

O Lam vows advancing Hengqin university town, int'l tourism & cultural zone

Tony Wong

The government held a meeting on Friday to brief association representatives on Macau's 3rd Five-Year Plan regarding its social affairs and culture portfolio, during which Secretary for Social Affairs and Culture Wallis O Lam said that her portfolio will place a strong emphasis on advancing the construction of two large-scale projects: the Macao-Hengqin International Education (University) Town and the Macao International Integrated Tourism and Cultural Zone.

The meeting, which was attended by about 60 association representatives, was held at the Service Platform Complex for Commercial and Trade Cooperation between China and Portuguese-speaking Countries (aka Forum Macao Complex) in Sai Van.

The meeting was open to the media when O Lam delivered her opening speech and officials under her portfolio gave presentations on the 3rd Five-Year Plan regarding the government's social affairs and culture portfolio. Afterwards, the meeting was held behind closed doors while attendees gave their opinions and officials answered their questions.

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

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.

Delivering her speech, O Lam noted that the 3rd Five-Year Plan is a programmatic document and a master blueprint guiding the MSAR's development over the next five years, fully aligning with the nation's 15th Five-Year Plan while directly bearing on residents' well-being and Macau's long-term prosperity and stability.

O Lam said that her portfolio will place a strong emphasis on launching initiatives to ensure the effective implementation of the 3rd Five-Year Plan's tasks and goals in her portfolio, pledging her commitment to turning the blueprint into tangible, concrete benefits for the public, thereby enhancing residents' sense of fulfilment, happiness, and security.

O Lam also said that her portfolio will place a strong emphasis on advancing the construction of the Macao-Hengqin International Education (University) Town in Hengqin to expand the development space for Macau's higher education, creating a virtuous cycle underpinned by education, empowered by technology, and supported by talent.

The university town's first phase, which started operating last month, consists of transitional teaching and research facilities in Hengqin used by three Macau public universities – namely the University of Macau (UM), the Macao Polytechnic University (MPU), and the Macao University of Tourism (UTM) – before the completion of their respective new campuses in Hengqin.

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Secretary for Social Affairs and Culture Wallis O Lam addresses Friday's meeting with association representatives about Macau's 3rd Five-Year Plan at the Forum Macao Complex near Macau Tower. – Photo: GCS

World's first museum devoted to prehistoric flying reptiles opens in Xinjiang

Visitors view pterosaur replicas at a new science museum in Hami, Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region, yesterday. Dedicated to the prehistoric winged reptiles closely related to dinosaurs, the museum officially opened to the public yesterday. – Xinhua



URUMQI – A science museum focused on pterosaurs, a winged reptile closely related to dinosaurs, opened yesterday in China's northwestern Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region.

The world's first of its kind, this museum is located in a national geopark in Xinjiang's Hami region, a location renowned for abundant pterosaur fossil discoveries.

With an exhibition area of about 4,600 square meters, the Hami Pterosaur Museum consists of six oval-shaped halls in a staggered layout. Seen from above, it resembles a clutch of pterosaur eggs resting in the desert.

Fossils on display include specimens recovered during more than two decades of rescue excavations by researchers from the Institute of Vertebrate

Paleontology and Paleoanthropology, Chinese Academy of Sciences (CAS). Also on display are the world's first 3D preserved fossilized pterosaur eggs and embryos, along with large pterosaur specimens making their public debut.

This is the first time all of these specimens have been displayed together. The exhibits present a panoramic recreation of pterosaur life and evolution during the Cretaceous period roughly 130 million years ago, the museum said.

Xu Xing, head of the CAS institute, said the museum not only highlights China's leading role in global pterosaur research but also offers the public a window to experience scientific discovery up close and appreciate the wonders of ancient life.

– Xinhua

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Xi charts course for high-quality development of greater BRICS cooperation: Wang Yi

President Xi Jinping's attendance at the BRICS summit in India is of strategic significance for steering the high-quality development for greater BRICS cooperation, Foreign Minister Wang Yi said yesterday.

– Story on p. 7

Trump says Irish unification would be 'fantastic'

US President Donald Trump said on Saturday he would "love to see" a united Ireland, wading into a politically sensitive subject as he embarked on a two-day Irish visit.

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US-blockaded Cubans appeal to 'Cachita' for divine intervention

Father-to-be Carlos Trejo paid his respects to Cuba's patron saint as he and thousands more marked the annual celebration in her name, wondering what fate awaits the US-blockaded island.

– Story on p. 12

Customs logs 17 IP infringement cases in Jan-Aug



Macao Customs Service (SA) Assistant Commissioner Ip Wa Chio talks to reporters on the sidelines of yesterday's 10th "Community Communication Mechanism for Combating Counterfeit Products" public awareness activity at the Macao Science Centre (MSC) in Nape. — Photo: Ida Cheong

Ida Cheong

In the first eight months of this year, the Macao Customs Service received a total of 93 reports regarding suspected intellectual property (IP) infringements. Based on its investigations, 17 cases involving 34 suspects have been referred to the Public Prosecutions Office (MP) for follow-up, Assistant Commissioner Ip Wa Chio told reporters on the sidelines of a public awareness campaign yesterday.

Ip made the remarks on the sidelines of the 10th "Community Communication Mechanism for Combating Counterfeit Products" activity at the Macao Science Centre (MSC) in Nape.

Overall, the detection of IP infringement cases has shown a slight downward trend, Ip said, adding that this decrease is primarily down to intensified patrols across the city, alongside the deployment of a big data anti-counterfeiting system for online monitoring. This technology-driven approach to law enforcement has created a strong deterrent effect, Ip said.

Regarding the ongoing revision of the External Trade Law, Ip noted that the proposed legislative amendment is still in the research and development stage in collaboration with relevant government entities and has not yet been finalised, adding that the Macao Customs Service will fully cooperate with the government's legislative initiative.

Asked by reporters if parallel-trading dens in Areia Preta and the Barrier Gate area continue to pose challenges, Ip noted that the Macao Customs Service strictly enforces the External Trade Law. He added that it will take immediate action against any illegal activity.

When asked by the media if parallel-trading dens are shifting from industrial buildings and shopping malls into private homes — requiring customs to operate more covertly — he replied that the Customs Service is closely monitoring changes in smuggling syndicates' tactics including residential building-based distribution points and cross-border vehicle smuggling, forcing law enforcement to dynamically adjust and formulate targeted enforcement strategies.

Ip also noted that the community anti-counterfeiting liaison mechanism has reached its 10th anniversary, growing to 21 member organisations spanning various social sectors and civic groups. The network has provided vital intelligence and information support for customs enforcement, significantly boosting anti-counterfeiting efforts, he said.

Ip also said that the Macao Customs Service plans to further expand the mechanism's membership and coverage area to strengthen its intelligence-gathering capabilities. ■

Customs busts 23 smuggling cases in 7 days worth 2.98 million patacas

Sherwin Hng

The Macao Customs Service said in a statement on Saturday that it intercepted 23 smuggling cases at several border checkpoints between September 4 and 10, seizing contraband with a total estimated value of about 2.98 million patacas.

The cases were detected at the local airport, the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge (HZMB) Macao Port (checkpoint), the Barrier Gate checkpoint, and the Inner Harbour Ferry Terminal.

The seized goods included roughly 53,000 cigarettes, 32,000 e-cigarettes, 195 beauty products, 108 second-hand smartphones, about 73 kg of suspected silver granules, 60 bottles of spirits, 48 bottles of Chinese liquor, 35 designer handbags and clothing items, and seven watches. The cigarettes involved carried an estimated tax liability of about 80,000 patacas, the statement said.

During the period, Customs officers detected two mainland residents carrying large quantities of cigarettes concealed in their luggage

at the local airport. At the HZMB Macao Port, officers intercepted three people separately carrying e-cigarettes, beauty products, watches, designer goods, and clothing concealed in their luggage.

In the other cases, Chinese liquor was found concealed inside a cross-border vehicle, while second-hand smartphones and silver granules were concealed on the bodies of two mainland residents, five Hong Kong residents, and nine local residents at the Barrier Gate. Customs officers also detected an under-declaration involving imported spirits at the Inner Harbour Terminal.

The suspects, aged between 18 and 56, face legal proceedings initiated by Macao Customs Service under the provisions of Macau's External Trade Law. If the offences are proven, a maximum fine of 100,000 patacas may be imposed, while the seized goods will be forfeited to the Macao Special Administrative Region (MSAR). Furthermore, one of the smugglers is suspected of violating the Tobacco Prevention and Control Law, with

his or her case referred to the Health Bureau (SSM) for follow-up action.

The Customs Service urged members of the public to comply with relevant cross-border legislation and refrain from engaging in illicit trafficking for financial gain. The service said it would continue to strengthen inspections at various checkpoints to crack down on smuggling activities involving concealment or disguise.

Residents who discover suspected offences can report them to Customs Service by telephone on 2896 5001, by fax on 2896 5003, or via email at info@customs.gov.mo.

Zhuhai's Gongbei Customs seizes 10 kg of silver hidden in Macau vehicle

Meanwhile, Zhuhai's Gongbei Customs announced in a statement on Saturday that its officers intercepted a cross-border vehicle carrying 10 kg of concealed silver granules at Hengqin Port on August 14.

According to the statement, customs officers inspecting the incoming passenger vehicle lane spotted an anomaly in the X-ray image of a vehicle arriving from Macau, prompting them to halt the vehicle for a detailed inspection.

A subsequent search revealed silver granules hidden inside a customised metal compartment welded beneath the rear-seat power battery.

The consignment was later verified as fine silver, weighing a net total of 10 kg*. The case is being handled further by mainland authorities. ■

*Based on the average global silver price as of yesterday, 10 kg of silver granules was worth 167,400 patacas. — Gemini



This undated handout photo provided by Macao Customs Service on Saturday shows e-cigarettes, beauty products, watches, other branded goods and clothing seized by its officers at the HZMB Macao Port (checkpoint) recently.

'Culture at Your Doorstep' features Mid-Autumn Festivities

Ida Cheong

The Cultural Affairs Bureau (IC) launched this past weekend the "Culture at Your Doorstep" series across six local neighbourhoods over three consecutive weekends.

Earmarked to welcome the upcoming Mid-Autumn Festival, the month-long event centres on traditional Chinese culture infused with festive elements, providing residents with a diverse cultural experience rich in traditional charm and interactive fun, an IC statement said on Saturday.

The statement noted that the event features intangible cultural heritage workshops, cultural experiences, and traditional game booths. The heritage workshops include bamboo-woven wind chimes, Song brocade pearl paintings*, mother-of-pearl inlaid vases, Peking Opera rattle-drums, Mid-Autumn rubbings on round fans, and floral paper lanterns.

The statement pointed out that the series's cultural experiences comprise shadow play, ribbon dancing, Chinese fan arts, and ethnic folk-dance handkerchief-



This handout poster provided by the Cultural Affairs Bureau (IC) yesterday promotes its 'Culture at Your Doorstep' series of activities.

spinning. Traditional games feature pitch-pot and beanbag tossing, two historically rich traditional games where participants completing both tasks receive a delicate, traditionally styled souvenir. Additionally, traditional costumed figures will interact closely with residents on-site to enhance the holiday atmosphere.

The "Culture at Your Doorstep" events will run from 2:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. this Saturday at the Lok Kuan Building Block 3 in Seac Pai Van; this Sunday at Largo do Pagode do Bazar (康公廟前地); on September 26 (the day after the Mid-Autumn Festival) in Areia Preta Park; and on September 27 next to the park in front of the Flower City estate in Taipa.

For more event details, please visit the official IC website at www.icm.gov.mo. ■

*Song brocade pearl paintings (宋錦珍珠貼畫) are a modern hybrid craft and cultural DIY art form that merge traditional Chinese textile heritage with mosaic-style pearl or shell inlay. — Gemini

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Macau Weather

CLOUDY APART FROM SUNNY INTERVALS.
A FEW SHOWERS.
SHOWERS WILL EASE OFF LATER.
FORCE 3 TO 5 EAST TO NORTHEASTERLY WINDS WITH GUSTS.
RELATIVE HUMIDITY WILL RANGE BETWEEN 65% AND 95%.



