Tibetan medicine and its visual illustrations drawn on thangkas.

Held in the regional capital Lhasa, the second international academic symposium on "The Four Treatises of Tibetan Medicine" and Tibetan medical thangkas brought together more than 200 experts from China, Britain, Germany, Austria, Mongolia and Nepal.

Discussions centered on the historical evolution of the classic treatises, the iconographic interpretation of Tibetan medical thangkas, and pathways for modern clinical application and international cooperation.

At the symposium, a research center for Tibetan medical thangkas was inaugurated.

Written between the 8th and 12th centuries, "The Four Treatises of Tibetan Medicine" is the most influential foundational work on traditional Tibetan medicine. It was inscribed on the UNESCO Memory of the World Register in 2023.

Based on the work, the 80-scroll Tibetan medical thangkas serve as a visual teaching complement, covering diagnostics, pharmacology, preventive care and medical ethics. The medical thangkas were added to China's national documentary heritage list also in 2023.

Among the participants was Katharina Anna Sabernig, a lecturer from the Medical University of Vienna, Austria, who first encountered Tibetan medical murals at Labrang Monastery in Gansu Province in 1994. She later returned and began delving deeper into the works.

"I saw these murals and I started to get deeper and deeper and to understand all this," Sabernig recalled.

Mary Caroline Wyatt, a scholar with dual British-Greek citizenship, began collaborating on an English translation of texts about Tibetan medical thangkas last September. She noted that complete English versions have long been scarce.

"Our translations target professional readers so that we preserve many specialized, traditional terms," said Wyatt.

The event was hosted by the regional health commission and co-organized by the regional Tibetan medicine hospital and Xizang University of Tibetan Medicine.

Xizang has formulated and implemented a series of policies on promoting Tibetan medicine and encouraging innovation. According to a government white paper released last year, the region has 51 public Tibetan medicine institutions, employing 5,287 professionals and operating 3,260 beds, up from 28 institutions, 2,232 professionals and 1,364 beds in 2012.

In April, China rolled out its first national recommended standard for ethnic-medicine disease classification and codes for Tibetan medicine.

Tsering, president of the regional Tibetan medicine hospital, said inscriptions on the UNESCO Memory of the World Register and China's national documentary heritage list have brought Tibetan medicine to a broader global audience.

"We will make the most of these opportunities to promote academic exchanges and clinical collaboration worldwide," Tsering said.

— Xinhua

China expands private-sector access to satellite IoT services

BEIJING – The Ministry of Industry and Information Technology (MIIT) has approved a two-year commercial trial of satellite Internet of Things (IoT) services by Zhejiang Geespace Technology Co., Ltd., marking the latest step in opening the sector to private companies.

During the two-year trial, Geespace will provide wide-area, low-power and reliable IoT connectivity services, enabling round-the-clock smart data collection and remote interaction in sectors such as smart transportation, marine fisheries, energy and water conservancy, the ministry said yesterday.

Satellite IoT uses satellite networks to connect devices and vehicles such as data terminals,

wearable devices, cars, ships and aircraft, particularly in areas where terrestrial networks have limited coverage.

The latest approval comes as China seeks to expand the commercial applications of satellite communications and develop its commercial space industry.

The country launched commercial trials of satellite IoT services in November 2025. In May of this year, Beijing Guodian Gaoke Technology Co., Ltd. received approval to conduct a two-year commercial trial.

Commercial trials are expected to help satellite IoT services achieve economies of scale and promote more coordinated industry development, the ministry said.

For years, basic telecommunications licences in the satellite communication sector have largely been held by major state-owned companies, while private firms have mainly operated in satellite manufacturing, launch services and downstream applications.

A policy document issued by China's State Council in November 2025 called for equal treatment of private investment projects in commercial spaceflight frequency licensing and launch approvals.

China will further optimize market access for satellite communications and strengthen regulation and security across the industry chain to promote the sector's development, according to the ministry.

— AFP

Robot conference spotlights commercial push for China's robot sector

BEIJING – At an exhibition hall, about 10 humanoid robots worked in a coordinated workflow, with some lifting and stacking boxes and others sorting goods along an assembly line. Together, they demonstrated a complete smart logistics process – from material handling to sorting and replenishment.

This scene, presented by humanoid robot maker UBTECH at the 2026 World Robot Conference (WRC) in Beijing, conveys one message: robots are quickly evolving from showpieces to real-world applications.

The five-day conference, which ends on Sunday, has drawn more than 300 exhibitors from 26 countries, with over 3,000 products on display, including more than 300 debuts.

At the Galaxea display area, visitors scanned a QR code to order a bottle of water. A robot autonomously navigated through the warehouse to fetch and package the water in just over one minute, relying solely on model-based recognition. This system is already up and running in Beijing and other cities.

“The solution can solve overnight warehouse staffing problems,” said Luo Tianqi, chief financial officer of Galaxea. “Nighttime order volumes aren’t huge, but still require people on night shifts. Replacing them with robots is economically viable.”

China’s humanoid robot industry is entering a critical stage of large-scale commercialization and deployment, as embodied intelligence products move from small-batch trials to broader adoption, Xu Xiaolan, chairwoman of the Chinese Institute of Electronics, said at the 2026 WRC.

Nearly 10 major automakers, including BYD and SAIC, are already testing embodied-intelligence systems on production lines for tasks like material handling and parts loading. Embodied-intelligence robots are also operating in high-risk, confined spaces for disaster relief, flood response and hazardous industrial inspections, Xu added.

Unitree Robotics founder and CEO Wang Xingxing said at the conference that the company’s robots are already being tested on auto assembly lines and in its own factories, with AI research focused on improving their

ability to perform practical tasks in homes and industrial environments.

On Wednesday, the Hangzhou-based company became the first humanoid robot maker listed on the A-share market, marking a significant step for the country’s humanoid robot industry.

This year’s conference has also emphasized industrial chain collaboration. The WRC brings together AI algorithm developers, 3D-vision and battery suppliers, robot makers and end-users to facilitate cooperation and shorten R&D and iteration cycles.

According to the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology, revenue for China’s robotics sector exceeded 300 billion yuan in 2025, with average annual growth of over 20 percent in the past five years. In the first half of 2026, revenue reached 165.5 billion yuan, up 24.5 percent year on year.

Chinese robots have demonstrated their technological prowess through impressive feats, ranging from martial arts to marathons. Meanwhile, China is doubling down on expanding robots’ real-world applications, despite predictions that the industry’s “GPT moment” remains years away.

Across the country, China has already built more than 70 embodied-intelligence training grounds as of June, with 46 more under construction or being planned, according to a report by the China Academy of Information and Communications Technology.

The industry has benefited from supportive national strategy. “Embodied intelligence” was first written into China’s government work report in 2025. China’s 15th Five-Year Plan (2026-2030) calls for a forward-looking layout of future industries, including embodied artificial intelligence, as well as mechanisms to boost funding and share risks in these emerging sectors.

Wang said “a ChatGPT moment in embodied intelligence” will come when robots can be dropped into unfamiliar settings and complete most tasks via simple voice or text commands. He expects that such a breakthrough could occur within two to three years in an optimistic scenario, or within five to ten years at the latest.

– Xinhua



A robotic smartphone assembly and quality inspection line is displayed at the 2026 World Robot Conference (WRC) in Beijing yesterday. Opened in Beijing on Wednesday, the 2026 WRC features more than 300 exhibitors and over 2,000 exhibits under the theme “Human-Robot Symbiosis, Production-Demand Convergence.” The conference showcases solutions for manufacturing, food service and retail, healthcare and elderly care, emergency rescue and other fields.

– Xinhua

Wang Yi urges strategic cooperation, mutual trust in China-S Korea ties

SEOUL – Foreign Minister Wang Yi said in Seoul yesterday that China and South Korea should strengthen communication, enhance mutual trust and pursue strategic cooperation in political, economic, trade and security fields.

Wang, also a member of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of China Central Committee, made the remarks when holding a strategic dialogue with Wi Sung-lac, South Korea’s top presidential national security advisor, in Seoul.

Wang said that the exchange of visits between the two heads of state since last year has ushered China-South Korea relations into a new stage of improvement and development.

China’s policy toward South Korea has remained consistent and stable, always placing it high on China’s agenda for neighborhood diplomacy, Wang said. As South Korea’s largest neighbor and an important force for peace, China has never initiated or participated in wars and has consistently played a constructive role in promoting the peaceful settlement of international and regional disputes, he added.

Wang said that China appreciates the current administration’s efforts to bring China-South Korea strategic cooperative partnership back on track, calling on the two sides to reduce unnecessary suspicion and strengthen strategic cooperation to benefit both peoples and contribute to regional peace and security.

Wang expressed hope that South Korea will pursue genuine strategic autonomy, refrain from



South Korean President Lee Jae Myung (right) shakes hands with Foreign Minister Wang Yi, also a member of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Committee, at Cheong Wa Dae in Seoul yesterday.

– Xinhua

bloc confrontation or taking sides, and develop its relations with China, the United States and other major countries in a mutually compatible manner.

For his part, Wi said that South Korea is ready to work with China to implement the consensus reached by the two heads of state, deliver tangible outcomes, improve the well-being of both peoples and advance the strategic cooperative partnership to a new level.

Wi added that South Korea is committed to developing relations with different countries in a mutually compatible manner and is ready to maintain close high-level strategic dialogue with China to join forces for regional peace and stability.

During the dialogue, the two sides also had an in-depth exchange of views on regional security issues.

Wang stressed that it is

necessary to remain highly vigilant against the rhetoric and actions of Japan’s right-wing forces that seek to turn back the wheel of history, and that the resurgence of Japanese militarism must never be allowed.