24°C~30°C

Source: SMG

'Chi Lam Vai: The Way Back Home' – multimedia theatre showcases Macau's core values

Armindo Neves

Organised by the Chung Chi Drama Club, the multimedia theatre production "Chi Lam Vai – The Way Back Home" held its opening ceremony on Friday night at the Macao Cultural Centre's (CCM) Black Box Theatre to a full house, kicking off a run of five performances across three consecutive days.

The event was sponsored by the Cultural Development Fund's (CDF) "Funding Programme for Intangible Cultural Heritage Projects" and received partial venue fee waivers under the Cultural Affairs Bureau's (IC) "Rental Waiver Scheme" at the Macao Cultural Centre.

According to a statement released during Friday's show, by combining live theatrical performance with documentary footage, the production breaks the boundaries of conventional performance formats.

Audience members can "experience" the grand spectacle of the Na Tcha Festival procession through authentic video footage, providing an innovative presentation of Macau's intangible cultural heritage, the "Na Tcha Folk Beliefs", the statement noted.

Centred around Chi Lam Vai – Macau's only surviving traditional walled village – the play brings to life the everyday street culture and collective memories nestled beneath the Ruins of St. Paul's and the Na Tcha Temple, the statement noted,



The production and performance team of "Chi Lam Vai: The Way Back Home", alongside Chi Lam Vai residents and guests, pose for a group photo on stage during Friday's premiere at the Macao Cultural Centre Black Box. – Photo: Pui Ieng

adding that in order to ensure an accurate restoration of the intangible heritage details, the production specially invited Ip Tat, a national-level intangible cultural heritage practitioner, to serve as a consultant.

Chi Lam Vai (aka Chi Lam Chuen – 茨林村; "Potato Plantation Enclosure"), known in Portuguese as Pátio do Espinho ("Courtyard of the Thorn"), is a 400-year-old former walled village. It is situated just a street away from the UNESCO World Heritage-listed Na Tcha Temple – one of Macau's two temples dedicated to the deity known in Putonghua as Nezha – and

close to the also UNESCO World Heritage-listed Ruins of St. Paul's.

Adapted from the 2023 short film "Rainy Moment" and the short drama script "Chi Lam Vai: The Way Back Home", the play tells the story of Chi Lam, who grew up in Chi Lam Vai and was forced to leave his home following his grandfather's passing. Years later, he returns to his roots carrying out his grandfather's dying wish – "to make a film about Chi Lam Vai".

Reconnecting with his old neighbours, he rediscovers the heartfelt warmth and true spirit of the village. The production was

headed by Michael Chung (鍾志業), with Steven U (余志雲) serving as the video director.

The organisers said on Friday they hope to revitalise the history of the centuries-old village and its intangible culture through theatrical art, supporting community cultural preservation and the integration of culture and tourism.

Speaking before the premiere, Chung said that the work focuses on the intangible cultural heritage of the "Na Tcha Folk Beliefs", merging various multimedia aspects to showcase Macau's historic sites and customs, with the aim of

enabling the audience to get a sense of the local people's core values.

The "Na Tcha Beliefs and Customs" centre around the worship of Na Tcha (Nezha), a deeply revered child deity in Chinese folk religion, Taoism, and Buddhism. Traditionally depicted as a youthful, rebellious figure who flies on "Wind Fire Wheels" and wields a "Universe Ring," Na Tcha is celebrated as a powerful protector against evil spirits, plagues, and natural disasters. While Na Tcha is recognised across many Chinese communities, the specific "Na Tcha Beliefs and Customs" have a uniquely profound cultural footprint in Macau. The core elements of the Na Tcha belief are his role as a Child Protector, a Shield Against Plagues, and Embodiment of Cultural Harmony. Every year, around the 18th day of the fifth lunar month, Macau hosts vibrant celebrations to mark Na Tcha's birthday, this year it was on July 2. The Na Tcha Parade, this time on July 1-2, was a grand procession where a statue of the deity was carried through the historic streets, accompanied by lion and dragon dances to bless the community.

The *Post* published an editorial headlined "Ne Zha – China's soft power answer to Mickey Mouse" on March 3, 2025.

<https://www.macaupostdaily.com/news/24225>. ■

34th Macao Int'l Fireworks Display Contest opens with drone show



Spectators view the fireworks during last night's annual contest at the waterfront of the Macao Science Centre (MSC) in Nape. – Photo: Khalel Vallo

Khalel Vallo

The 34th Macao International Fireworks Display Contest opened in Sai Van yesterday with a large-scale drone show and fireworks displays by teams from Brazil and Switzerland, drawing residents and visitors to waterfront viewing areas across Macau.

According to a statement by the Macao Government Tourism Office (MGTO) on Saturday, more than 3,400 drones opened the first night with formations depicting elements including a compass, a blue-and-white porcelain vase and a ship, highlighting Macau's historic role as a port along the Maritime Silk Road.

The drone show was followed by performances from Brazil's Fireworks do Brasil and Switzerland's La Pirotecnica di Colombo.

During the festival, each

firework display lasts about 18 minutes, with two shows scheduled at 9:00 p.m. and 9:40 p.m. on each competition night. The pyrotechnic extravaganza ends on October 4.

This year's contest, themed "Set Sail for Macao, where the Silk Road Sparkles", is divided into three chapters – "Encounter with History", "Encounter with Civilisation" and "Encounter with the Future", the statement noted, adding that the drone shows represent the first and third chapters, while the fireworks performances form the "Encounter with Civilisation" section.

Meanwhile, the Fireworks Carnival also opened at the waterfront of the Macao Science Centre (MSC) in Nape, running from 5:30 p.m. to 10:30 p.m. on fireworks contest nights with food and game stalls and stage performances. ■

Na Tcha culture-fest aims to promote Na Tcha folk beliefs

Armindo Neves

Na Tcha Temple Association President and Macau Temple Civilisation Association Chairman Ip Tat told the *Post* recently at the Na Tcha-themed coffee shop "Amigos do Espinho" that the inaugural "World Na Tcha Folk Belief Culture Festival" aims to promote Na Tcha folk beliefs in Macau and beyond.

The festival, taking place between tomorrow and Friday, marks the first joint collaboration between the city's two Na Tcha temples and the city's two Na Tcha Temple associations, based near the Ruins of St. Paul's and Calçada das Verdades respectively, according to Ip.

He also pointed out that both temples represent national-level intangible cultural heritage items, making this partnership a rare opportunity, with the ultimate goal of promoting Macau's Na Tcha culture across Southeast Asia.

He underlined that the festival takes inspiration from the World Tua Pek Kong Festival (Tudi Gong)*, launching it initially in Macau with plans to potentially rotate the event through overseas Chinese communities in the future as conditions allow. This year's event has drawn around 200 guests from Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, and China's Taiwan region, alongside representatives

from the three ancestral Na Tcha temples in the Chinese mainland.

Regarding the schedule, a welcome dinner and a seminar on Na Tcha customs and beliefs will be held tomorrow, bringing together scholars and temple representatives from various regions. On Wednesday morning at 11.00 a.m., a joint procession featuring over a dozen groups will set off from in front of the Ruins of St. Paul's to the city's main square, Largo do Senado, concluding around noon. This will be followed by a blessing ceremony and a farewell banquet in the Barra area. The festival is scaled down compared to the traditional Na Tcha Festival, omitting Chinese opera performances in favour of simplified prayer ceremonies and a traditional Poon Choi (basin dish) feast, Ip said.

Ip also said that applications for support have been submitted to several government bodies, including the Municipal Affairs Bureau (IAM) and the Cultural Affairs Bureau (IC), with police coordination arranged to maintain public order. Given that the procession route traverses busy tourist areas, it has been deliberately scheduled for the morning to minimise disruption.

Ip said he hopes that the festival will foster cross-regional exchanges



File photo of Na Tcha Temple Association President and Macau Temple Civilisation Association Chairman Ip Tat.

– Photo: Armindo Neves

on Na Tcha customs and raise wider awareness of this national-level intangible cultural heritage from Macau. ■

* *The World Tua Pek Kong Festival* (世界大伯公節) is an annual international celebration honouring the Taoist earth deity Tua Pek Kong (大伯公), also widely revered as Tudi Gong (土地公) or Fude Zhengshen (福德正神). The deity is venerated across Chinese communities as the guardian of localised soil, prosperity, and community well-being. – Gemini



Rui Pastorin

Artist Ada Zhang (張洪) has lived in Macau for a number of years, and in her latest exhibition at the 10 Fantasia gallery, she uses painting to capture the parts of the city that makes it distinct.

Mainly watercolours, Zhang's latest solo exhibition "Macau in Spring Breeze" sees a compilation of her standout works made over the past few years.

Each frame presents something familiar and undoubtedly Macau, all with a twist through Zhang's art style. Whether that's depicting landmarks in the city centre like Largo do Senado, the nearby Municipal Affairs Bureau (IAM) headquarters and the General Post Office (GPO), the distinct local streets and alleys, night scenes like a rain-soaked Rua de Felicidade (福隆新街 - "Street of Bliss"), or the stylised depiction of speed at the Macau Grand Prix (MGP), Zhang's brush strokes show it all.

In terms of the works on display, most are watercolour pieces, though among there are also oils like the larger artwork "Dusk", which presents a landscape featuring hotels and other buildings with their lights turning on as the sun begins to set.

According to information displayed at the gallery, Zhang, who has won various awards

and taken part in a number of joint and solo exhibitions, specialises in oils, watercolours and sketching.

She notes in an artist's statement that the city has become etched into her soul, with the city being part of her artistic journey.

Particularly highlighting watercolour as a medium, Zhang notes in the statement that it "acts as a flowing dialogue. Water and colour freely merge and seep across the paper – just like Macau itself: a city that is inclusive and ever-changing. It holds both the depth and ancient simplicity of historical accumulation, and the bright flickering rhythm of modern life".

Each piece Zhang chose for the exhibition condenses her "deep, tender gaze towards" Macau, hoping that exhibitiongoers will not only find familiarity, but a "quiet peace" found through each brush stroke, the statement added.

The exhibition is hosted by the Macau Youth Art Association in conjunction with the Macau Artist Society (MAS) and the gallery. It is located within the gallery's "Young Artist Exhibition Room" on the basement and runs through October 31. Members of the public can visit the free admission venue on Calçada da Igreja de S. Lázaro (瘋堂斜巷) from 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. from Tuesdays to Sundays. It is closed on Mondays.

-Photos taken yesterday by Rui Pastorin



Denmark's Signe Ørnbøll wins FIA Asia-Pacific Karting title



Denmark's Signe Ørnbøll holds up the flag of Denmark for a photo after yesterday's race at the Coloane Karting Track. – Photos: Rui Pastorin

Rui Pastorin

The final races for the 2026 FIA Karting Arrive & Drive Asia-Pacific Championship took place yesterday at the Coloane Karting Track, with Denmark's Signe Pejls Ørnbøll crowned champion in the Senior category.

Owing to yesterday's weather conditions, preliminary races were suspended, leaving only the finals in the afternoon, with the starting grid determined by Saturday's qualifying results. Italy's Andrea Galimberti was in pole position, followed by Ørnbøll and Macau's Vernice Lao Si Lun. Conditions also meant that all raced on wet tyres and a wet track.

In the final lap of an action-packed race, which featured 23 drivers, New Zealand's Amelia Phillips, who started the race from sixth, managed to finish first, followed by Ørnbøll and Singapore's Conrad Garrow. However, due to Phillips receiving a front fairing penalty, Ørnbøll moved up to first and Garrow to second. Philips, meanwhile, was relegated to third.

Macau karter Lao, despite a strong start, ultimately ended the race in eighth.

Speaking with reporters about her win, Ørnbøll was asked about how she was able to adapt to the conditions of the track, to which she explained that rain slows steering response. Her strategy: enter corners fast, turn aggressively, and trust the tyres to regain grip after sliding a few metres.

Ørnbøll also told the Post about how impressed she was with the track, noting that how it is situated is part of what makes it unique. "I've never been to a track in the middle of the city. If you walk 10 minutes that way, there's tons of big hotels and everything, shopping malls... It's a bit bumpy, but you will get used to it."

Meanwhile, John Han of Hong Kong took home the top prize for the 20-karter Junior category. In all, the races gathered a total of 43 racers from 16 countries and regions.

Macau a 'key player' in growing karting in Asia: FIA

With the championship marking the return of an FIA event at the Coloane Karting Track since



FIA Head of Karting Jacob Nortoft poses after yesterday's interview at the Coloane Karting Track.

2016, FIA Head of Karting Jacob Nortoft said during an interview with the Post after yesterday's races that they were proud to bring their event back to the circuit, noting that Macau is a key player in growing karting in Asia.

Nortoft, who took up his position in 2024, highlighted: "Macau has a great motorsport history in general but specifically also for karting", noting that the Coloane Karting Track has even already played host to large events.

"For us to bring back FIA karting is a great opportunity and something we are very proud about". In all, he described weekend as a "very smooth" one while also pointing out the positive feedback from racers, along with the support received.

The weekend was also special given the "Arrive and Drive" format, with Nortoft explaining it as all competitors having both equal material and an equal chance to showcase their talents.

"With this new concept, one of the ambitions for FIA is to take karting to all the places of the world... It's clear that Asia-Pacific is a key market and a key area for us", pointing out its many proactive and strong member clubs.

"I hope we can keep growing karting here in Asia and, of course, to do that Macau is a key player", particularly pointing out that as a city and location, it is a hub for many things even beyond motorsport. "The logistics flying in and out, the culture and the life in the city makes it very attractive for people to come here". ■

Harimoto, Möregårdh crowned WTT Champions Macao winners

Khalel Vallo

Japan's Miwa Harimoto and Sweden's Truls Möregårdh were crowned women's and men's singles champions, respectively, at the WTT Champions Macao 2026 in the East Asian Games Dome in Cotai last night, with both players highlighting their determination and the support of the crowd after their victories.

WTT stands for "World Table Tennis".

Harimoto garnered the title after a close match to defeat the Chinese mainland's Chen Yi 4-3 (11-7, 11-7, 9-11, 8-11, 11-13, 11-9, 12-10), while Möregårdh won the men's singles title with a 4-1 victory (11-7, 11-9, 3-11, 11-8, 11-9) over Brazil's Hugo Calderano.

Harimoto secured her third consecutive WTT Champions title after overcoming a difficult final, describing the match as one she had expected to lose before fighting through it one point at a time.

"I literally thought I was going to lose, but I'm very happy that I fought until the last on the court in this very arena, with one point and one shot at a time," Harimoto said after the match. The Japanese player said she had struggled to believe she could win after repeatedly finding herself behind during the contest, including in the sixth game when her opponent



Japan's Miwa Harimoto (right) and Sweden's Truls Möregårdh pose with their trophies after being crowned women's and men's singles champions at the WTT Champions Macao 2026 in the East Asian Games Dome in Cotai last night. – Photo: Khalel Vallo

took the early advantage.

"I thought it was impossible to win today, but I was lucky to be able to play one game at a time and to be able to play until the end," she noted.

The victory marked Harimoto's third WTT Champions title in succession. Harimoto said she had not expected to achieve the feat, adding that her original target for the year had simply been to win more than one champions event. "To be honest, I didn't think I would win three times in a row," she said, adding that "to be able to win three times in a row, I'm very proud of myself."

Harimoto added that the Macau final was particularly memorable because of the battle she had

endured throughout the match.

Meanwhile, Möregårdh credited his older brother and coach, Malte Möregårdh, and his parents for helping him through a difficult period before the tournament. "I wasn't believing in myself the whole tournament. It's a big thanks to Malte as a coach," Möregårdh said.

The Swedish player also singled out the crowd's support throughout the tournament, pointing out that spectators had backed him from his opening match and that the atmosphere had helped him enjoy the occasion: "Today was fantastic. I always enjoy playing big matches and with this many people, I'm so happy to play table tennis." ■

Sands China hosts inclusive basketball carnival ahead of NBA China Games

Sherwin Hng

More than 250 local players joined the 2026 MSO Sands China Cup – Inclusive Community Basketball Carnival yesterday at the University of Saint Joseph, bringing together Special Olympics athletes, students from special education schools, members of community care homes, and secondary school students through basketball.

The event was co-organised by Sands China Ltd., Macau Special Olympics (MSO), and the University of Saint Joseph (USJ), and featured five activities, including an inclusive basketball interactive zone, a basketball skills challenge, an inclusive basketball match, a community youth basketball tournament, and a training camp.

Sands Cares Ambassadors and members of the Sands China basketball team joined Special Olympics athletes in the inclusive basketball match, while volunteers from the University of Saint

Joseph, Hou Kong Middle School, and Macau Special Olympics also supported the activities.

Sands China Executive Vice Chairman Wilfred Wong Ying-wai said at the event that basketball could serve as a bridge connecting different groups in civil society and promote social inclusion.

He said the one-day carnival also helped build excitement for the NBA China Games 2026, which will be held next month, adding that Sands China would continue to support community sports and social inclusion as part of its corporate social responsibility.

Macau Special Olympics Executive Director Hetzer Siu Yu Hong said in a speech that the carnival was more than a sporting event, describing it as a platform for people of different abilities to participate in basketball, interact with one another, and build mutual understanding.

Siu said the event offered

participants the opportunity to develop teamwork and confidence through sport. He also thanked Sands China for its continued support of Macau Special Olympics, adding that the carnival provided valuable training experience for local athletes preparing for the 2027 Special Olympics World Summer Games in Chile.

The youth tournament featured teams from Chan Sui Ki Perpetual Help College, Pui Va Middle School, Escola São Paulo, and Colégio Diocesano de São José 6, with Escola São Paulo winning the competition.

Sands China said in a statement that its long-term partnership with Macau Special Olympics includes health services and inclusive sports programmes. The integrated resort operator noted that it has supported the Healthy Athletes® Programme for 13 consecutive years, providing free health screenings to more than 7,650 people since 2014. ■



Players and representatives pose for a group photo at University of Saint Joseph (USJ) on its Ilha Verde campus yesterday.

– Photo: Sherwin Hng

Sam seeks Shenzhen's support for Macau sci-tech drive

Tony Wong

Chief Executive Sam Hou Fai has met with Communist Party of China (CPC) Shenzhen Municipal Committee Secretary Jin Lei, where Sam said he expects the strengthened cooperation between Macau and Shenzhen to help the Macao-Hengqin International Education (University) Town in Hengqin being converted into an integrated platform for industry-academia-research collaboration, according to a statement by the Macao Government Information Bureau (GCS) yesterday.

The meeting was held at Santa Sancha Mansion – the local government guesthouse – on Penha Hill on Friday.

Welcoming the visiting delegation led by Jin, Sam underlined the Macao Special Administrative Region (MSAR) Government's commitment to putting into practice the spirit of President Xi Jinping's important speeches and instructions concerning Macau's development.

Sam stressed the local government's ongoing efforts to closely align Macau's development with the nation's 15th Five-Year Plan, strengthen Macau's roles as "One Centre, One Platform, One Base" plus an international talent hub, enhance the competitiveness of the "1+4" key industries, accelerate the integrated development of Macau and Hengqin, solidly advance Macau's appropriate economic diversification, and better integrate Macau's development into the nation's overall development.

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.

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 additional "4" elements, namely (+1) big health mainly driven by traditional Chinese medicine



Chief Executive Sam Hou Fai (right) meets with Communist Party of China (CPC) Shenzhen Municipal Committee Secretary Jin Lei at Santa Sancha Mansion on Friday. – Photo: GCS

(TCM), (+2) modern finance, (+3) high-tech, and (+4) MICE and commerce as well as culture and sports.

According to the statement, Sam also noted during the meeting that the number of visitor arrivals to Macau reached 30 million on Friday morning, exceeding the 30-million benchmark 22 days earlier than last year.

Macau recorded 40.069 million visitor arrivals in 2025, the highest annual number on record.

Sam noted that as a global hub for innovation, Shenzhen possesses strong capabilities in linking industry, academia, and research, adding that he expects deeper Macau-Shenzhen cooperation to enable Macau to learn from Shenzhen's experience and enhance its ability to transform sci-tech research achievements into applications, thereby helping the Macao-Hengqin International Education (University) Town

in Hengqin develop itself into an integrated platform for industry-academia-research collaboration.

Sam said that Shenzhen's issuance of offshore municipal government bonds in Macau for the second consecutive year has highlighted the successful results of enhanced financial cooperation between the two cities, underlining that Macau will continue to leverage its role as a "precise connector" to support Shenzhen enterprises in expanding into Portuguese- and Spanish-speaking markets.

During his meeting with Sam, Jin thanked the MSAR Government for its long-standing support for Shenzhen's development. Jin highlighted that in recent years, under the "One Country, Two Systems" principle and within the development framework of the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area (GBA), bilateral cooperation between Shenzhen and Macau has continuously

deepened, yielding fruitful results.

"Looking ahead," Jin said, "Shenzhen will put into practice Xi's various important instructions regarding Hong Kong, Macau, Guangdong, and Shenzhen, fully leveraging its role as one of the four core cities of the GBA."

Jin underlined Shenzhen's commitment to strengthening pragmatic cooperation with Macau across various fields – such as trade, finance, culture, tourism, sci-tech innovation, logistics, youth talent development, and entrepreneurship – to foster high-level, mutually beneficial development.

Jin, also a member of the Standing Committee of the CPC Guangdong Provincial Committee, pledged that Shenzhen will fully support Macau's better integration into the nation's overall development, making greater contributions to creating a new landscape for the high-quality development of the "One Country, Two Systems" cause. ■

O Lam vows advancing Hengqin university town, int'l tourism & cultural zone

Continued from p.1

Dezhi Plaza (德智廣場) in Hengqin, a property development project consisting of about a dozen high-rise and low-rise buildings, was initially slated to operate as a "German City" commercial complex, but it has been converted into the university town's first phase.

Since its operational start last month, the converted Dezhi ("Virtue and Wisdom") Plaza has been shared by UM, MPU, and UTM for the operation of their respective transitional teaching and research facilities.

The university town's second phase is UM's new campus in Hengqin, the partial and full operation of which is slated for 2028 and 2029, respectively, while the third phase consists of the new campuses of MPU and UTM in Hengqin, construction of which is slated to start in 2027 and be completed in 2030.

O Lam said in her speech that the university town is being developed through an extended campus model, extending Macau's higher education to Hengqin, with the integrated development of "one university, two campuses" as its goal. At the same time, she said, the university town aims to achieve internationalisation in talent cultivation, scientific research, and sci-tech exchange.

O Lam also said that her portfolio will also place a strong emphasis on advancing the construction of the Macao International Integrated Tourism and Cultural Zone, which will be built into a new urban cultural landmark and a new engine for Macau's development.

O Lam noted that the Cultural Affairs Bureau (IC) held a press conference on Thursday to announce its ongoing preparatory work for the design and construction of

the Macao National Museum of Culture – one of the three major cultural facilities for the Macao International Integrated Tourism and Cultural Zone.

O Lam noted that the government is aiming to complete the construction of the first phase of the Macao National Museum of Culture – which will be located in the waterfront area east of Macau Tower – and open it in 2029.

O Lam underlined that her portfolio is also vigorously addressing the challenges brought to Macau's socioeconomic development by declining birth rates and an ageing population. Adhering to a people-centred approach, O Lam pledged the government's commitment to thoroughly and effectively carrying out its tasks concerning residents' daily lives, so as to safeguard residents' physical and mental health and raise their quality of life. ■

Macau's first national security trial to start Wednesday

Staff Reporter

The Lower Court (TJB) of Macau's Court of First Instance (TPI) announced in a brief statement on Friday that it will proceed this Wednesday with the closed-door trial of the first case concerning national security.

The Criminal Chamber of the Court of First Instance will proceed, on September 16, with the trial of the national security case involving the defendant Au Kam San, the court said in Chinese- and Portuguese-language statements.