Speaking on the Korean Peninsula situation, Wang said the fundamental way to ease tensions is to address the root causes and to push for the United States to abandon its hostile policy toward the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK).

The Chinese top diplomat called on all parties to do more to facilitate the resumption of dialogue and restoration of mutual trust, expressing hopes that the Korean Peninsula will move toward peaceful coexistence between South Korea and the DPRK, ultimately achieving lasting peace and stability on the Korean Peninsula. (More on S Korea on page 9)

– Xinhua

China to host World Cleanup Day global observance in Shaoxing

HANGZHOU – The global observance of World Cleanup Day 2026 will be held in Shaoxing City, Zhejiang Province, marking the first time China has been chosen to host the event.

Cecilia Andersson, Programme Management Officer and Waste Management Lead at UN-Habitat, announced at a press conference in Shaoxing yesterday that the event, themed “From Clean Plates to Clean Cities,” will run from September 19 to 21.

Andersson noted that preventing and reducing waste at the source contributes to building cleaner, healthier and more resource-efficient cities.

“Hosting the event allows us to learn from practices worldwide, while driving cities toward high-quality development and creating better living spaces for people,” said Wang Shengjun, chief economist at

the Ministry of Housing and Urban-Rural Development.

Wang said the goals and principles of World Cleanup Day closely align with China’s efforts to build modern, people-centered cities.

The host city Shaoxing, an early practitioner of the nationwide “Clean Your Plate” campaign, has been actively promoting grassroots green initiatives, including household waste sorting and citywide cleanup drives.

In 2021, for example, the city rolled out an action plan to curb food waste, mobilizing all sectors to make Shaoxing a model of thrift and foster a culture of conservation.

The global event comes as China steps up its nationwide efforts in waste management and environmental cleanup. Earlier in January, China released an action plan to significantly expand its

solid waste treatment capacity over the next five years, as part of broader efforts to advance a comprehensive green transition across the economy and society.

Meanwhile, China’s 15th Five-Year Plan (2026-2030) outlines initiatives for comprehensive solid waste treatment, stronger environmental risk controls, and significant progress in addressing emerging pollutants.

Established by the United Nations General Assembly in 2023, World Cleanup Day is observed annually on September 20. It aims to raise public awareness of the role cleanup efforts play in sustainable development.

Previous editions have addressed a wide range of global environmental issues, from the challenges of waste pollution in polar regions to efforts targeting textile and fashion waste.

– Xinhua

'It is tough': Indonesia battles wildfires, bracing for worse to come

JAKARTA – Smog is choking parts of Indonesia's Borneo, home to pristine rainforest and vast plantations, but the worst is yet to come, officials and experts warned yesterday.

Nearly 95,000 hectares of land across Indonesia burned in July alone, the government said this week, as dry conditions driven by a powerful El Niño weather pattern take hold.

The fires have created thick smog that is blanketing areas like Palangkaraya, capital of Indonesia's Central Kalimantan in Borneo.

"It is tough," said forestry ministry official Yudho Shekti Mustiko, adding that all 767 of his colleagues across Borneo were deployed dealing with fires.

"There are no officials on standby in the office," he told AFP.

Fires have now burned through over 200,000 hectares since the start of the year, the government said this week – an area around three times the size of the sprawling capital Jakarta.

But fire season has only just begun.

"We have to maintain our stamina, September, October will be very dry," said Yudho.

The area burned is already larger than during previous El Niño seasons in 2019 and 2023, but has not yet caught up to the country's devastating 2015 losses, during a particularly strong El Niño.

Those blazes burned through millions of hectares and created a regional haze crisis.

'4 decades of deforestation'

This year's fires have already sent smoke into Malaysian Borneo, with six areas of Sarawak state recording "unhealthy" air and residents urged to avoid going out.



Motorists drive with headlights on a haze-shrouded road in Palangkaraya city, central Kalimantan, Indonesia yesterday, as smoke originating from widespread forest and land fires has significantly reduced visibility and degraded air quality across the province.

– AFP

In Palangkaraya, the mayor advised people to wear masks and stay indoors. Motorists who ventured out battled through brown haze that reduced visibility.

Volunteer firefighters were deployed, in some cases physically beating down flames with branches, as they struggled to breathe.

"It was certainly difficult," said Deni, one volunteer, on Wednesday.

"My breathing, in particular, couldn't keep up. I usually had to take a five-minute break before going back down to continue extinguishing it."

Forestry Minister Raja Juli Antoni told reporters in Palangkaraya on Wednesday that experts were on standby for cloud seeding operations to quell fires and prevent future ones.

"Should there be even the slightest trace of a cloud suitable for seeding, and provided it is technically feasible to seed it, we

will carry out a weather modification operation," he said.

Cloud seeding involves sprinkling silver iodide, salts or other particles into clouds to trigger precipitation, but it requires clouds to work.

El Niño is a naturally occurring climate phenomenon that brings worldwide changes in winds, air pressure and rainfall patterns – typically experienced as drought in Indonesia.

Experts also point to human factors contributing to the Indonesian fires.

"The scale of the fires burning today is also the legacy of four decades of deforestation, which has turned vast landscapes into degraded tinderboxes," said David Gaveau, founder of deforestation monitoring site Nusantara Atlas.

"Only rain will stop the fires, but that is unlikely before November," he told AFP.

– AFP

Philippines to build more pumping stations in Metro Manila

MANILA – The Philippine government will construct and upgrade a total of 13 pumping stations around Metro Manila as part of flood-control efforts, local media reported yesterday.

Most of the projects are expected

to be operational by the end of 2026 or early 2027, local media said.

The government is also exploring environmentally friendly waste disposal methods, including composting, according to the reports.

– Xinhua

Philippine health authorities warn of leptospirosis amid floods

MANILA – The Philippine Department of Health (DOH) yesterday warned of increased leptospirosis risk from widespread flooding, assuring that its facilities and medicine supplies are sufficient.

According to the DOH, more than 3,000 leptospirosis cases have been reported nationwide in the past eight months. The public was urged to avoid wading in floodwaters and seek immediate medical help if experiencing fever, headache, or muscle pain.

The San Lazaro Hospital in Manila said on Wednesday that it now has more than 20 leptospirosis cases, three of them severe, and expects the number to grow amid the floods caused by heavy rains in the metropolis, local media reported.

Around 3.1 million doxycycline capsules are on standby nationwide, with a Code White Alert raised in affected areas, according to the DOH.

– Xinhua

Philippine school shooter in Zamboanga City 'acted alone,' official says

MANILA – The 14-year-old student who carried out the deadly shooting at the junior high school in Zamboanga City "acted alone," a Philippine minister said yesterday, according to local media.

"Alone in the sense that he planned, executed, and willfully did everything on his own,"

Interior and Local Government Secretary Jonvic Remulla was quoted as saying at a press conference.

No organized group planned the attack with him, and authorities found no communications indicating that others were involved, he added.

– Xinhua

Philippine authorities seize 43 kg meth

MANILA – Philippine authorities have seized about 43 kg of methamphetamine hydrochloride, worth 292.4 million pesos (about US\$5.1 million), local media reported yesterday.

According to the Philippine Bureau of Customs, the operation took place at the Manila International Container Port, with the drugs concealed in fabric

pouches covered with plaster of Paris to resemble genuine talc stones.

Describing the concealment as a new modus operandi, Customs Commissioner Ariel Nepomuceno noted that the shipment was linked to a legitimate company that allegedly attempted to smuggle the contraband alongside lawful cargo.

– Xinhua

Philippine official pushes ban on online gaming platform Roblox after school shooting

MANILA – Jonvic Remulla, secretary of the Department of the Interior and Local Government of the Philippines, yesterday expressed support for a total ban on the online gaming platform Roblox, citing its links to the dark web and concerns over its influence on young people following a deadly school shooting.

Roblox is a US-based online gaming platform launched in 2006

that allows users to play, create, and share games with a global community. It is particularly popular among children and teenagers in the Philippines.

Remulla said the shooting in Zamboanga City on Tuesday, which left two students dead and nine others wounded, bore a strong resemblance to a first-person shooter video game.

"This is a case of desensitization to violence and children because of the games they play on the internet," Remulla said.

He noted that the incident showed the "undue influence" of video games. Roblox, which has previously stated its commitment to child safety, maintains that it has multiple layers of protection on its platform.

– Xinhua

Sharia enforcers flog 4 Indonesians for sex out of marriage

BANDA ACEH – Officials in Indonesia's staunchly Islamic Aceh province publicly caned two women and two men 100 strokes each for engaging in sex outside of marriage, an AFP reporter witnessed.

The four, whose ages were not disclosed, were caned in a public park in the provincial capital Banda Aceh, with dozens gathered to watch.

Some in the crowd, which included children, shouted "harder" as the cane came down repeatedly.

Four other people received 22

lashes each at yesterday's flogging for the lesser crime of "physical intimacy", which can mean hugging and kissing.

Two others received seven lashes each for getting too close to one another – which can include holding hands – while a man was flogged 20 times for consuming alcohol.

These are all crimes in Aceh, Indonesia's only province to apply a version of Sharia Islamic law in force there since 2002, and made more strict in 2015.

Caning, though not a legal form of punishment in the Southeast Asian nation, retains strong support in Aceh to punish a range of offences, including gambling and gay sex.

Aceh enjoys a special autonomy granted under a 2005 peace deal to end a 30-year separatist insurgency in the province.

Indonesia is the world's largest Muslim-majority country, but officially recognises six religions as well as indigenous beliefs.

– AFP



Myanmar's military commander-in-chief, General Ye Win Oo (centre left) and Thailand's Chief of Defence Forces, Ukrit Boontanon (centre right) shake hands after their High-Level Committee Meeting talks at the Chatrium Grand hotel in Bangkok yesterday.

– AFP

Bangladesh elects ruling party's Alamgir as president

DHAKA — Lawmakers in Bangladesh elected ruling party veteran Mirza Fakhru Islam Alamgir as the country's president yesterday, a largely ceremonial post left vacant after the early resignation of his predecessor.

Alamgir, 78, secretary-general of the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) and local government minister, won 255 votes to become the 23rd president of the South Asian country of 170 million people.

The only other candidate, Oli Ahmad, nominated by the opposition 11-party alliance led by Jamaat-e-Islami, finished with 88 votes, Chief Election Commissioner A M M Nasir Uddin said.

"I dream of a happy, prosperous, and welfare-orientated state where marginalised communities, hard-working people, and daily wage earners can afford meals twice a day," Alamgir said yesterday before the vote, according to the state news agency BSS.

The poll was the first in 35 years that more than one candidate contested the Bangladesh presidency.

The previous presidential election involving a parliamentary vote was held in 1991.

"We have high hopes from you," Oli, 87, said after the vote.

"We expect you to serve the country by putting national interests above personal interests."

Bangladesh's close ally China congratulated Alamgir, saying it looked forward to "a shared future in the new era", its high commission in Dhaka said in a statement.

The presidency vote follows the resignation in July of the previous president, Mohammed Shahabuddin, 76, a close ally of Hasina who had faced pressure to quit.

Widely known as "Chuppu", he was elected in 2023 and stepped down citing ill health. His term was due to end in 2028.

Seasoned politician

Prime Minister Tarique Rahman's BNP won a landslide victory in February, in the first elections since a 2024 uprising ousted the government of Sheikh Hasina.



Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) general secretary Mirza Fakhru Islam Alamgir speaks during an interview with AFP in Dhaka on August 21, 2024. — AFP

Hasina remains in hiding in India, having refused to attend her trial in Dhaka — where in November she was found guilty of crimes against humanity and sentenced to be hanged.

Rights groups had long accused Hasina's administration of abuses

including the murder of rivals, suppression of opposition parties, rigged courts and one-sided elections.

Born on January 26, 1948, Alamgir entered politics while studying economics at Dhaka University.

He was a key student leader in the 1969 uprising opposing military rule by Pakistan, a stepping-stone towards Bangladesh's eventual independence in 1971.

After teaching economics, he entered government service, then politics, with posts including minister of agriculture, aviation and tourism.

But he rose to prominence as an opposition leader during Hasina's iron-fisted rule — while BNP head Khaleda Zia was in prison and her son Rahman was in exile.

Alamgir was himself repeatedly arrested under Hasina's government, facing dozens of charges he said were politically motivated.

The BSS news agency said he had been praised for "keeping the BNP organised and maintaining the party's political presence during difficult times".

Alamgir is married to Rahat Ara Begum, a retired financial official. They have two daughters.

As president, Alamgir will serve as the head of state and commander-in-chief of the armed forces. — AFP

Japan to launch probe for Mars moons in Oct: space agency

TOKYO — Japan's ambitious mission to collect and bring back samples from one of Mars's moons will lift off on October 20, the space agency announced yesterday.

The unmanned Martian Moons eXploration (MMX) probe, a collaboration with US and European space agencies as well as numerous universities and tech companies, may help unlock the origins of the Solar System and life on Earth.

The Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency (JAXA) said the flagship H3 rocket carrying the MMX will blast off from Tanegashima Space Centre at 4:41 a.m. on October 20 (local time).

The spacecraft will stay in Mars's orbit for around three years and will attempt to land on Phobos, one of the planet's moons.

It will collect at least 10 grams

of material from the surface of Phobos, while the IDEFIX rover — the French name for comic hero Asterix's dog — will conduct surface observations.

The spacecraft will also observe Demios, another Mars moon — but without landing. A return capsule is meant to head back to Earth and land in Australia in 2031.

JAXA hopes that the mission will reveal how Mars and its moons formed, a key piece of knowledge in working out how the Solar System was born.

JAXA has said that the mission will also explore the possibility of using Phobos as a "natural space station" by establishing the technology required for a round trip to Mars — something "essential for crewed Mars exploration".

— AFP

N Korea fires unidentified projectile: S Korea military

SEOUL — North Korea fired several short-range ballistic missiles yesterday, the South said, and Pyongyang mocked US "servant" Seoul, after President Donald Trump suggested he would meet Kim Jong Un this year.

Trump told reporters at the White House on Wednesday that he would meet North Korean leader Kim Jong Un, seeking to revive the bond he claims to have forged with the leader of nuclear-armed North Korea in his first term.

He also said it was important to "get along" with Kim, adding in an unusually precise assessment that Pyongyang now had 57 "very powerful" nuclear weapons.

Hours after Trump's remarks, North Korea fired more than 10

short-range ballistic missiles from the Pyongyang area towards the East Sea at around 5:00 pm (local time), South Korea's military said.

The missiles flew around 300 kilometres (186 miles), the Joint Chiefs of Staff said, adding that South Korean and US authorities were conducting a detailed analysis of their specifications.

South Korea's presidential office convened an emergency security meeting, condemning the launches as a violation of UN Security Council resolutions and ordering heightened readiness.

Trump's sudden focus on Kim and his scaling back of joint US-South Korean military drills have alarmed Asian allies — while sparking speculation that he is

seeking a foreign policy win as his Iran war stalls.

The powerful sister of Kim Jong Un said Wednesday she didn't know about the reported communication between her brother and Trump.

Kim Yo Jong nevertheless said her brother still had "good memories and feelings" about Trump and that the relationship between the two leaders remains "excellent".

Earlier Wednesday, Seoul's military said the drills would wrap up today, not on August 27 as originally planned, "at the suggestion of the US side".

South Korea's defence minister said yesterday that North Korea is estimated to have around 80 to 120 nuclear weapons. — AFP

Train hits station workers, killing 4 in Japan

TOKYO — A train hit and killed four workers in Japan yesterday, authorities said, a rare incident in a country renowned for its normally excellent rail safety record.

Local media reported that the four workers were removing weeds from the train tracks at Shin-Kanuma Station in Kanuma city north of Tokyo when the express train struck them.

"The four were confirmed dead," a fire department official told AFP.

Another official said that when emergency services arrived, three workers were trapped under the train, while one was on the platform.

The workers, all men, were in their 50s and 60s, Jiji Press reported. None of the roughly 50 passengers on the train suffered injuries.

The six-carriage train was the

Spacia X express on the Tobu Nikko Line, connecting Greater Tokyo with popular tourist destination Nikko in the Tochigi region, media reports said.

The Tokyo-bound train was approaching its stop at Shin-Kanuma when the accident occurred, broadcaster NHK said, citing the operator.

"We heard this loud rumbling noise. Then the train came to an emergency stop with such sudden braking that it was impossible to stand," a 40-year-old man who was on the train told NHK.

"There was an announcement saying 'we will stop to identify where the noise came from', and then we were left unable to get off for a while," the man was quoted as saying.

Local media reported that the workers were part of a seven-

person crew removing weeds from around the train tracks.

Japanese railways have one of the best safety records in the world.

Fatal accidents from malfunctioning trains are extremely rare in Japan due to high levels of maintenance and training, and use of advanced technology.

Japan's deadliest accident this century was in April 2005 when a rush-hour commuter train derailed and smashed into an apartment building in Amagasaki, in the country's west, killing 107 people and injured more than 500 others.

An accident involving a derailed cargo train and two passenger trains killed 161 people in 1963.

There has never been a passenger fatality from a derailment or a collision on Japan's network of "shinkansen" bullet trains since they entered service in 1964. — AFP



This handout photo taken on August 13, 2024 and released by Phillip Island Nature Parks yesterday shows tourists watching the "Penguin Parade" at Phillip Island Nature Parks in Victoria.

Australian wildlife workers have launched an unprecedented effort to vaccinate wild populations of little penguins against the highly contagious H5N1 avian influenza.

— AFP

US warns allies, China to back economic war on Iran

WASHINGTON, DC – The United States yesterday warned allies and China alike to join President Donald Trump's new campaign to isolate the Iranian economy and "collapse" the government in Tehran.

US Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent's comments underscored how Trump is shifting to economic rather than military pressure on Tehran as his unpopular war drags towards the six-month mark.

Under pressure at home over the impact of the war and with crucial midterm elections looming, Trump had on Wednesday promised the "most crushing" economic operation ever against Iran.

"It is going to work in Iran and we are going to collapse this regime," Bessent told US broadcaster CNBC.

Bessent underlined that Washington expects both allies and rivals to join the ramped-up campaign on Iran.

"This is going to be the greatest coordinated economic isolation in the history of the world. And we are going to them and saying you are either with us or against us," he added in a message to allies.

Asked whether the United States would pressure China, Bessent said that "many conversations are best to have in private," but called on Beijing "to get with the programme."

Chinese President Xi Jinping is due to visit the White House on September 24 when the topic of Iran is sure to come up, as it did when Trump travelled to Beijing for a summit in May.

Bessent said the economic plan meant the United States is less likely to have to return to heavy military operations against Iran.

"If we are doing the maximum economic pressure, then that means that likely there will not be a large-scale kinetic restart, but I will emphasize that is for now," Bessent said.

The US treasury chief said he would give further details of the economic measures against Iran during a press conference on Monday.

'Economic terrorism'

Iran dismissed Trump's plan.

"The so-called 'Economic D-Day' is a diversion from America's own crisis: unprecedented debt & surging interest costs," Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi said in a post on X.

The Iranian foreign ministry called the sanctions threats "economic terrorism."

Trump said earlier this week that talks with Iran were on hold for now as the war started by the US and Israel on February 28 appears stalemated.

Tehran is keeping the key Strait of Hormuz partially shut and Washington is persisting with a naval counter-blockade of Iran.