At the request of the Public Prosecutions Office (MP) and with the confirmation of the Committee for Safeguarding National Security of the Macao Special Administrative Region (CDSE), the presiding judge of the case, pursuant to Paragraph 2 of Article 9 of Law No. 9/1999 (Judicial Organisation Law), decided to conduct the trial behind closed doors in order to ensure that no prejudice is caused to the

interests of national security.

Au was a directly elected member of Macau's Legislative Assembly (AL) between 2001 and 2021.

In July 2025, Au was arrested by the Judiciary Police (PJ) for alleged collusion with foreign forces to endanger national security, a crime under the revised Macau National Security Law. He has been remanded in custody since his arrest.

Au, a teacher by profession, was born in Macau in April 1957. According to previous local media reports, Au will be defended by a court-appointed lawyer approved by the Committee for Safeguarding National Security of the Macao Special Administrative Region.

He faces up to 30 years' imprisonment, the maximum allowed by the Macau Penal Code, which strictly prohibits life sentences, indefinite imprisonment, and capital punishment. ■

Full text of President Xi's speech at Session II of the 18th BRICS Summit - Xi puts forward 5 initiatives

NEW DELHI – President Xi Jinping yesterday delivered a speech at the 18th BRICS Summit in New Delhi, India.

The following is the full text of the speech:

Cementing the Foundation for BRICS Cooperation and Bolstering the Strength of the Global South

Statement by H.E. Xi Jinping

President of the People's Republic of China

At Session II of the 18th BRICS Summit
New Delhi, September 13, 2026

Your Excellency Prime Minister Narendra Modi,

Colleagues,

I thank Prime Minister Modi and the Indian government for hosting this meeting.

We meet at a time when changes unseen in a century are accelerating across the world. The Global South, with its collective rise, has become a key driver of world multipolarity. At the same time, the international landscape is volatile and fraught with risks and challenges. To bring stability to the world and make it a better place, BRICS countries must seize the historical initiative, rally the Global South, be an active, stabilizing and positive force in international affairs, and advance the well-being of all humanity.

A world without rules is like a crossroads without traffic lights, where chaos and disorder are all but guaranteed. Fairness and justice is a universal aspiration, and international rules must be written by all countries. The logic of "might makes right" does not hold, and should have been discarded long ago. Global South countries should jointly defend the rule of law in international affairs, safeguard the basic norms of international relations including sovereign equality, noninterference in internal affairs, and the peaceful settlement of disputes, and ensure that international law and international rules are applied to all, free from double standards.

All countries, regardless of their size, strength or wealth, are equal members of the international community. Global South countries should hold high the banner of multilateralism, uphold the authority and role of the United Nations, support multilateral institutions in advancing reform and increasing efficiency, and ensure the equal participation of all countries in international affairs. We should see to it that the reform of the World Trade Organization proceeds in the right direction, uphold such principles as the



President Xi Jinping delivers a speech when attending the second and last day of the 18th BRICS Summit in New Delhi, India, yesterday. – Xinhua

most-favored-nation treatment, and actively explore new rules for the future. We should support the operation and development of the New Development Bank to facilitate Global South cooperation. The international financial architecture must be reformed and improved to increase the representation and voice of developing countries.

"To achieve great things, one should always put the people first." Global South countries should stay committed to a people-centered development philosophy and strive to deliver on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Since China launched the Global Development Initiative five years ago, we have implemented over 2,000 projects in partnership with others, and provided training for more than 200,000 professionals, benefiting people in more than 120 countries. China is opening its door ever wider to the world. We have granted zero-tariff treatment for all the 53 African countries having diplomatic relations with China. We will continue to broaden independent and unilateral opening up, and share the opportunities of China's development with other countries.

As global challenges keep surfacing, we should adopt a holistic approach to address

both the symptoms and root causes. Global South countries should jointly advance security governance and tackle both traditional and nontraditional security threats. We should improve global climate governance, and urge the full and effective implementation of the Paris Agreement. We should take a people-centered approach, develop AI for the positive and for good, and work faster to evolve a consensus-based global AI governance framework, so that new technologies can light the way toward shared prosperity.

Colleagues,

To accomplish great things and achieve major progress, the foundation of greater BRICS cooperation must be cemented. We should leverage our close ties with fellow emerging markets and Global South countries, uphold open cooperation for mutual benefit, safeguard stable and smooth industrial and supply chains, and foster a large integrated market. We should build incubators for innovation, upgrade traditional industries, develop emerging industries, and deploy future industries. To this end, I wish to put forward five initiatives:

First, the open source and inclusive AI initiative. China will be a pioneer in establishing a BRICS AI open-source

community, support the cooperation in developing and applying large language models, hold specialized AI seminars and training courses, and build an open ecosystem for AI.

Second, the trade and investment facilitation initiative. China proposes to establish a BRICS special economic zone partnership, under which countries can set up an intelligent portal, coordinate policies, and build a new frontier for open development. In an effort to cultivate new drivers of economic and trade cooperation, China will hold the BRICS Forum on Trade in Services next year. We welcome your active participation.

Third, the digital industry cooperation initiative. China will push for establishing a BRICS digital ecosystem cloud platform, and conduct digital skills training, technological exchange and industrial alignment, so as to jointly enable the development of the digital economy.

Fourth, the intelligent manufacturing cooperation initiative. China stands ready to assist fellow BRICS countries in building smart factories and developing standards and norms, and jointly promote manufacturing transformation and upgrading.

Fifth, the science and technology talent development initiative. China proposes to set up a BRICS engineer cultivation alliance for joint development of engineers and mutual recognition of competency standards. China will launch a BRICS youth exchange program for scientific and technological innovation, so as to cultivate more high-caliber talent.

Colleagues,

This year marks the launch of China's 15th Five-Year Plan for economic and social development. It is both a blueprint for China's development and a cooperation list for the rest of the world. China will continue to advance high-quality development, expand high-standard opening up, implement the Global Development Initiative, and promote high-quality Belt and Road cooperation to share opportunities and prosper together with all countries. Let us work as one to promote greater BRICS cooperation and write a new chapter of strength through unity for the Global South!

Thank you.

End

Editor's note: Italics and bold type have been added by The Macau Post Daily for emphasis.

Xi charts course for high-quality development of greater BRICS cooperation: Wang Yi

BEIJING – President Xi Jinping's attendance at the BRICS summit in India is of strategic significance for steering the high-quality development for greater BRICS cooperation, Foreign Minister Wang Yi said yesterday.

The South Asian trip also promoted strength through unity among Global South countries, Wang said.

Wang, also a member of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of China Central Committee, made the remarks while briefing reporters on Xi's visit to India to attend the 18th BRICS Summit on Saturday and Sunday.

First, Xi's visit injected fresh impetus into BRICS cooperation. The Chinese president summed up the development of BRICS over the past two decades with three key phrases: self-reliance and self-strengthening, standing

together through wind and rain, and fruitful outcomes, Wang said.

Standing at a new historical starting point, Xi called on BRICS countries to be pioneers in advancing innovation-driven development, upholding peace and stability, facilitating mutual learning between civilizations, and reforming and improving global governance, Wang said.

In 2027, the BRICS will usher in its fourth "China Year." Xi announced that China will take this opportunity to work with all parties to build consensus, open up prospects for the future, and embark on the third golden decade of BRICS cooperation, Wang said.

Second, Xi's visit empowered the Global South, Wang said.

Xi put forward four important proposals to strengthen the Global South: jointly

defending the rule of law in international affairs and ensuring that international law and international rules are applied to all; holding high the banner of multilateralism and upholding the authority and role of the United Nations; staying committed to a people-centered development philosophy and striving to deliver on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development; and jointly advancing security governance and tackling both traditional and nontraditional security threats, Wang said.

Focusing on the new round of scientific and technological revolution and industrial transformation, Xi proposed initiatives including the BRICS initiative of AI-empowered new industrialization, the open source and inclusive AI initiative, the digital industry cooperation initiative, and the intelligent manufacturing

cooperation initiative, Wang said.

Third, Xi's visit guided China-India relations, Wang said.

Xi and Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi conducted a candid and in-depth exchange of views on strategic, long-term and directional issues concerning China-India relations, Wang said, noting that the most important consensus they reached was that China and India should be partners.

The Chinese president said China and India can draw on each other's strengths, support one another, help each other succeed and pursue common development, Wang said.

The leaders of the two countries agreed to jointly maintain peace and tranquility in border areas, while the two countries will support each other as rotating chair of the BRICS, Wang said. – Xinhua

Xi, Modi conduct in-depth exchange of views, agree China, India should be partners

NEW DELHI – President Xi Jinping and Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi held in New Delhi on Saturday a candid and in-depth exchange of views, and reached important consensus that China and India should be partners.

The two leaders met on the sidelines of the 18th BRICS Summit in New Delhi.

Xi said China has always viewed and developed its relations with India from a strategic height and with a long-term perspective.

Xi noted that he has met with Modi twice over the past two years, guiding bilateral relations from a new start to a further improvement.

Institutional exchanges between the two countries have gradually resumed, the list of areas of cooperation has continued to grow, and bilateral trade has reached a new record high, Xi added.

Xi said such hard-won progress should be cherished. Noting that China and India have different national conditions, Xi said they can draw on each other's strengths, support one another, help each other succeed and pursue common development.

Amid a turbulent international landscape, China and India, as the world's two most populous countries and important members of the Global South, shoulder important responsibilities, Xi said.

Xi called on the two sides to keep in mind the future of humanity and the well-being of peoples, work together

to promote high-quality development of greater BRICS cooperation, and contribute more positive energy to world peace, stability, development and prosperity.

Underscoring objective and rational strategic perception in calibrating China-India relations, Xi said China and India are partners for cooperation, not rivals. The two countries provide development opportunities for each other rather than pose threats to each other, he added.

That is a strategic judgment based on the development stages of the two countries and the international environment, and serves the common interests of both countries and their peoples, Xi said.

Xi called on both sides to help each other succeed through win-win cooperation.

The two sides, Xi said, should focus on development as their greatest common denominator, while strengthening friendly exchanges and mutually beneficial cooperation.

He called on the two sides to expand cooperation in people-to-people exchanges, direct flights and other areas to effectively strengthen the public support for bilateral relations.

The two sides should also balance and address each other's economic and trade concerns, and promote a sound and stable development of bilateral economic and trade ties, Xi added.

Xi called on China and India to draw on political wisdom of



President Xi Jinping (left) shakes hands with Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi on the sidelines of the 18th BRICS Summit in New Delhi, India, on Saturday. – Xinhua

mutual respect and understanding to overcome disruptions, urging both sides to pursue parallel progress in bilateral ties and border issues with the two tracks reinforcing each other, so as to maintain peace and tranquility in border areas.

He also urged China and India to promote multilateral cooperation with openness and inclusiveness to benefit the world.

Xi said the two countries should support each other as rotating chair of the BRICS, strengthen coordination within such multilateral frameworks as the United Nations, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and the Group of 20, stand together in addressing global challenges, and

unequivocally uphold international fairness and justice.

Modi said he has held several productive meetings with Xi, guiding India-China relations toward a positive direction, which serves the common interests of the more than 2.8 billion people of both countries.

The two major civilizations of India and China have, over thousands of years, learned from each other through exchanges and moved forward hand in hand, he said.

India always views India-China relations from a strategic height and a long-term perspective, and is willing to be a partner rather than a rival to China, and to regard each other's development as an

opportunity rather than a challenge, he noted.

India adheres to an independent foreign policy, and the development of its relations with China is not subject to the influence of any third party, he said.

India's policy and position on the issues related to Taiwan and Xizang remain unchanged, and it does not allow any force to engage in anti-China activities in India, he said.

India is ready to maintain high-level exchanges with China on the basis of mutual respect and mutual trust, strengthen strategic communication, promote mutually beneficial cooperation, and enhance people-to-people exchanges, so as to advance bilateral relations to greater heights, Modi said.

The two sides should work together to safeguard peace and tranquility in the border areas, he added.

India thanked China for its support for India's hosting of the BRICS summit and will fully support China in assuming the BRICS chairmanship next year, he said.

Modi said India is ready to closely coordinate and cooperate with China to jointly strengthen cooperation among Global South countries, promote a more multipolar world and global economic growth, and serve as a force for stability and progress in a turbulent world.