Trump has insisted that Iran cannot be allowed to develop a nuclear weapon as part of any deal. However, nearly half a year of war has failed to force Tehran to give up its enriched uranium or abandon its stated plans for nuclear energy.

A new US aircraft carrier strike group arrived in the Middle East on Wednesday, after grim conditions aboard a long-deployed carrier

provoked fresh domestic criticism of Trump's war.

The USS George Washington is replacing the USS Abraham Lincoln, which had reportedly suffered food shortages, broken plumbing and a number of suicide attempts during a deployment that began in November 2025.

Trump's pledge on Wednesday of unprecedented "economic warfare" on Iran comes as the president grows increasingly frustrated with the lack of movement on the military front.

In a post on his Truth Social, the US leader said he was announcing "the MOST CRUSHING ECONOMIC OPERATION EVER TAKEN AGAINST ANY COUNTRY! This will be Economic Warfare and Isolation on an unprecedented scale".

The US has maintained punishing sanctions against Iran for decades, with Trump in his 2017-2021 first term ratcheting them up as part of a "maximum pressure" strategy in which he tore up a nuclear deal negotiated by his predecessor Barack Obama.

Despite the heavy international sanctions, Iran found ways to continue exporting its oil, with China the biggest buyer. Tehran operates a so-called shadow fleet of tankers, all of which are under international sanctions.

In his threat to those helping Iran, Trump did not mention any country by name but listed several activities that he said needed to stop immediately: "oil smuggling, swap lines, cash transfers, exchange houses, ship registries, front companies". – AFP

Finland charges mother with trafficking children to IS-controlled Syria

HELSINKI – A Finnish-Russian woman has been charged with trafficking her children to parts of Syria then controlled by the so-called Islamic State (IS) group, Finnish prosecutors said yesterday.

The woman has been charged with two counts of aggravated human trafficking for the alleged crimes, spanning 2014-2024, Finland's National Prosecution Authority said.

She denies the charges.

The woman, in her 40s and now residing in Finland, first took her children to Syria in 2014, according to a preliminary police investigation.

The family was later taken to the Al-Hol camp in northeast Syria.

The children had been subjected to a life in which their "rights to a safe upbringing could not be met", Detective Chief Inspector Jan Aarnisalo said when the investigation was completed last year.

By the end of 2021, the woman and one of the children had returned to Finland. The second child came back later.

Both of the children are now adults, though their exact ages were not specified.

According to the Finnish prosecution authority, the charges had been filed with the Eastern Uusimaa District Court. – AFP

Nord Stream bomb suspect arrested while working on movie about attack: media

BERLIN – A Ukrainian man arrested in the Nord Stream bombing was detained while working on a Hollywood movie about the gas pipeline attack starring Adrien Brody and Sean Penn, a report said yesterday.

Police in Pula, Croatia on Wednesday arrested Volodymyr Zhuravlyov under a European arrest warrant put out by Germany, which is seeking his extradition.

German prosecutors say Zhuravlyov is a trained diver and accuse him of helping plant explosives on the Baltic Sea energy link between Russia and Germany that destroyed three of the four pipelines in 2022.

Germany's Legal Tribune Online reported he was arrested while working on the set for the movie "Snake Island" by US director Doug Liman ("Bourne Identity"), with Brody and three-time Oscar winner Penn.

Zhuravlyov worked as an advisor for the film, according to media reports AFP was unable to immediately verify with German or Croatian authorities.

The Ukrainian suspect had previously been held in Poland for

his alleged role in destroying the pipelines.

But authorities there refused to extradite him and let him go, judging that any such Ukrainian attack would have been a legitimate act of war rather than a crime.

The Baltic Sea sabotage attack came months after Moscow's February 2022 full-scale invasion of Ukraine.

German investigators believe the attack was ordered by a Ukrainian state agency with the aim of depriving Russia of future energy revenues to finance its war in Ukraine.

Prosecutors charge Zhuravlyov worked closely with Sergiy Kuznetsov, another Ukrainian man who was arrested in Italy last year before being extradited to Germany.

The case is politically awkward for Germany and Ukraine, as Berlin has strongly backed Kyiv in its fight against Russia.

German government officials, when asked about the issue, have pointed to the independence of the judiciary.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky has said his government knew nothing about any plan to blow up the pipelines. – AFP

Milky Way's fastest star discovered spinning around black hole

Bénédicte Salvétat Rey

PARIS – Astronomers have discovered the fastest star in the Milky Way zooming at 25,000 kilometres a second around the supermassive black hole at the centre of our galaxy.

The star, named S301, orbits so dangerously close to the black hole that scientists believe it can shed light on this unimaginably powerful cosmic monster – and test out Albert Einstein's theory of relativity.

"Decades carefully tracking stars orbiting our galaxy's central black hole, Sagittarius A*, have led to this breakthrough discovery," Reinhard Genzel of the Max Planck Institute for Extraterrestrial Physics in Germany said in a statement.

"Because it orbits so close to Sagittarius A*, S301 opens a new window to the fundamental properties of spacetime in this extreme black-hole environment," added Genzel, who shared a 2020 physics Nobel prize for discovering the black hole.

To spot S301 – which is two billion times fainter than the star Betelgeuse in our sky – the team of astronomers used the European

Southern Observatory's Very Large Telescope in the Chilean desert.

They first noticed the star in 2023, and have been tracking its orbit since.

"What is special about this star is that it's orbiting Sagittarius A* on a very tight orbit, taking just 8.7 years to complete it," explained Felix Mang, a co-author of a new study describing the discovery.

The star gets roughly as close to the black hole as Saturn gets to our Sun, which is "unprecedented", the PhD student emphasised.

Torn from its partner

When the star gets closest to the immense suck of the black hole, it is travelling around 25,000 kilometres per second.

That is 100,000 times faster than a commercial airplane, or more than eight percent of the speed of light, making it the fastest star ever detected in our galaxy.

Scientists believe that S301 was once part of a binary star system that was torn apart by the almighty pull of the black hole.

While S301 became trapped in the black hole's gravity, its partner

star was blasted out with such force it likely left the galaxy entirely.

The astronomers will get another good look at the star when it makes its next closest approach to the black hole in 2031.

The team hopes that data from two complete orbits will allow them to determine the star's trajectory with enough precision they can also directly measure the black hole's rotation.

Like most objects in the universe, black holes are thought to spin.

Einstein's theory of general relativity predicted that a spinning black hole would drag spacetime along with it, twisting it in a way that changes the orbits of the surrounding stars.

Within the next 10 years, the astronomers hope to use S301 to measure the black hole's spin for the first time.

"Without this star, we would need to measure the motion of other stars for several more decades to get anywhere close to measuring the spin of the black hole," explained French astronomer and study co-author Juan Osorno.

The study was published in Nature on Wednesday. – AFP



Women mourners sit with posters depicting late Iranian supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei while attending an event marking 40 days since his burial at Imam Hassan al-Mujtaba Mosque in Iraq's central holy shrine city of Karbala yesterday.

– AFP

Huge questions loom over Prince Harry's shock return to UK

Helen Rowe

LONDON – Dozens of questions swirled yesterday as Prince Harry prepares to move back to the UK with his wife and children, six years after his departure sparked a bitter rift with the royal family.

In a surprise move, Harry and Meghan “plan to leave the United States by the end of the month to settle in a private, non-royal residence, which is said to be located outside London”, *The Daily Telegraph* reported on Wednesday.

Media outlets including the BBC reported the couple's two children, Prince Archie, 7, and Princess Lilibet, 5, had already been enrolled in a British school for the start of the school year in early September.

But many questions remain.

Why now?

Some commentators pointed out that Harry and Meghan's US adventure has largely failed to live up to expectations.

“Meghan's cookery series didn't go well. They haven't managed to cooperate successfully... with Netflix. And also, they lost Spotify,” royal commentator Richard Fitzwilliams told AFP.

“I think they've not been a success in Hollywood and I think this is one way to change things, and change things before William becomes king.”

The couple might also be concerned over reports that Harry's brother Prince William “might remove their [royal] titles”, he added.

Another commentator, Ed Owens, said Harry, King Charles III's younger son, was keen to reconcile with his father and wider family.

Harry and Meghan met the king in July during a brief visit to the UK – the first time in four years the couple's children had met their grandfather.

“There's a sense that visit went well...



Britain's Prince Harry and US actress Meghan Markle pose for photographs in the Sunken Garden at Kensington Palace in west London on November 27, 2017, following the announcement of their engagement.

– AFP

so now might seem an opportune moment,” Owens said.

Where will they live?

After stepping back as working royals in 2020, Harry, 41, and Meghan, 45, known as the Duke and Duchess of Sussex, eventually settled in Montecito in California.

It has been reported that the couple have chosen a new house in the UK, but it will not be one of the many royal residences.

Fitzwilliams said the rural Cotswolds area of western England, where Harry spent time as a child at his father's private Highgrove House residence, appeared to be a possibility.

The Sun newspaper said the couple would keep their Montecito home, as well as a house in Portugal where they are believed to have spent some vacation time this summer.

They also spent some time in July with Harry's uncle Charles Spencer, in the ancestral home of Althorp where his mother Princess Diana grew up and is buried.

What will they do?

The late Queen Elizabeth II made it clear to Harry and Meghan before her death in 2022 that there was no “half-in/half-out” option under which they could pursue commercial ventures while being working royals.

There appears to be no change to that position from Buckingham Palace.

“Currently, their podcasts, lifestyle shows, and entrepreneurial activities are seen as incompatible with the ethos of royal work which is considered to be done for the greater good, not for financial gain,” said sociologist Nathalie Weidhase of the University of Surrey.