The two-day BRICS India 2026 summit ended yesterday.

– Xinhua, MPD

Highlights of Xi's remarks on BRICS cooperation

NEW DELHI – President Xi Jinping yesterday called on BRICS countries to strengthen unity among the Global South and play an active, stabilizing and positive role in global affairs, while putting forward five initiatives on greater BRICS cooperation.

Xi made the remarks when attending the second day of the 18th BRICS Summit. The following are some of the highlights of his remarks.

ON JOINT ACTIONS

– The Global South, with its collective rise, has become a key driver of world multipolarity.

– To bring stability to the world and make it a better place, BRICS countries must seize the historical initiative, rally the Global South, be an active, stabilizing and positive force in international affairs, and advance the well-being of all humanity.

– Global South countries should jointly defend the rule of law in international affairs, safeguard the basic norms of international relations including sovereign equality, noninterference in internal affairs, and the peaceful settlement of disputes, and ensure that international law and international rules are applied to all, free from double standards.

– Global South countries should hold high the banner of multilateralism, uphold the

authority and role of the United Nations, support multilateral institutions in advancing reform and increasing efficiency, and ensure the equal participation of all countries in international affairs.

– Global South countries should stay committed to a people-centered development philosophy and strive to deliver on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

– Global South countries should jointly advance security governance and tackle both traditional and nontraditional security threats.

ON DEEPENING COOPERATION

– We should leverage our close ties with fellow emerging markets and Global South countries, uphold open cooperation for mutual benefit, safeguard stable and smooth industrial and supply chains, and foster a large integrated market.

– We should build incubators for innovation, upgrade traditional industries, develop emerging industries, and deploy future industries.

– China will be a pioneer in establishing a BRICS AI open source community, support the cooperation in developing and applying large language models, hold specialized AI seminars and training courses, and build an open ecosystem for AI.

– China proposes to establish a BRICS special economic zone

partnership, under which countries can set up an intelligent portal, coordinate policies, and build a new frontier for open development. In an effort to cultivate new drivers of economic and trade cooperation, China will hold the BRICS Forum on Trade in Services next year.

– China will push for establishing a BRICS digital ecosystem cloud platform, and conduct digital skills training, technological exchange and industrial alignment, so as to jointly enable the development of the digital economy.

– China stands ready to assist fellow BRICS countries in building smart factories and developing standards and norms, and jointly promote manufacturing transformation and upgrading.

– China proposes to set up a BRICS engineer cultivation alliance for joint development of engineers and mutual recognition of competency standards. China will launch a BRICS youth exchange program for scientific and technological innovation, so as to cultivate more high-caliber talent.

– China will continue to advance high-quality development, expand high-standard opening up, implement the Global Development Initiative, and promote high-quality Belt and Road cooperation to share opportunities and prosper together with all countries. – Xinhua

BRICS cooperation creates new opportunities for Global South: S African scholar

Interview

JOHANNESBURG – Deepening practical cooperation within BRICS is creating new opportunities for the Global South to strengthen economic resilience and advance sustainable development, a South African scholar has said.

“BRICS has become an important source of global economic dynamism, particularly driven by the scale and growth of its emerging-market economies,” Mogomme Alpheus Masoga, deputy vice-chancellor for teaching and learning at the Central University of Technology, Free State, told Xinhua in a recent interview.

Masoga said the significance of BRICS expansion goes beyond its growing membership, with cooperation increasingly extending from traditional trade to infrastructure, digitalization, green energy and technological innovation.

“Deeper intra-BRICS trade, investment, infrastructure financing and payment-system cooperation could diversify markets, strengthen supply-chain resilience and expand development-finance options,” he said.

Such cooperation has become increasingly important amid rising protectionism, geopolitical tensions and supply-chain restructuring, Masoga added.

On China's role in the group, Masoga described the country as “an important driver of practical economic cooperation,” particularly in emerging fields such as the digital economy and artificial intelligence (AI), saying that China's technological capabilities and experience could support joint research, skills development, digital infrastructure and technological solutions across BRICS countries.

He also noted the launch of the BRICS AI Industry Cooperation Network at the 2025 World Artificial Intelligence Conference in Shanghai, saying that China's proposed open-source AI initiative and action plan could help Global South countries develop technologies suited to their own development needs.

For South Africa, Masoga said BRICS cooperation provides opportunities to address infrastructure constraints, expand trade and investment, advance the energy transition and strengthen industrial capacity, as well as support the broader African development agenda.

The group's greatest value to the Global South is “its potential to turn collective economic weight into practical development cooperation,” Masoga said. – Xinhua



This handout photograph taken on Sunday and released by the Indian Press Information Bureau (PIB) shows India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi (right) speaking with Indonesia's President Prabowo Subianto (centre) and Philippines' President Ferdinand Marcos during the 18th BRICS Summit in New Delhi. — AFP

Thai abbot arrested in US\$2.8 million embezzlement, sex scandal

BANGKOK — Thai police said Friday they arrested a senior Buddhist monk on suspicion of embezzling US\$2.8 million intended for his monastery, alongside a suspected female accomplice he was having sex with.

The case is the latest scandal to hit the clergy in Buddhist-majority Thailand, after a sex and extortion case involving senior monks last year prompted public outrage and calls for greater scrutiny of temple finances.

Phra Wachirayan Wi, the 66-year-old abbot of the 14th-century temple Wat Phutthaisawan in the ancient capital of Ayutthaya, was arrested on Thursday on charges including embezzlement and money laundering, according to lead police investigator Pattanasak Bupphasuwan.

A 47-year-old woman accused of helping convert and conceal the money was also arrested.

Leaked CCTV footage of the pair having sex on a table in the monk's residence was widely broadcast on Thai media.

In Thailand, Buddhist monks take a vow of celibacy and also renounce material possessions.

Police began investigating Phra Wachirayan in mid-July after receiving an anonymous tip alleging him of misconduct and misuse of temple funds.

Pattanasak, commander of the police Crime Suppression Division, said investigators identified two streams of money linked to donation receipts issued in the temple's name.

Some 89 million baht (US\$2.69 million) was donated for temple renovations, with another 2.8 million baht in payments for Buddhist amulets and other sacred objects, he said.

"But the money from both streams did not enter the temple's account — not a single baht," Pattanasak told a news conference on Friday.

He said authorities had seized assets worth about 215 million baht, including 16 kilograms of gold bars and jewellery and 28 land title deeds.

Police are investigating which were personal property and which belonged to the temple.

"We will expand the investigation to identify other people involved and restore public confidence in Buddhism," said Central Investigation Bureau commissioner Nattasak Chaowanasai.

Wat Phutthaisawan is a prominent royal monastery with a large following that includes government officials, businesspeople, police and military personnel.

The former abbot, also known as Luang Pho Atichot, was well known for making amulets, with Prime Minister Anutin Charnvirakul reported to be among those who wore his creations.

The abbot was defrocked shortly after his arrest.

Last year, police arrested a woman accused of blackmailing at least 11 monks she had sex with, extorting nearly US\$12 million of monastery funds from them, in a case that shook Thailand. — AFP



Protesters gather to demand charges against 229 people allegedly involved in collusion in the 2024 Senate election in Bangkok yesterday, a day before an Election Commission decision on whether to pursue collusion charges in the case. — AFP

Indonesia says 6 killed, 129 missing after ferry capsizes off Java

Mahfuz

BANJARMASIN, Indonesia — Rescuers in Indonesia said at least six people were killed and 129 others were missing yesterday after a ferry sailing between the islands of Java and Borneo was hit by bad weather and capsized.

The Virgo Transport 8 — which authorities said carried 213 passengers and 30 crew — lost contact with its shipping company early yesterday after departing from Surabaya in East Java.

Basarnas, Indonesia's national search and rescue agency, said in its latest update that six people were killed and that one more survivor was found, bringing the number of people rescued to 108.

Another 129 people were still missing.

The first rescue ship carrying survivors arrived before nightfall at a pier in Banjarmasin, a city on the southern coast of Borneo island, an AFP reporter saw.

Some of the survivors were carried on stretchers into waiting ambulances. Others were put into wheelchairs or needed help walking.

In ferry disasters in Indonesia, search efforts are typically suspended during the night.

Indonesian Transport Minister Dudy Purwagandhi said the ship had capsized.

"From the information we received, based on helicopter surveillance... the

ship capsized but has not sunk. As of 3:00 p.m. [local time] it had not sunk yet, but it was capsized," he said at a news conference in Banjarmasin.

Local search and rescue chief I Putu Sudayana earlier told AFP that the ship's captain had reported to its owners before losing contact that the vessel was "tilting".

Rescuers battled waves of up to 2.5 metres to reach the ferry, Sudayana told reporters.

"It is extremely risky for vessels. Even our Basarnas vessel, which is 40 metres long, is at great risk," he said.

Two helicopters were involved in the search, and the national rescue agency said it continued to "take into account weather conditions and wave patterns in the operational area".

The vessel's last position had been detected in the Java Sea, around 150 kilometres from its destination.

Heri Purwanto, head of the Banjarmasin Sea Port Authority, said the ship, which was also carrying vehicles, lost contact at 2:00 a.m. yesterday.

"We responded quickly to the incident report... Our main focus and top priority at this time is the safety of everyone on board the ship, and we are deploying a coordinated rescue operation," Heri Purwanto said.

'Very shocked'

Rescue authorities have established

a command centre at the Banjarmasin port, with paramedics and ambulances on standby, an AFP reporter saw.

Dozens of relatives and friends of the passengers checked a whiteboard where the names of people rescued were being updated.

Jenah, 26, told AFP she came to the command post for information about her older brother.

"I am saddened and very shocked. Until now, I haven't received any more information," said Jenah, who like many Indonesians has only one name.

"He was travelling alone. I hope he survives. I couldn't contact him since last night."

Marine accidents are a regular occurrence in Indonesia, an archipelago of more than 17,000 islands that relies heavily on boat connections for daily transport and tourism.

Lax safety standards and unpredictable weather are the main reasons for the disasters.

Last Monday, a speedboat carrying eight people, including five journalists working for local and international news agencies, went missing near a volcano, Mount Anak Krakatau, in Banten province. That search is ongoing.

The journalists were sent to cover the volcano's eruption that paralysed Jakarta's main airport and several others. — AFP

Philippine rescuers pull more victims from charred ferry

Ron Lopez

CORON, Philippines — The bodies of 41 victims of the worst Philippine ferry disaster in over a decade made their way through the blue waters of a resort area yesterday, bound for a dock where forensic investigators awaited them.

Days after a fire ripped through the M/V June Aster, it is clear few of its victims ever made the water, with nearly all of the 76 confirmed dead found aboard the grounded vessel.

The 24-year-old ferry, known locally as a "roro" (roll-on, roll-off), was carrying vacationers, businesspeople and families headed for loved ones in Coron, Palawan, when it erupted in flames following an explosion in its hold.

Some areas, such as the cargo deck and engine room, remain to be searched.

"The water is still high," Commodore Noemie Cayabyab told reporters yesterday on the deck of the BRP Melchora Aquino, a 97-metre coast guard vessel.

"The focus right now is to retrieve (any additional bodies)."

The coast guard confirmed late Saturday that 41 more corpses had been found aboard the June Aster, bringing the death toll from a blaze that swept through the vessel "in seconds" to 76 passengers and crew.

Earlier in the day, 30 corpses, charred badly enough that DNA must be extracted from teeth and bones, were brought ashore to waiting examination tents.

Some will be "temporarily" buried in a local cemetery pending identification.

Thirty passengers, including two Chilean nationals and 13 crew, have been rescued, according to the coast guard. Five others were declared dead in the immediate aftermath of the incident.

'Weeks or months'

AFP journalists came within a nautical mile of the grounded ferry yesterday before stopping due to the shallow waters, transferring to a smaller boat that contained body bags holding the 41 recovered victims.

A drone flown over the ferry showed a burnt-out husk, decks covered by ash and metal twisted by the intense heat.

A floating orange barrier intended to keep fuel from leaking into the ocean surrounded the ship.