Harry is patron of a number of UK charities and remains involved with the Invictus Games for wounded veterans, which he founded and which will be held in Birmingham next year.

The couple's reported initial US\$100 million deal with Netflix was last year replaced with a reduced agreement to develop film and TV projects for the streaming giant.

Meghan also launched a lifestyle and consumer-products brand, As Ever, in 2025.

The couple are not popular with the public, with a YouGov poll revealing only 22 percent of Britons had a positive opinion of Meghan and 33 percent for Harry.

Can Harry reconcile with William?

Relations with Harry's family nosedived in March 2021 with a no-holds-barred interview with US talk show hostess Oprah Winfrey.

The rift deepened further with the publication in January 2023 of Harry's tell-all memoir “Spare”.

While bridges have since been rebuilt with Charles, Prince William, the heir to the throne, and Harry remain estranged.

The Daily Mail tabloid reported that William would be “apoplectic”.

“There is a very deep rift. He feels Harry has betrayed him,” Fitzwilliams said.

What security will there be?

Harry has said he did not feel safe bringing his family to Britain after losing a court battle over government-funded police protection.

Jennie Bond, a former BBC royal correspondent, told Sky News it was “extraordinary that he feels suddenly that he can bring his wife and children to the UK when a year ago he couldn't see any way of doing that because of the issues over security”.

Prime Minister Andy Burnham told reporters their security was a “private matter”, wishing them well in the move. – AFP

German prosecutors probe alleged leader of sadistic online group

BERLIN – German prosecutors said yesterday they had arrested the suspected ringleader of an online group which incited murder and other acts of sadistic violence involving minors.

The suspect, only partially named as Kai M., was arrested in March and is in pre-trial detention, federal prosecutors said, adding that he is aged under 20 and would be tried as a juvenile.

The case echoes others in a dark online subculture where predators manipulate, groom, exploit and extort young victims and seek to sow societal chaos, a category of crime labelled nihilistic violent extremism.

Kai M., together with other members of his online group, is accused of inciting a minor in Russia to fatally injure another child.

He is also alleged to have incited others to commit murder and to set cars on fire.

Prosecutors labelled the network Kai M. was involved in “a terrorist organisation” which was “influenced by a far-right ideology”.

He is suspected of “contacting a child in another European country via the internet and inducing the child to

perform sexual acts on [him or herself] with a knife, causing serious injuries”.

Prosecutors said he was involved in two criminal groups, the first of which aimed to cause “serious criminal offences such as murder or manslaughter” with the goal of “bringing about the collapse of the social order”.

He is also suspected of spreading video footage of the crimes he instigated.

Both groups Kai M. was in are described as connected to the so-called “Com scene”, short for community, made up of people searching social media and gaming platforms for young victims who can be coerced or manipulated into harmful acts.

The case echoes that of a 21-year-old German-Iranian man known as the “White Tiger” who is accused of multiple sadistic online crimes including coercing a 13-year-old to take [his or her] own life.

The trial of that man, partially named as Shahriar J., began in a juvenile court in Hamburg in January, with hearings scheduled until December.

– AFP, MPD

University suspends academic behind Jason Arday plagiarism charges

BRUSSELS – A Belgian university yesterday suspended a US academic who spearheaded accusations of plagiarism against Jason Arday, the black ex-Cambridge professor found dead last week after resigning over the scandal.

Researcher Nathan Cofnas – a self-defined “race realist” who was himself sacked from his Cambridge post two years ago – posted on X: “I was just suspended by Ghent University. They will almost certainly fire me.”

Without naming Cofnas, the University of Ghent said in a statement it had launched a “preliminary disciplinary investigation” against a postdoctoral researcher embroiled in the furore, suspending him “as a precautionary measure”.

Arday, who became Cambridge's youngest-ever black professor when he was appointed in 2023, was found dead Friday aged 41. He was facing mounting accusations he had plagiarised parts of his doctoral thesis and exaggerated some of his personal life achievements.

Diagnosed with autism and other developmental difficulties as a child, Arday had disputed the allegations against him.

But he quit on August 5, writing in his resignation letter that he had “reached the limits of what any person should reasonably be expected to endure”.

Plagiarism concerns surrounding Arday first surfaced several years ago but went nowhere at the time, with one reporter backing down from

investigating further after the professor threatened legal action.

Last month, however, Cofnas came forward to say he had found numerous instances of plagiarism in the professor's work – and the case snowballed, receiving widespread media coverage in Britain and the United States.

British media and right-wing commentators seized on the row, claiming Arday had unfairly benefited from diversity, equality and inclusion (DEI) policies.

Ghent University said it was now “assessing” whether there were sufficient grounds to launch full disciplinary proceedings in the case.

In a previous statement on Wednesday, the university said it was “shocked” by Arday's death and took “very seriously” public statements made by its researcher regarding the former professor.

“Ghent University stands for respect for human dignity and opposes discrimination, hatred and racism,” said the statement by the university's rector Petra De Sutter and vice-rector Herwig Reynaert.

“We attach great importance to academic freedom and to open academic debate, even when views are controversial,” it added.

“However, that freedom is not unlimited. It goes hand in hand with responsibility and may be restricted in order to protect the rights of others.”

– AFP

Honduras places 80 pct of country on El Niño drought alert

TEGUCIGALPA – The Honduran government on Wednesday placed 80 percent of the country, including the capital, on drought alert as El Niño scorches harvests and causes livestock to die of thirst.

The El Niño weather pattern warms surface temperatures in the central and eastern equatorial Pacific Ocean, triggering worldwide changes in winds, atmospheric pressure and rainfall patterns, and causing warmer overall global temperatures.

This year's El Niño is forecast to be one of the strongest on record.

The measures taken by the Honduran government covers 234 municipalities (out of a total of 298) that have been affected by low reservoir levels, crop losses, and livestock deaths, threatening food security.

"Cattle have died, and the cows we still have are thin. The situation is critical; the forecasts are discouraging," Francisco Euceda, a cattle rancher from one of the municipalities under red alert, told AFP.

Tegucigalpa, the capital city with 1.7 million inhabitants, tops the list of 75 areas placed under red alert, meaning they are at maximum risk.

The most affected area is the Central American Dry Corridor, an arid strip of land covering parts of Honduras, El Salvador, and Nicaragua, that is vulnerable to extreme weather events.



A man pours drinking water in plastic barrels due to a lack of tap water supply in the area, at a house in Tegucigalpa, on Wednesday. – AFP

"This crisis will last until March or April of next year," said Honduran President Nasry Asfura, announcing a series of emergency measures, including the drilling of new wells, construction of new reservoirs and delivery of food to the most critical areas.

The UN World Food Programme recently estimated that Central America would be the region worse affected by hunger exacerbated by El Niño.

From Mexico to northern Brazil, including the Pacific coast and the Guiana Shield on the north coast of South America, some 110 million people experienced the hottest July on record.

El Salvador, Nicaragua, and Honduras broke their monthly temperature records in both June and July, exacerbating fears of famine.

Last month, UN Secretary-General António Guterres warned that El Niño was "adding fuel to a planet already on fire" and pushing the world into "uncharted territory."

Peru last week declared a state of emergency in a third of its cities over El Niño and said intense heat and rain could also cause havoc for food production.

In Indonesia, meanwhile, El Niño has been blamed for worsening a drought that has fuelled one of the worst wildfire season in years. – AFP

Brazil boosts protection for women against gender violence

BRASÍLIA – Brazil's Supreme Court has ruled that women should be granted protective measures under a domestic violence law, even when threats come from outside the home or family.

Violence against women is a major concern in Brazil, where femicides have reached record levels.

Until now, Brazil's Maria da Penha law, which in 2006 established measures to protect women from domestic violence, was principally applied to husbands, boyfriends, or members of the same household.

The Supreme Court broadened the scope of the law after a case in which a state court denied protective measures to a woman who reported being stalked and receiving death threats from a neighbour.

The court's 10 justices unanimously ruled on Wednesday that protection measures must now "apply to any form of gender-based violence against women, regardless of whether it occurs within a domestic or family setting or within an intimate relationship."

These include court-ordered requirements to maintain a safe distance between the victim and the alleged aggressor.

The Maria da Penha law is named after a woman who fought for justice after surviving several murder attempts by her husband – including electrocution – which left her paraplegic.

It took two decades for the law to be passed after the attacks on her. "Today, 20 years after the Maria da

Penha Law, the situation has worsened," said Carmen Lácia, the only woman serving on the Supreme Court.

Brazil passed a law making femicide – killing a woman because of her gender – a distinct crime in 2015.

According to the Brazilian Public Security Forum NGO, the number of femicides has risen by 14.5 percent over the past five years, reaching 1,571 deaths in 2025.

Leftist President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva and his main election rival, the conservative Flavio Bolsonaro, both pledged to protect women as they launched their campaigns on Sunday.

With nine million more registered women voters than men, the demographic is key to election victory. – AFP

Spain expands Ceuta migrant shelters

MADRID – The Spanish government announced yesterday the creation of shelters for 1,800 migrants in Ceuta in a bid to relieve the humanitarian crisis there following last month's influx from Morocco.

Some 72,000 migrants breached the border in an unprecedented and deadly rush into Spain's north African exclave on July 30-31, with 70,000 having since returned to Morocco, according to Spanish government figures.

But the thousands who remain – including unaccompanied children who cannot be summarily deported – are struggling to access food, water, shelter and sanitation while the tiny city's resources are overwhelmed.

Many have spent the past three weeks sleeping on the streets or on the beach, with NGOs warning that women and girls are particularly vulnerable.

Locals have complained about insecurity and hygiene problems linked to the homeless migrants roaming the streets, accusing the government of neglecting Ceuta.

The migration ministry said the two new shelters were "temporary reception facilities that will be

expanded progressively as the adaptation work on the other planned spaces is completed".