Coast guard search and rescue efforts aided by fishermen in the surrounding waters have so far yielded nothing, Cayabyab said yesterday.

About 13 people are still considered missing, including the ship's captain, though notoriously inaccurate manifests in the Philippines make it hard to be certain.

Some have already stepped forward to say family members were aboard the ship despite not appearing in records.

"Most of the victims we've retrieved are badly burned," Police Lt. Colonel Richard Mangalip, a victim identification specialist, told reporters aboard the Melchora Aquino.

"We are doing our best to collect any possible identifying marks," he said, adding the painstaking DNA process could take "weeks or months".

"As of last night, we are still at

cadaver four," he said.

Victims were found clustered together in different parts of the vessel, he added, some found in positions that suggested they had embraced in their final moments.

History of disasters

An emotional Josenit Mayo, 40, told AFP this week that her daughter had been aboard the ferry, returning from the capital Manila for a family visit because "she was lonely" and missed her siblings.

Myra Cabilan fought back tears describing the search for her missing brother.

"His wife had just given birth a month ago. He was so happy he was given a daughter," she said.

The archipelago nation of 116 million has a long history of disasters involving the inter-island ferries that ply its seas.

Many rely on cheap and poorly regulated boats and ships for transport between the country's more than 7,000 islands, despite regular accidents.

In January, a triple-decker ferry carrying more than 340 people sank off the southern Philippines, killing at least 52 people.

Yesterday, Dindo Macalinao, a human resources official with Atienza Interisland Ferries, the June Aster's owner, said it was too early to assign blame.

With the investigation ongoing, it was hard to say "if this was negligence on the part of the company ... or truly an incident that may have occurred beyond the company's control," he said. — AFP

‘Second life’: Nepal tunnel survivor recalls ordeal

Deepesh Deo Joshi

SATARI, Nepal – For 10 days, Nepali hydropower worker Sanjay Sah survived in darkness inside a flooded tunnel, drinking muddy water and losing all sense of time as he desperately prayed for rescue.

When a disaster response team finally pulled him to safety on September 4, Sah’s first question showed how deeply the ordeal had disoriented him.

“When I was rescued I first asked, how many days has it been?” Sah, 30, told AFP in an interview, while on his way back home in Saptari district yesterday.

“He said that it has been 10 days. I thought it had been just a few days.”

Sah was among hundreds of workers at a series of hydropower projects hit by the catastrophic August 26 flood, triggered by a glacial mountain collapse on the China-Nepal border.

Sah’s extraordinary survival was a rare ray of hope after a disaster that killed at least 1,429 people and left more than 5,640 missing, the majority in Nepal.

Family, friends and neighbours celebrated Sah’s return with garlands and a cake, and his home was

adorned with balloons and colour.

His mother, Kapur Devi Sah, embraced him tightly as she cried, and later washed his feet for an auspicious welcome.

“My son has returned, I am very happy,” she said.

Struggling to hold back tears, Sah recalled how the disaster had struck with stunning speed.

“I was on duty, and then suddenly an unthinkable flood hit us, with tsunami-like waves that were several metres tall,” he said.

Workers had received warnings that floodwaters were approaching, but did not get enough time to escape, he said.

“We did get information to stay alert, that a big flood is coming. As much as possible, we tried to be alert and evacuate our friends,” Sah said.

“But the water did not give us much time... we shut down everything, and tried to rescue and evacuate our friends.”

Within minutes, however, the tunnel was engulfed by raging waters.

The sheer scale of the flood was unlike anything witnesses had seen before, with the government pointing the finger at the dire impact of rising global temperatures on Nepal’s Himalayan mountains.



Nepali hydropower worker Sanjay Sah (centre) meets his family members at his residence in Nepal’s Saptari district yesterday after being rescued from a flooded tunnel in the aftermath of deadly flash floods. – AFP

‘Divine energy’

Separated from his colleagues, Sah found himself stranded with little idea whether anyone would ever reach him.

His Hindu faith helped carry him through the days of darkness and isolation.

“I survived because of my deep belief and confidence,” he said.

“I was chanting Maha Mantra (Hindu prayers), and the divine energy I received because of that allowed me to not be scared or

despair,” he said.

“I was able to stay there.”

With no clean water to drink, he survived on whatever he could find.

“There was water, but it was muddy,” he said. “I only had that.”

The darkness and isolation might have been overwhelming, but Sah was not entirely alone.

Another trapped worker, Kabir Maharjan, 45, had survived nearby.

“We were separated but speaking to each other.”

The ability to hear another human

voice offered a lifeline to Sah.

Eventually, after days of excavation and painstaking rescue efforts, search teams broke through to the trapped men and brought them out alive.

Sah’s wife, Lakshmi Kumari Sah, said she never gave up hope of seeing her husband again.

“God has helped us, we had our hopes,” she said, holding her daughter in her arms.

Sah, who spent several days recuperating in a Kathmandu hospital, says he has mixed emotions.

“I am happy, but I feel sad too,” he said. “I was able to get a second life, to survive there. But many of our friends were there.”

As rescuers continue searching through the tunnels, Sah urged authorities not to abandon the effort.

One Chinese worker was rescued on September 5, the day after Sah – but no signs of life have been heard since.

“I hope the government continues its search and rescue. It is possible there might still be someone alive,” he said.

“Or they will be able to find bodies of friends who have passed away and hand them over to their families.” – AFP

Indonesia seeks to bring back baby orangutans allegedly trafficked to India

JAKARTA – Indonesian authorities are working to repatriate five baby orangutans allegedly trafficked to India, where they were found motherless in a forest, Jakarta’s forestry ministry told AFP Friday.

The critically endangered animals were found Tuesday by rangers patrolling in the Balasore district of India’s eastern Odisha state.

Authorities suspect the primates, known for their shaggy red fur, were trafficked into India, sparking a criminal investigation.

The youngsters, estimated to be about one-and-a-half years old, appeared to be healthy and were being cared for at a zoo after their rescue, the ministry said in a statement.

Orangutans in the wild are native only to Indonesia’s Sumatra island and Borneo, which it shares with Malaysia and Brunei.

The five infants appeared to be of Sumatran origin, the ministry said, and DNA tests will be used to

confirm where they were from.

According to the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), which lists Sumatran orangutans as critically endangered, the young of the species are weaned only at about seven years of age.

The last estimate of the species’ population size, in 2016, was just over 13,500.

Critically endangered

The Indonesian government has requested India hand over the apes, forestry ministry spokesman Ristianto Pribadi told AFP on Friday.

“The forestry ministry has begun communicating with the government of India through the Indian embassy in Jakarta,” he said.

Jakarta has also been in touch with conservation NGOs to help rehabilitate the baby orangutans, the ministry statement added.

Sumatran orangutan population decline is blamed on habitat loss

and fragmentation due to human encroachment, as well as illegal hunting.

The Tapanuli orangutan, another species native to Sumatra, is also classified as critically endangered, with fewer than 800 believed left in the wild.

Panut Hadisiswoyo, founder of the Orangutan Information Centre, an NGO, said it supported bringing the primates home.

“Repatriation should be the priority,” he said. “In my opinion, the DNA tests can be done after repatriation.”

Wild orangutans have been put under pressure in recent weeks by forest fires that have plagued the region and consumed swathes of Borneo island.

In Borneo’s West Kalimantan province, at least 15 of the animals have been rescued from flames and haze since July, some stuck in plantations after fires cut off access to their forest home. – AFP

N Korea fires multiple ballistic missiles: Seoul

SEOUL – North Korea fired multiple ballistic missiles Saturday, Seoul said, a day after South Korea concluded five days of joint maritime drills with the United States and Japan that were focused on the North.

Pyongyang last month slammed plans for the so-called Freedom Edge joint exercises in international waters off South Korea as a “threat” to North Korea and other countries of the region.

On Saturday, Seoul’s military detected “multiple short-range ballistic missiles launched from the Wonsan area toward the East Sea,” also known as Sea of Japan, the Joint Chiefs of Staff said in a statement.

The missiles were detected at around 05:20 a.m. [local time] and flew around 250 kilometres, they added.

South Korean and US intelligence authorities “have tracked and shared relevant developments since the initial stage of the launch and also shared information regarding the ... missile with Japan,” the JCS statement said.

In its last test, North Korea fired a barrage of missiles into the sea on August 20, despite an overture from US President Donald Trump, who said he planned to meet this year with North Korean leader Kim Jong Un.

That launch from the nuclear-armed North came as South Korea and the United States held a shorter edition of their annual Ulchi Freedom Shield military exercises, following an order from Trump to scale them back.

Trump’s order alarmed US allies

in the region, with the president calling the drills “inappropriate and hostile” towards North Korea.

But Seoul’s spy agency told lawmakers earlier this month that a summit between the US and North Korea appeared possible “at any time” as signs have emerged of dialogue between them.

Trump met Kim three times during his first term – once declaring they were “in love” – in high-profile summits aimed at securing a denuclearisation deal, but no tangible progress was made.

‘An evident disaster’

Pyongyang has long condemned US-South Korea joint exercises as rehearsals for invasion, often staging missile launches around the drills.

Trump, seeking to revive the bond he claims to have forged with Kim in his first term, told reporters at the White House on August 19 he plans to meet the North Korean leader this year.

The US president also said it was important to “get along” with Kim, adding that Pyongyang now had 57 “very powerful” nuclear weapons.

Hours after the August 20 missile launches, Kim Yo Jong, the powerful sister of the North Korean leader, said Trump’s decision to scale back the drills with South Korea was Seoul’s punishment.

She called it in a statement “an evident disaster brought by the unrealistic and anachronistic security outlook” pursued by Seoul, arguing the South had a “master-and-servant” relationship with the United States. – AFP

Bangladesh’s ex-PM Hasina’s daughter quits top UN job

NEW DELHI – The World Health Organisation said Friday Saima Wazed, the agency’s Southeast Asia chief and also the daughter of Bangladesh’s ousted prime minister Sheikh Hasina, has resigned.

Wazed was convicted in absentia in November by a court in Dhaka for corruption and sentenced to five years imprisonment. She has denied her guilt.

Her mother Hasina, who was overthrown in 2024 by a student-

led uprising, was found guilty of crimes against humanity in 2025, also in absentia, and sentenced her to be hanged. She remains in hiding in India.

The WHO said while Wazed resigned from her post on Wednesday, the organisation was already looking to end her employment.

“The Regional Committee had recommended that Ms Wazed’s appointment as Regional Director be terminated,” it said.

Wazed has been on leave since 2025, after Bangladesh’s anti-graft commission opened cases against her and her family for an alleged land grab of lucrative plots in a suburb of Dhaka.

Bangladesh has requested Hasina’s extradition, which New Delhi has said was “under examination”.

But Hasina has said she will return of her own volition to Bangladesh in December, despite the death sentence she faces. – AFP

Anthropic boss calls for AI slowdown, Altman and Musk agree

Thomas Urbain

NEW YORK – Anthropic CEO Dario Amodei on Saturday called on artificial intelligence (AI) firms to slow down the development of the powerful technology, amid mounting worries over the risks of “superintelligent” computer systems.

His comments came a few days after AI researcher Jacob Coxon, who left OpenAI to join Anthropic, decided to leave the industry, accusing both US companies of “gambling with our lives” in the race to develop models capable of self-improvement.

OpenAI boss Sam Altman and Elon Musk, who owns xAI, quickly chimed in to say they agreed with Amodei’s assessment, as pressure builds for improved oversight.

“We must slow the pace at which we improve the capabilities of AI models. Progress will still seem fast, and we must make wise use of the time we gain,” Amodei wrote in a post on his personal website.

“Not building the technology deprives humanity of benefits or simply places AI in the hands of authoritarian powers, while building it too fast is reckless. We have sought a middle way,” said Amodei, who co-founded Anthropic with his sister Daniela in 2021.

“But over the last few months, I have become convinced that fully addressing the risks requires even more prudence.”

Amodei’s statement echoed another call by Anthropic in early June to slow or suspend development.

Then in late July, Altman said developers might need to voluntarily tap the brakes to give society a chance to catch up.