The priority of the "voluntary" transfer was to offer "an alternative accommodation and reception space so that they [the migrants] no longer have to spend the night on the streets or on the beach", the ministry said.

The migrants' future has sparked a political battle between Spain's leftist central government and regions governed by the main conservative People's Party (PP) and far-right Vox, which resist taking in unaccompanied children under existing legal provisions.

The government aims to transfer 500 girls to mainland Spain, but the PP has demanded the expulsion of all the remaining migrants.

"In Spain, mass deportations of minors are illegal," secretary of state for children Rubén Pérez Correa responded during an interview with Cadena SER radio yesterday.

The unaccompanied girls in Ceuta – some as young as 10 or 11 years old – come from "very complex family situations" and "require specialised care", he said.

– AFP



A migrant prays and another one rests under a makeshift shelter as they wait to enter a short-stay migrants centre at Trampolin beach in Spain's north Africa's Ceuta exclave last Saturday. – AFP

Guinea-Bissau exports 200,000 tonnes of cashew nuts

BISSAU – Guinea-Bissau has exported about 200,000 tonnes of cashew nuts so far during this year's marketing season, Minister of Commerce and Industry Jaimentino Có has announced.

Có made the remarks on Wednesday during a visit to three warehouses in the Bolola industrial zone of the capital, Bissau, where he inspected the handling and export of cashew nuts.

The minister gave a positive assessment of the export process, describing the cashew sector as vital to the country's economy and the livelihoods of its population.

He said the visit also came ahead of dredging work at the

country's ports scheduled for October, which was expected to significantly reduce the time needed for the transport and shipment of goods.

According to Có, six companies have yet to declare their exports, although they have already completed customs clearance procedures and vessels are ready for further shipments.

Cashew nuts are the backbone of Guinea-Bissau's export sector. According to the World Bank, raw cashew nuts account for around 90 percent of the country's export value and provide income to a large part of its population.

– Xinhua

2 Brazilian workers killed after crane collapses in Portugal

LISBON – Two Brazilian construction workers aged between 30 and 40 were killed on Wednesday after a large crane collapsed in Belas, in the municipality of Sintra, about 20 km northwest of Lisbon.

The incident was reported at 8:04 a.m. (local time) after nearby residents heard a loud noise and found two bodies close to the crane lying in the street.

A third worker, who was painting the rear of a building at the time of the accident, was not injured. The collapse also damaged one vehicle parked nearby.

Sintra Mayor Marco Almeida arrived at the scene and said he had requested inspectors from the Authority for Working Conditions (ACT) to assess safety conditions at the construction site. He added

that authorities were also gathering information to determine whether the construction work had been properly licensed.

Some residents told Portuguese broadcaster RTP that the crane had previously shown signs of instability. Almeida said technical experts and police investigators would determine the circumstances surrounding the collapse. – Xinhua

Barca seal Cancelo return to bolster defence

LALIGA BARCELONA – Barcelona have signed defender Joao Cancelo on a free transfer, the Spanish champions said yesterday.

“The full-back arrives as a free agent and signs on until June 30, 2029,” said Barca in a statement.

Portugal international Cancelo terminated his contract with Saudi Arabian side Al Hilal in order to return to Camp Nou.

The 32-year-old has previously spent two loan spells with Barca, including in the second half of last season, helping Hansi Flick’s side retain La Liga.

Cancelo played in Portugal, Spain and Italy before joining Manchester City in 2019.

The defender was loaned to Bayern Munich and then Barcelona in the 2023/24 campaign before joining Al Hilal in 2024.

Cancelo follows Rodri, Anthony Gordon and Karim Adeyemi to Barca this summer, with the Catalan giants still looking to sign a striker after the departures of Robert Lewandowski and Ferran Torres.

Barca were hoping to sign Atletico Madrid’s Julian Alvarez but have to look elsewhere with the Rojiblancos refusing to let the Argentina international move.

Flick’s team begin their La Liga campaign on Sunday at Elche.

The game will be played at 3:30 a.m. Monday Macau time.

– AFP/MPD



Portuguese international footballer Joao Cancelo poses with a Barcelona jersey during his official presentation as FC Barcelona's new player at the Nou Camp in Barcelona yesterday. – AFP

Alonso won't confirm Fernandez will remain at Chelsea after Man City link

Steven Griffiths



LONDON – Chelsea manager Xabi Alonso refused to reveal if Enzo Fernandez wants to remain at Stamford Bridge after the Argentina midfielder was strongly linked with Manchester City.

Seeking a new midfielder after selling Rodri to Barcelona, City boss Enzo Maresca is believed to be keen on a reunion with Fernandez after their time at Chelsea.

The pair worked together for 18 months before Maresca departed Stamford Bridge in January.

Fernandez infuriated Chelsea last season when he hinted on several occasions that he could be willing to leave the Premier League club amid links with Real Madrid.

He was booed by Chelsea supporters during Saturday's friendly win over Real Sociedad.

Aware of City's interest, Chelsea reportedly set a deadline of August 14 to receive offers for Fernandez, who is valued at around £120 million (US\$163 million).

With the transfer window closing on September 1, Alonso was asked if Fernandez had told him he wants to stay at Stamford Bridge.

“Enzo is a Chelsea player, a top, top player. He's training really well, he started 10 days ago with the team, very integrated,” Alonso told

reporters yesterday.

“We are happy with him and he is getting ready for Monday. He's training really well and I see him with a good attitude. That's what we want.

“He's trying his best to prepare for the Premier League kick off.”

Argentina international Fernandez, who was sent off in his country's World Cup final defeat against Spain in July, joined Chelsea from Benfica for £106.8 million in 2023.

Losing one of his most combative players would be a blow to Alonso, who begins his first season as a Premier League manager with a west London derby at Fulham on Monday.

Fulham are managed by Alvaro Arbeloa, who is a close friend of Alonso after their time playing for Liverpool, Real Madrid and Spain.

‘Made the right choices’

“Of course you can have a relationship, but once you're on the pitch, no friends, no past,” Alonso said.

“It's just the 90 minutes that we are playing, fighting for each club.”

Both Chelsea and Alonso have a point to prove after disappointing seasons last term.

Alonso earned his managerial reputation by leading Bayer Leverkusen to the domestic double in Germany in 2024.

But he was sacked by Real Madrid in January after less than eight months in charge, while Chelsea finished a dismal 10th in the Premier League, leaving them without European action this season.

“We feel ready. We've prepared the whole pre-season, six weeks with some players from the first day, others coming later,” Alonso said.

“The desire, the hunger, the ambition to play the Premier League is already in the building, in each training. Looking forward to it.”

Asked about Chelsea's close-season signings, including Morgan Rogers, Maxence Lacroix, Danny Welbeck and Jordan Henderson, Alonso said: “I'm very happy. I think we have made many right choices.

“Very good balance in terms of quality, personality, maturity, different stages of their career, good momentum. We are in a good position I would say.”

Liam Delap, Nicolas Jackson and Mykhailo Mudryk are reportedly among a group of players training separately to Alonso's main squad following links with other clubs.

“We manage well, with good group dynamics, whenever we need, we have different groups, and it's not been an issue at the moment,” Alonso said of Chelsea's bloated squad of over 40 players. – AFP

Mourinho begins 2nd Real Madrid reign with Barca in his sights

Rik Sharma



BARCELONA – Jose Mourinho's second spell at Real Madrid begins in Barcelona this weekend in La Liga, although at Espanyol rather than up against his and Los Blancos' bitter rivals.

The veteran Portuguese coach returns to the club 16 years after first being appointed but charged with a similar task, deposing Barcelona as the leading club in Spain.

Mourinho is also aiming to restore some of the intensity and attitude that defined his first Madrid reign, between 2010-2013, after two seasons without winning a major trophy steered president Florentino Perez back to him.

The 15-time European champions have suffered dressing room turbulence, with tensions between players and a succession of coaches unable to find a convincing balance on the pitch.

Not Carlo Ancelotti, Xabi Alonso nor Alvaro Arbeloa could fit the team's attacking stars - Kylian Mbappe, Vinicius Junior and Jude Bellingham - in together without compromising the team defensively.

Perhaps disciplinarian Mourinho might be the man to make it work, to turn superstars into willing runners without dulling their attacking edge.

The Portuguese says he returns as a different coach, more mature after years of experience in England, Italy, Turkey and elsewhere.

“I'm much more mature, less emotional, and more in control... as always, learning from mistakes,” said the 63-year-old this week, although he insisted he was not “more boring”.

Mourinho made clear from his first days back at Madrid's Valdebebas training ground what it is he wants from his team.

“I am here... to create a culture of work, responsibility, ambition,” said Mourinho, describing his role as a “mission”.

Perez has certainly given Mourinho the ammunition he needs to catch up with Barca.

Los Blancos spent heavily this summer, making Ivorian winger Yan Diomande their record signing at 140 million euros (US\$163m) and bringing in Bernardo Silva and Marc Cucurella among a series of high-profile arrivals.

However some would argue that in not signing Rodri, who they were linked with before he joined rivals Barcelona, Madrid have not reinforced sufficiently in midfield.

Diomande's arrival adds yet another major attacking threat to a squad that already boasts plenty of them. It may be former Manchester City midfielder Silva who proves the more significant signing when it comes to balance.

Madrid have spent years trying to move on from the era of Toni Kroos and Luka Modric, whose ability to control matches allowed

the forwards great freedom and reduced the team's exposure to relentless opposition attacks.

Silva is not a direct replacement for either, but his technical quality gives Mourinho an option for solving a problem that has persisted since their departures.

Whether he will be enough to give Madrid a foothold in the biggest games, including against Hansi Flick's double defending Spanish champions, remains to be seen.

Mourinho's first Madrid spell was defined by his rivalry with Pep Guardiola and a Barcelona side that dominated Spanish football.

Clasicos became increasingly bitter during his time in Madrid, with touchline confrontations, accusations of refereeing bias and a succession of heated encounters making the rivalry increasingly dark and compelling.

Mourinho's Madrid eventually ended their rivals' domestic dominance by winning the title in 2011-12 with a record 100 points.

This season Madrid visit Barcelona in late October in the first Clasico of the campaign, already eagerly awaited.

Between now and then, starting at Espanyol tomorrow, Mourinho has two months to get his team fit, firing and most importantly, all on the same page.

The game will be played at 3:30 a.m. Sunday morning Macau time. – AFP/MPD

German football fans plan widespread VAR protests

Football

BERLIN – German football club fan groups are planning to launch widespread protests over VAR technology during the first round of German Cup matches this weekend.

Yesterday, fan groups from clubs across the country shared co-signed statements critical of VAR and calling for the video assistant referee technology to be abolished.

The fan groups are expected to launch protest action at matches, with the first round kicking off today.

Entitled “VAR is robbing us of the joy of football”, the statement said the technology has “destroyed the most emotional moment of the game.”

“Instead of spontaneous joy after a goal, there is uncertainty about a possible review.

“We want to return to this state permanently and therefore demand the abolition of the Video Assistant Referee in German football.”

German football has a strong history of fan activism, with regular protests launched in recent seasons

against match starting times and investment deals.

In the 2023-24 season, widespread fan action including littering pitches with tennis balls and chocolate coins resulted in the scrapping of an investment deal, despite the proposal winning majority support of clubs.

The protests resulted in significant delays, with players speaking out against the actions and referees threatening to cancel matches.

Recent cup winners Stuttgart and Eintracht Frankfurt start their cup journeys against lower league opposition today, while holders Bayern Munich play on September 2.

Due to technical and other issues, VAR is not used in the first round of German Cup matches. The technology had been introduced from the last 16 stage, but this season will be adopted from the second round onwards.

St Tonis 1911/20 vs Eintracht Frankfurt kick off is at 12:00 a.m. tomorrow and Hansa vs Stuttgart kick off is 2:45 a.m. tomorrow. All Macau time. – AFP/MPD



Ravenna's football club jerseys of newly recruited Brazilian football player Ronaldinho are on sale before an event to present the team in Marina di Ravenna yesterday. Former Ballon d'Or and World Cup winner Ronaldinho is set to come out of retirement aged 46 to play for Ravenna in the Italian third tier. – AFP

Wang downs Sindhu to break Indian hearts at badminton worlds

Badminton

Faisal Kamal

NEW DELHI – China's world number three Wang Zhi Yi overcame severe cramps to down Indian star P.V. Sindhu and reach the quarter-finals of the badminton world championships yesterday.

Top seeds kept their campaign on track with South Korea's world number one An Se-young and defending champion Akane Yamaguchi also winning their round three matches at New Delhi's Indira Gandhi Indoor Stadium.

But Wang's brave effort stood out as she beat ninth-seeded Sindhu 21-11, 15-21, 21-17 despite severely cramping in the deciding game and stun the home crowd.

With scores level at 16-16 in game three, Wang slipped and winced in pain before taking some treatment for cramps.

The Chinese went down again at 19-17, but this time got back to get the winner as she fell flat on the court in relief and joy.

"Obviously it was such a tough match today," said Wang. "I think she is very strong opponent and has very fast attacks. My gameplan worked and I am proud of my performance today."

On her cramps, Wang said, "That moment I just told myself to keep going. Never give up - that's it."

Sindhu added: "I don't know if she was injured or not. Maybe that's her strategy or her way of doing it. You never know, maybe that's her gameplan."

An eases through

Earlier Olympic champion An beat Denmark's Mia Blichfeldt 21-16, 21-10 in 43 minutes in New Delhi as she bids to win a second world crown.

An, who pulled out of the Japan Open in the second round last month with a foot issue, made a slow start but soon found her groove against the 16th-seeded Dane.

"I am very happy, the crowd was supporting me and that gave me energy and keeps me going," the 2023 champion An said.

Japan's world number two Yamaguchi beat Sim Yu-jin of South Korea 21-17, 21-10 to stay on course to defend her title she won last year in Paris.

Japanese Nozomi Okuhara served past Ishika Jaiswal of Malaysia 21-11, 13-21, 21-12.

In men's singles action, Indian giantslayer Ayush Shetty's dreamrun in the tournament ended with a 21-19, 21-11 defeat to Ali Farhan of Indonesia.

Shetty, who knocked out defending champion Shi Yuqi of China in round one, fought hard but 11th-seeded Farhan showed his class in the round-of-16 match.

Chinese Taipei's Chou Tien Chen beat Yushi Tanaka of Japan 21-14, 21-9.

American teenager Garret Tan lost to Thailand's Kunlavut Vitidsarn a day after the 18-year-old caused a big upset to send India's Lakshya Sen packing in a three-game thriller.

World number two Vitidsarn outplayed world championship debutant Tan 21-10, 21-10. – AFP



Wang Zhiyi of China hits a return during the women's singles round of 16 match against Pulara V. Sindhu of India at BWF World Championships in New Delhi, India, yesterday. – AFP

Hamilton 'fittest ever' as he chases 8th F1 title

F1

ZANDVOORT, Netherlands – Seven-time Formula One world champion Lewis Hamilton said yesterday he had spent the summer break training not partying, in the best shape of his life as he chases another title.

The 41-year-old sits 50 points behind current championship leader Kimi Antonelli but said his Ferrari was in a "sweet spot" that gave him hope of being able to close the gap.

"This has been the most different summer break that I've ever had in all of my championship seasons," the veteran Briton told reporters.

Previous summer breaks

involved a week or two off "with a bit of partying and stuff," he said.

But this year was different. "I took this as an opportunity to really level up. So I trained for three weeks."

"I come back the fittest I've ever come back in summer in the 20 years or whatever that I've been here," he said in an ominous warning to his rivals.

Hamilton cut a very different figure to the man who arrived at Zandvoort last year.

Following a frustrating start to his career at Ferrari, he had suggested the team should find another driver and that he was "useless".

One year on, he said what had changed his outlook was that

the team was moving in the right direction and the changes he had demanded had been implemented.

"I think we're in a real sweet spot. We're just going to continue to build on this foundation that we've built," he said.

Further driving Hamilton on is the fact he has never won at Zandvoort in his long F1 career.

This will be his last chance, as the Dutch Grand Prix is being removed from the calendar after this season.

"I've won at pretty much all the other tracks... So I definitely want to change that. So massively driven, it's just such an incredible circuit," he told reporters. – AFP

WADA pledges vigilance on Russian athletes ahead of 2028 Olympics



MONTREAL – The World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) director general told AFP Wednesday that the organisation will "be vigilant" in monitoring Russian athletes ahead of the next Olympic Games, promising reassurance to competitors from other countries.

In a controversial decision last month, the International Olympic Committee opened the way for Russian athletes to compete at the 2028 Los Angeles Olympics.

Years before Russia's 2022 invasion of Ukraine, WADA uncovered what it termed a massive state-backed Russian doping campaign at the 2014 Winter Games in Sochi.

"We're not naive," WADA director general Olivier Niggli told AFP at the agency's headquarters in Montreal.

"We're going to be vigilant because other athletes will be looking for reassurance," he added.

Niggli stressed that there remains no accredited drug-testing lab in Russia, meaning all samples from any Olympic hopeful will be analysed abroad.

"They can no longer do their internal cooking the way they did in Sochi. At the moment, that's not possible," Niggli said.

He cited an IOC request to bolster the testing system for Russian athletes, including multiple tests for any Russian national likely to qualify for LA 2028.

The Sochi doping scandal led to Russia's flag, anthem and other national symbols being banned from the Tokyo Games, held in 2021 because of the pandemic, and at the Beijing Winter Games in 2022.

WADA President Witold Banka told AFP the ongoing Ukraine conflict made it impossible for the agency to even consider reinstating Russia's national anti-doping lab.

"RUSADA (the Russian Anti-Doping Agency) remains non-compliant with the code. To check whether they are compliant or not, we need to do the audit, an in-person audit in Moscow."

"Because of the political situation and the war, it was

impossible to do it," he said.

The IOC's Russia ban was imposed in October 2023 when the Russian Olympic Committee decided to include sports organisations in territories Moscow had annexed as members.

The IOC's July decision will allow Russian athletes, albeit under strict conditions, to compete in team events and qualifying competitions for the Games.

Ukraine has slammed the IOC's decision, accusing it of "playing into the hands of a bloody aggressor".

'Politicisation'

Beyond the case of Russian athletes, Banka said WADA is pushing for a more independent testing regime that would exclude all national agencies from monitoring athletes during major competitions.

"We want to implement stronger rules, stronger independent rules, that only independent testing bodies can test athletes, without involvement of the national anti-doping agency of a particular country," he said.

This proposal received sharp criticism in June from the United States Anti-Doping Agency (USADA) - an organisation long at loggerheads with WADA.

Relations between the two agencies soured further in 2024, when it emerged that 23 Chinese swimmers had tested positive for a banned substance three years earlier but escaped sanctions.

The controversy led US authorities to raise concerns over possible Chinese influence in WADA, which the global watchdog denied.

With the Los Angeles Olympics two years away, Banka said those poor relations would not undermine anti-doping efforts during the Summer Games.

"There is no threat for the Olympic Games, that this situation will affect the Olympic Games in LA from the anti-doping perspective. We have a very good relationship with the LA 2028 organising committee," he said.

"There is no room for politics and politicisation of anti-doping."