More than 1,000 employees at cutting-edge AI companies including Amodei signed a petition calling on the US government to help “deliberately pace the frontier of automated AI development.”

OpenAI had revealed that during testing, AI models broke out of their confined environment, connected to the internet and infiltrated Hugging Face, a site developers use to store and share code.

In that incident and others, the blame was placed on AI agents, which are software programs that can carry out tasks without constant supervision by humans.

“Dario is right,” Musk wrote on X, as Altman said: “I agree with Dario that we need to pace the frontier.”

‘Gambling with our lives’

Earlier this week, Coxon, 27, sounded the alarm after spending the past three years pretraining AI models – first at OpenAI and then, this year, at its rival Anthropic, which he considered more cautious in its approach.

Pretraining is the stage where AI models absorb vast quantities of data.

“Neither company is acting responsibly. They are racing straight to self-improving superintelligence and gambling with our lives,” Coxon said last Tuesday.

“The people building AI earnestly believe that it could kill us all by the end of the decade,” he said in a post on X.

Superintelligence is the theoretical point when AI’s capabilities exceed human intelligence.

‘Taking over the entire internet’

Amodei cautioned that the Hugging Face incident should not be dismissed as a one-off.

“A swarm of agents essentially acted as a fanatically devoted collective, conducting cybersecurity attacks on targets they were not asked to attack and that were unrelated to the task at hand,” he explained.

“Given the accelerating rate of AI capability development, it’s my worry that in 6-12 months such a swarm could be capable of taking over the entire internet,” potentially generating hundreds of billions of US dollars in damage, he added.

The Anthropic CEO said his company would grant “employee-like access” to a team of “third-party evaluators” who would verify adherence to safety practices – and he called on all companies to follow his lead.

Altman said he would commit to similar outside oversight, adding that he would have “more to share soon.”

Amodei also suggested that companies work together to establish common safety standards, and said he supported some kind of government cooperation on the issue.

In early August, the US government put in place a voluntary security review process for advanced AI models before their release, but the parameters of that program remain unclear.

Industry observers say they are not sure how effective it would be, as President Donald Trump’s administration has thus far favoured a light-touch, deregulatory approach to most industries, including tech.

–AFP

Trump says Irish unification would be ‘fantastic’

DUBLIN – US President Donald Trump said on Saturday he would “love to see” a united Ireland, wading into a politically sensitive subject as he embarked on a two-day Irish visit that blurs the lines between his presidency and personal business interests.

After meeting Ireland’s Prime Minister Micheal Martin in Dublin, Trump said reunification of the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland – split for over a century – would be “a fantastic thing”.

“It’s going to happen eventually. It may as well happen now,” he told reporters, adding “the UK will have something to say about it, obviously”.

The island of Ireland has been split between the Irish republic in the south and Northern Ireland, which is part of the United Kingdom, since 1921.

Under the 1998 Good Friday Agreement, which ended three decades of sectarian violence in Northern Ireland that killed about 3,000 people, a referendum can be held if the UK government determines a majority there is likely to favour joining the Republic of Ireland.

Republic of Ireland voters would also have to endorse reunification in a poll for it to happen.

The United States has previously adopted a neutral position on the issue.

UK Prime Minister Andy Burnham insisted last month that a unity referendum was “off the table”, drawing a sharp response from the pro-reunification party Sinn Féin.

Asked about Trump’s comments, a spokesperson for his Downing Street office referred reporters to comments Burnham made in parliament Wednesday when he vowed to “stick to the Good Friday Agreement 100 percent”.

However, Gavin Robinson, leader of the pro-British Democratic Unionist Party, said on X that “as unionists we are not interested in the destruction of our country by joining with the Irish Republic”.

Divergences

Trump had touched down at Dublin airport under a security operation dubbed one of the largest ever mounted in Ireland and reportedly costing 20 million euros (US\$23 million).

At least 4,000 police and other personnel, including snipers, have been mobilised.



Donald Trump (centre) gestures as he visits the 1st tee during the final round of the Irish Open golf tournament at the Trump International Golf Links & Hotel, a resort and golf course owned by the US president, in Doonbeg, western Ireland, yesterday. – AFP

In Dublin, at least 2,000 protesters waving Palestinian flags and holding placards rallied on Saturday lunchtime against the president’s visit, chanting “Donald Trump’s not welcome here”, AFP reporters saw.

One sign read “no imperialists in Ireland” while some held explicit inflatable balloons showing Trump in sex acts with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

“Trump is a warmonger,” student Cillian Whelan, 19, told AFP. “He has no right to be in my country. He should be on trial.”

One small group of demonstrators – dressed in black and wearing masks and dark glasses – set a US flag on fire, according to *The Irish Times*.

Smaller protests also occurred at Shannon Airport, where the US leader transited, and in Doonbeg on Ireland’s west coast, where the Trump Organization’s 2014-purchased course is hosting golf’s Irish Open tournament.

Police said three women – aged in their 20s, 30s and 40s – had appeared in a western Irish court late Saturday after being arrested for separate trespass and public order offences there.

After completing engagements in Dublin, Trump landed in Doonbeg aboard Marine One, and was soon photographed watching over the 18th green during the third round of the Open flanked by his sons Don Jr. and Eric.

He was reportedly given a rapturous reception during a brief appearance in the resort’s members’

bar, with drinkers chanting “USA”.

‘Strong view’

Earlier in Dublin, Trump appeared to receive a frostier reception from left-wing President Catherine Connolly, an outspoken critic of the US leader.

“I conveyed the strong view of the Irish people that the normalisation of war and genocide can never be accepted,” Connolly said in a post-meeting statement.

He then met Martin, where the Iran war and US tariffs on EU pharmaceuticals and immigration were on the agenda.

Ireland and the United States have long been close allies, partly because of their common ancestral ties.

But the Irish government’s politics diverge sharply from those of the Trump administration on many issues, with Ireland being one of Europe’s most pro-Palestinian countries.

It is among several countries, including Spain, the UK and France, that have announced a trade ban targeting Israeli settlements in the occupied West Bank.

The 80-year-old golf-mad president has promoted his family’s courses and other businesses unabashedly since returning to the White House for his second presidential stint in January 2025.

Trinity College Dublin US history professor Daniel Gear told AFP that Trump “sees little difference between his private interests and his role as president”.

– AFP

Trump says Zelensky ‘has to stop’ attacking Russian refineries

DOONBEG – US President Donald Trump said yesterday he had warned Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky to “stop knocking out diesel fuel” refineries in Russia because it was causing shortages and “hurting” other countries.

“Mr. Zelensky has to do one thing,” Trump told reporters while on a visit to Ireland. “He has to stop knocking out diesel fuel in Russia.”

“Let him go after targets, but not diesel fuel, because he’s causing a shortage of diesel. This isn’t done by the Middle East, this is done by

what’s happening with Russia and Ukraine.”

Trump added he had spoken to Ukraine’s leader about the country’s stepped-up attacks on such sites over recent months.

“There are plenty of other targets. Don’t hit diesel fuel because that’s hurting. That’s hurting the world. We don’t want him to hit diesel fuel... He’s hitting diesel refineries.”

Ukraine has hit numerous Russian oil refineries hundreds of kilometres from its border with Russia, while Moscow has also intensified its

long-range attacks in recent months, leading to a jump in civilian deaths.

Kyiv has been firing record numbers of drones at Russia, while Moscow has been launching all-time high missile attacks.

With conflict again intensifying in the Middle East, oil prices have spiked, in turn raising American fuel costs and inflation.

That has prompted speculation that the Federal Reserve will hike interest rates just as voters in the US prepare to vote in key midterm elections in November.

– AFP

Why has a financial scandal shaken Brazil to its core?

Analysis by Louis Genot

RIO DE JANEIRO – A financial scandal of mammoth proportions is dominating Brazilian headlines less than a month before the South American nation votes for a new president.

Disgraced banker Daniel Vorcaro, charged with fraud after the collapse of his private bank Banco Master, is at the centre of the sticky web entangling political figures from across the spectrum.

Presidential candidate Flávio Bolsonaro, the son of former far-right president Jair Bolsonaro, is now being probed for alleged corruption and money laundering.

Crisis has also engulfed Brazil's Supreme Court after it emerged that Vorcaro apparently asked one of its top judges for legal help just days before his arrest last year.

AFP takes a look at the Banco

Master affair, described by President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, who is running against Bolsonaro for a fourth non-consecutive term, as “the biggest robbery in Brazil’s history.”

How did this start?

The private bank was the brainchild of Vorcaro, a 42-year-old businessman with expensive taste.

The insolvent operation was liquidated in November 2025, leaving a US\$7 billion debt in its wake.

Vorcaro had just been arrested as he attempted to board a private jet in São Paulo, the financial hub of Brazil.

The detained banker boasted that he had “friends in all branches of government,” and authorities are now also investigating his alleged ties with financiers, top judges and politicians.

His thick address book includes

Lula-allied Senator Jaques Wagner and former pro-Bolsonaro minister Ciro Nogueira.

Lula has admitted that he and Vorcaro held an off-the-record meeting in December 2024 – before the Banco Master case erupted.

What has a Bolsonaro biopic got to do with it?

Flávio Bolsonaro’s troubles began with “Dark Horse,” a forthcoming film about his father.

Bolsonaro asked Vorcaro to finance the biopic starring US actor Jim Caviezel, it emerged in May.

In recordings released by the investigative outlet Intercept Brazil, the two men discuss huge sums of money in a fraternal tone.

Bolsonaro admitted having ties to the banker after denying any relations, and admitted that Vorcaro had contributed millions of US

dollars to the project.

And a court document released on Friday revealed that police have been investigating Bolsonaro since July regarding possible crimes “in the context of financing the production” of the film.

“I have nothing to hide. The film is completely legal,” the 45-year-old senator said at a campaign event on Friday.

Police conducted dozens of raids on Thursday into the alleged embezzlement of public funds by the company that produced “Dark Horse.”

Why is the Supreme Court involved?

The country’s top court got dragged early this month when it emerged that Vorcaro sent messages to a number attributed to Judge Alexandre de Moraes, asking him for advice ahead of his arrest.

Moraes, the bete noire of Bolsonarismo, presided over the case that convicted the ex-leader of coup-plotting after he narrowly lost elections to Lula in 2022.

Judge André Mendonça, nominated by Jair Bolsonaro in 2021, ordered the disclosure of the messages that have caused such a stir.

Moraes in turn accused his colleague of abusing authority and called for an investigation.

Mendonça then ordered the suspension of the Brazilian chief of police, alleging that he had been spied on.

The court’s president, Edson Fachin, intervened in the quarrel and suspended both rulings, but the saga has left a bad taste in the public’s mouth.

The court is reviewing Mendonça’s request to investigate Moraes over his possible ties to Vorcaro. – AFP

US-blockaded Cubans appeal to ‘Cachita’ for divine intervention



Children, whose families are followers of the Virgin of Charity, Oxun in the Yoruba religion, attend a procession during the Oxun Day celebrations in Havana last Tuesday. – AFP

Lisandra Cots

HAVANA – Father-to-be Carlos Trejo paid his respects to Cuba’s patron saint as he and thousands more marked the annual celebration in her name, wondering what fate awaits the US-blockaded island.

Tough times in Cuba did not mute last Tuesday’s colourful procession in honour of Our Lady of Charity, although devotees made sure to ask for her assistance.

Trejo clutched a yellow candle and a yellow flower, the signature colour of the saint affectionately known as “Cachita.”

“I came to make a request for my wife,” he told AFP shortly before joining a traditional procession through the city centre.

The 34-year-old electrician is no stranger to the economic struggles brought on by a US energy blockade imposed on Cuba since January.

But with his partner preparing to deliver their first child, he worries about raising an infant amid regular blackouts, shortages and a breakdown in essential services.

“We all know what the

situation is like...but we have to deal with it” without “abandoning faith,” he said.

A portrait of the patron saint floated serenely down the packed streets, accompanied by singing, applause and prayers.

Catholic Cubans walked alongside practitioners of Afro-Cuban religions, many of whom wore yellow and carried sunflowers, while others cradled dolls representing the saint in their arms.

Associated with the goddess Oshun by practitioners of the Yoruba religion of African origin, Cachita enjoys special status on the Caribbean island.