– AFP



Sweden's Armand Duplantis competes in the men's Pole Vault during the World Athletics Diamond League athletics meeting at the Stade Olympique de la Pontaise in Lausanne, Switzerland yesterday. – AFP

Verstappen signs new Red Bull contract until 2030: team

F1

ZANDVOORT, Netherlands – Four-time Formula One world champion Max Verstappen has signed a new contract with Red Bull until the end of 2030, the team announced yesterday, ending speculation over his future in the sport.

"Four more years of full send. We

are delighted to announce that Max has signed a contract extension with the team until the end of 2030," Red Bull said on X, formerly Twitter.

The news came with preparations in full swing for Verstappen's home race, the Dutch Grand Prix in Zandvoort, and will delight his thousands of orange-clad fans.

Verstappen is one of the most

successful Formula One drivers of all time, dominating the sport with four consecutive world championships from 2021.

But results have been harder to come by this season, with the 28-year-old failing to see a chequered flag in the first half of the year and sitting sixth in the drivers' championship. – AFP

Shakira, Christina Aguilera concerts in Abu Dhabi cancelled

DUBAI – Entertainment organisers have announced the cancellation of a UAE concert by US singer Christina Aguilera and a festival featuring Shakira in Abu Dhabi, amid the ongoing Middle East war.

Iran has pressed attacks on Emirati ships in recent weeks, after a ceasefire fell apart last month.

The United Arab Emirates on Tuesday said it is suspending all trade and financial dealings with Iran after reporting an Iranian missile attack directed at its ships.

Against this backdrop, the

organisers of the Offlimits music festival, scheduled for November with Shakira as the headline act, announced on Tuesday that the festival was cancelled, vowing to refund tickets.

“We look forward to bringing the OFFLIMITS community together again in 2027,” a message on the festival website read, without stating the reason behind the cancellation.

Separately, ticket sales website Ticketmaster said Christina Aguilera’s scheduled September 25 concert had also been cancelled,

without providing a new date, Emirati media reported.

Both the Offlimits festival and the Aguilera concert had been scheduled for April before being postponed.

Gulf countries – including the UAE, long seen as a haven of security in a turbulent region – have been struggling to recover from the impact of repeated Iranian strikes.

Tourism and cultural activities have taken a hit, even as the scale and intensity of Iranian attacks on the UAE have declined.

– AFP

Sweden reports rare measles outbreak following music festival

STOCKHOLM – Sweden’s Public Health Agency said on Wednesday it had recorded 21 cases of measles connected to a folk music festival in the country’s north.

The agency said the cases were reported in several regions but all connected to the music festival Urkult, which was held in the north of Sweden in late July and early August.

A majority of those affected were under the age of 18 and most of the cases involved people who had not been vaccinated.

“Outbreaks of measles are rare. Vaccination against measles is included in the national childhood vaccination programme, and vaccination coverage is around 95 percent,” the health agency said in a statement.

It added that regional health authorities were carrying out contact tracing in order to limit the spread.

Measles causes fever, respiratory symptoms and skin rashes.

In some cases, it can also lead to more severe complications, including pneumonia and brain inflammation, which can lead to serious long-term impacts and death.

– AFP

‘Girl with a Pearl Earring’ in Japan, perhaps for the last time



A visitor films the ‘Girl with a Pearl Earring’ painting by Dutch artist Johannes Vermeer at Nakanoshima Museum of Art in Osaka yesterday.

– AFP

OSAKA – “Girl with a Pearl Earring” will go on show in Osaka this week, on a rare trip abroad for the 17th-century Johannes Vermeer masterpiece and potentially its last to Japan.

The work will be displayed from today at the Nakanoshima Museum of Art in Osaka while its home museum, the Mauritshuis in The Hague, closes until September 20 for maintenance.

“For the Mauritshuis, the Girl’s journey is a special opportunity to share her with the Japanese public, perhaps for the very last time,” said Mauritshuis’ director Martine Gosselink.

The museum generally does not loan the painting “because she is our most important and precious painting”, but the renovations allowed it to travel, Gosselink told AFP.

The Dutch institution is frequently visited by enthusiastic Japanese fans, and other nations like China, Singapore and South Korea also have asked about loaning it, she said.

“But we chose Japan, for Japan has a huge number of fans. And they really love Vermeer. They love ‘Girl with a Pearl Earring,’” Gosselink said.

“And the amount of visitors coming from Japan every year to the Mauritshuis is so large. So we thought, if one country deserves the girl, it should be Japan,” she said.

‘Mona Lisa of the North’

The Osaka exhibition, running through September 27, will feature a

total dozen paintings from the Mauritshuis collection, including Vermeer’s “Diana and her Nymphs” and “The Laughing Man” by Rembrandt.

Dubbed the “Mona Lisa of the North” for the inscrutable expression of its subject, which recalls Leonardo da Vinci’s famous portrait, the painting attained global fame after inspiring a best-selling novel that was turned into a Hollywood film.

The small canvas shows a young woman set on a dark background, her head turned towards the viewer and a pearl earring glinting from beneath her blue and cream turban.

The last time the portrait was out on loan was in 2023 for a less exotic trip to the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam.

It went on a world tour in 2012-2014 while previous works were ongoing at the Mauritshuis.

The Osaka show will be the fourth visit to Japan.

Following a 1984 show in Tokyo, the painting came to Osaka to mark the 400th anniversary of Japan-Netherlands relations, drawing 600,000 viewers, said *The Asahi Shimbun* daily, which organised the latest show.

It also came to Tokyo and Kobe in 2012 and drew 1.2 million fans, the newspaper said.

The Mauritshuis will be closed from August 24 to September 20 for maintenance work and “Girl with a Pearl Earring” will be back on display at the Mauritshuis from early October.

– AFP



(From left to right) Mexican actors Alfonso Herrera, Noé Hernández, and Héctor Kotsifakis pose on the red carpet upon arrival to attend the premiere of the film “La Captura” (or “Facing El Chapo”) in Mexico City on Tuesday. Joaquín “El Chapo” Guzmán was captured by law enforcement three separate times between 1993 and 2016. Following his 2016 recapture by Mexico, Guzmán was extradited to the United States in 2017, convicted on federal drug trafficking and conspiracy charges in 2019, and sentenced to life imprisonment plus 30 years.

– AFP

World Weather

CHINA	ASIA-PACIFIC	WORLD	LUSOPHONE
Beijing 23°C~33°C	Manila 25°C~31°C	New York 21°C~27°C	Lisbon 16°C~27°C
Shanghai 26°C~32°C	Bangkok 25°C~33°C	London 11°C~21°C	Rio de Janeiro 20°C~29°C
Hong Kong 26°C~30°C	Tokyo 23°C~32°C	Frankfurt 12°C~23°C	Luanda 18°C~23°C
Taipei 24°C~31°C	Singapore 25°C~34°C	Vancouver 17°C~28°C	Maputo 16°C~27°C
Guangzhou 24°C~32°C	Kuala Lumpur 25°C~35°C	Paris 11°C~23°C	Dili 20°C~31°C
Nanjing 24°C~32°C	Jakarta 23°C~33°C	Moscow 11°C~22°C	São Tomé 25°C~31°C
Guilin 25°C~36°C	Seoul 23°C~27°C	Las Vegas 27°C~41°C	Praia 25°C~32°C
Xi'an 22°C~32°C	Sydney 10°C~22°C	Monte Carlo 20°C~29°C	Bissau 24°C~32°C

‘Tinker Tailor’ filmmaker John Irvin dies at 86

LONDON – British filmmaker John Irvin, best known for adapting John Le Carre’s espionage classic “Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy” for television, has died aged 86, his producer Claire Evans told UK media on Wednesday.

Irvin, who also directed a string of 1980s action movies including “The Dogs of War”, “Raw Deal” and “Hamburger Hill”, enjoyed a five-decade career that spanned TV, documentaries and cinema.

He died “peacefully at home” on August 11, surrounded by his

family, Evans confirmed to *The Guardian*.

The pair worked together on the 2016 film “Mandela’s Gun”, which explored the South African ex-president’s experience as a guerrilla fighter for the African National Congress (ANC).

Irvin, born in northern England in 1940, won two BAFTAs and an Emmy nomination for his 1979 BBC adaptation of Le Carre’s spy novel, which cast Alec Guinness as the shy, monkish hero George Smiley.

Its success opened the doors to

Hollywood, with Irvin making a number of action-packed movies and other films featuring a host of star names in the decade that followed.

They included Christopher Walken and Tom Berenger in “The Dogs of War”, Fred Astaire in horror film “Ghost Story”, Arnold Schwarzenegger in “Raw Deal” and Patrick Swayze and Liam Neeson in crime thriller “Next of Kin”.

He is survived by three children and two grandchildren, according to reports.

– AFP

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1. Nature will win

People walk past a salvaged jeep laden with plants at a waste-themed garden in Srinagar, India yesterday. — AFP

2. Flowers by the yard

People buy flowers at KR Market in Bengaluru, India yesterday. — AFP

3. Walking the dogs

Attendants in costumes present robot dogs from Vbot during the 2026 World Robot Conference in Beijing on Wednesday. — AFP

4. Champion pumpkin runner!

A statue depicting a jockey on his horse is made of pumpkins at a pumpkin exhibition in the garden of Ludwigsburg Castle in Ludwigsburg, southern Germany, yesterday. The pumpkin exhibition is themed "Let's play" and lasts from today until November 1. — AFP

5. Fisherman for eternity

A crab-shaped coffin, designed for a deceased fisherman, is pictured near the Erico Carpentry Shop in Accra, Ghana on Monday. — AFP

6. Pious sauropod

A woman walks past a dinosaur statue inside a Buddhist temple at Wat That Phra Aram Luang in Khon Kaen, Thailand yesterday. — AFP

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