Along with the usual prayers for health and protection, Cubans are appealing to her for a way out of economic hardship and a resolution to disastrous relations with the United States.

‘Symbol of peace’

Something else was different this year, too: Cachita was cloaked in white rather than her classic yellow.

“It is a symbol of peace,” said Ariel Suárez, secretary of the

Conference of Catholic Bishops of Cuba.

Across the port last Monday, hundreds of people gathered to honour Our Lady of Regla, the patron saint of Havana Bay syncretised with the Yoruba water goddess Yemaya.

Power had just returned to the neighbourhood named after her following a 40-hour blackout.

“Thanks to the Virgin, we have light now, and many are taking the opportunity to cook,” beamed Odalys Fernández, 64.

Jéssica Napoles, a 24-year-old doctor, travelled to Regla despite scant transportation due to fuel shortages.

“Health, lots of health, and that the Cuban people get out of this situation,” she prayed, performing a ritualistic hand-washing in the sea amid floating flowers and fruit.

Her work has shown her just how hard things are for people with illnesses, with food and medical shortages taking a toll.

“We’re all in a bad way, but those who are sick are even worse off,” she said. – AFP

Over 5,300 migrants leave Ceuta in a month: Spain

CEUTA – The Spanish government yesterday said more than 5,300 of the migrants who remained in Ceuta after July’s influx had returned to Morocco in a month, as it faces pressure to restore normality to the increasingly tense city.

The new figures come as criticism over the speed at which the migrants are being returned from the Spanish north African territory damages Socialist Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez before next year’s election.

More than 70,000 migrants entered Ceuta on July 30 and 31 in an unprecedented and deadly rush, with most returning to Morocco in the following hours.

The government has had to identify the thousands of migrants who have remained for weeks to check if they are entitled to asylum, while unaccompanied children cannot be summarily deported.

Ángel Victor Torres, the minister tasked with leading the government’s response, said in a video posted to social media that 5,321 people had “voluntarily returned” to Morocco since August 10.

Ninety people had “given up” their request for international protection and “almost 1,000 people

are being registered with the aim of being able to complete their return proceedings”, Torres added.

The minister did not say how many migrants remained in Ceuta after those returns, a figure that has consistently sparked controversy between the leftist government and the conservative-run city.

On Friday, Ceuta’s leader Juan Jesús Vivas, of the main opposition right-wing Popular Party, put their number at 13,000, but the government’s estimations have been significantly lower.

Locals have protested regularly as the migrants continue to camp on beaches and sleep in the streets, accusing the government of abandoning the overwhelmed city amid a humanitarian crisis.

The migration ministry announced yesterday the creation of another 864 places in temporary migrant shelters, taking the total to around 4,300 and with a view to reaching 6,000 “in the near future”.

Doubts about what the government knew beforehand and the possible role of Morocco, with which Madrid has spent years trying to improve relations, have also increased the political fallout for Sánchez. – AFP



This photo taken yesterday shows illegal migrants’ makeshift tents set up on Benítez beach in Ceuta. – AFP

Yamal double helps Barca edge Levante thriller

Rik Sharma



VALENCIA

— Lamine Yamal struck twice to help Barcelona to an exciting 4-2 win at Levante yesterday in La Liga, extending the Catalans' perfect start to the season.

Hansi Flick's side reestablished their three point lead over Real Madrid at the top of the table, after Los Blancos beat Rayo Vallecano on Saturday.

Xavi Espot opened the scoring for the champions in Valencia with Yamal netting the second and then scoring a penalty early in the second half.

Barca may have a 100 percent record so far from their five games but their defensive frailties were exposed as Ivan Romero and Roger Brugue pulled Levante back into the game in the final stages.

Substitute Karim Adeyemi made the game safe for Barca in stoppage time with a stunning solo goal, breaking through at pace and beating Mathew Ryan.

Flick warned Barcelona's players to keep their focus ahead of the game, lest their sparkling form start to fade, and the Catalans came flying out of the blocks at the Cíutat de Valencia stadium.

The visitors took the lead in the fifth minute, with Levante barely touching the ball before Barca defender Espot found the net.

Barca cut through the middle of Levante's team too easily and the 19-year-old finished from the edge of the box with the help of a slight deflection.

It was Espot's first goal for the club, with the young midfielder brought into the first team this season by Flick and deployed at left-back.

Levante responded with a spell of concerted pressure and Barca were fortunate to maintain

their advantage.

Petar Ratkov could not get a proper shot away when well placed and Barca goalkeeper Joan Garcia saved well from Brugue.

Levante soon came to regret those spurned chances when Raphinha created Barca's second for teenage star Yamal.

The Brazilian rounded goalkeeper Ryan and squared for Yamal to smash into the empty net in the 19th minute.

Between the afternoon summer heat and some heavy tackles, the pace of the game slowed.

Paying the penalty

Yamal claimed his second goal soon after the restart, winning and then converting a penalty.

The Spain winger was hacked down by Aissa Mandi and powered the resulting spot kick past Ryan for his seventh goal in four games across all competitions.

Levante could have pulled one back but Andreas Christensen cleared Romero's bobbling shot off the line.

The striker did get on the scoresheet when Espot gave the ball away with a loose pass towards Christensen, and Romero nipped in to strike.

Levante fans roared when Brugue capitalised on a Marc Bernal error, with Garcia saving his first shot but the striker able to nudge home the rebound.

However, former Borussia Dortmund winger Adeyemi ended the hosts' dreams of a point with a dynamic burst through the defence and then a cool finish to match.

Barcelona host promoted side Racing Santander on Wednesday, while Levante welcome Athletic Bilbao.

Earlier yesterday, Celta Vigo were held to a 1-1 home draw by Malaga.

— AFP

Haaland fires 10-man Man City to memorable win over Man Utd

Kieran Canning



MANCHESTER

— Erling Haaland fired 10-man Manchester City to a memorable 1-0 victory over Manchester United despite Phil Foden's first-half red card to extend a perfect start to Enzo Maresca's reign.

Foden kicked out at United captain Bruno Fernandes on 23 minutes to give the visitors a mountain to climb.

But a new-look City were up to the challenge as the near £250 million (US\$340 million) midfield pairing of Elliot Anderson and Enzo Fernandez proved their worth.

Haaland's winner was laced with controversy as Fernandez was deemed not to be interfering with play when he attempted to head in before the ball reached the Norwegian.

Defeat compounds a miserable Premier League start for United as they are already eight points adrift of City and defending champions Arsenal.

By contrast, victory was a huge statement for Maresca to quell fears of a major drop-off from City following Pep Guardiola's trophy-laden decade in charge.

A fervent pre-match atmosphere was fuelled just as much by United fans' anger towards their own club as it was by the usual animosity between the supporters.

A crackdown on ticket touting in recent months has resulted in widespread condemnation from supporters' groups after many innocent people faced the threat of sanction.

A normal array of banners and flags in the Stretford End was replaced by just one bearing the message: "The way you treat us is a disgrace."

The visitors had made the better start in the opening quarter but looked to have been completely undone by Foden's ill discipline.

City will argue Fernandes



Manchester City's English midfielder Phil Foden (centre) reacts to Referee Michael Oliver (left) after being shown a red card during the English Premier League match against Manchester United at Old Trafford in Manchester, north west England, yesterday.

— AFP

should also have seen red as he fouled Foden and then kicked him in the back.

But there was little case for Foden's defence as he retaliated by throwing both legs up into Fernandes's midriff.

Kobbie Mainoo blocked Rayan Cherki's goalbound effort before Youri Tielemans nearly sliced Antoine Semenyo's cross into his own net as City continued to be the more threatening.

Marcus Rashford was inches away from his first United goal since December 2024 when his free-kick came crashing back off the post with United's best effort before the break.

Donnarumma to the rescue

The woodwork came to City's rescue again just after half-time when Mainoo curled onto the post from distance and the ball rebounded kindly into Gianluigi Donnarumma's grasp.

But the City sucker punch arrived on the hour mark.

Haaland adjusted his body brilliantly to sweep in Josko

Gvardiol's deflected cross.

A VAR review deemed Haaland was onside and that Fernandes was not interfering as he stooped to try and head in himself.

City came close to landing the telling blow when Fernandes's effort was turned onto the post by Senne Lammens.

Haaland also should have had a second when he got onto Fernandes's wicked low free-kick delivery.

City, though, were not made to pay for failing to add a second as United lacked the composure and quality to make the man advantage count until the final minute of stoppage time.

Fernandes's reverse ball perfectly picked out Bryan Mbeumo but he was denied by a fine save from Donnarumma.

Maresca scampered down the touchline in delight at full-time.

After a battle for the title went down to the final week of last season, Arsenal and City look a class apart from the competition once more.

Both are locked on 12 points with Chelsea, Liverpool and United already cut adrift.

— AFP

Kane edges Bayern past Elversberg in Bundesliga



BUNDESLIGA

BERLIN

— Harry Kane scored his first goal of the season to help Bayern Munich edge to a 2-1 win at promoted Elversberg in the Bundesliga yesterday.

Handed the captain's armband with skipper Manuel Neuer rested, Kane scored with 18 minutes remaining to break a 1-1 deadlock and put the defending champions on track for victory.

Bayern had taken the lead through teenage Germany winger Lennart Karl but Elversberg levelled things up just after the hour mark thanks to a stunning curling effort from Maurice Krattenmacher.

The defeat was Elversberg's first after opening their maiden Bundesliga campaign with two wins from two.

Coming from a town of just 13,000, Elversberg represent the smallest town to have ever played in the German top flight.

The underdogs got a pre-game boost when coach Vincent Wagner was cleared to take his spot in the dugout after he won an appeal against a red card in Elversberg's wild 4-3 win at Borussia Mönchengladbach last week.

Bayern took the lead after 26 minutes when Karl tapped in a cross aimed at Kane which the England captain missed.

American forward Cole Campbell looked to have levelled things up for the hosts but his effort was ruled out for offside. Elversberg were soon level however when Krattenmacher looped in a superb effort from the edge of the box.

Kane took it upon himself to get Bayern back in front, scoring on the turn in a crowded penalty box on 72 minutes.

Leipzig thrash Hamburg

Earlier yesterday, RB Leipzig bounced back from their Champions League defeat at Como by thumping strugglers Hamburg 5-0 at home.

Norway winger Antonio Nusa was the best of the bunch for the hosts, scoring one goal and setting up two more, including one for Christopher Nkunku, the French winger's first since returning to Leipzig in August.

Tidiam Gomis, Willi Orban and Romulo also got on the scoresheet for Leipzig, who climbed to fifth with the victory.

"It's easy to look into the past too much.

You lost two games. It's difficult, but you have to look forward," Nusa told reporters.

"Today we had to perform and we did, so I think we had a good balance of not thinking too much of the past, but trying to attack today and I think we did it."

Hamburg's third big defeat in their third league match this campaign leaves the six-time German champions in bottom spot in the table.

Leipzig came into the match already under pressure. After a 4-1 defeat at Como on Thursday and a 3-1 failure at Werder Bremen last week, sporting director Marcel Schaefer took the unusual step of issuing a statement on Friday saying the club was "united" despite criticisms of the side and new coach Martin Demichelis.

Gomis opened the scoring with 17 minutes gone and Nusa added another to have Leipzig two up by half-time.

Nusa set up Orban's 72nd-minute goal before creating another for Nkunku just two minutes later.

Brazilian striker Romulo added gloss to the dominant victory with a late counter-attacking effort.

— AFP



SV Elversberg's German midfielder Felix Keidel (left) and Bayern Munich's English forward Harry Kane vie for the ball during the German first division Bundesliga match between SV Elversberg and FC Bayern Munich in Spiesen-Elversberg, southwestern Germany, yesterday.

— AFP

Resurgent Marquez powers to San Marino win to take MotoGP lead



First place Ducati Lenovo Team's Spanish rider Marc Marquez (right) sprays Prosecco on his brother - Second place BK8 Gresini Racing's Spanish rider Alex Marquez on the podium at the end of the San Marino Moto GP Grand Prix at the Misano World Circuit Marco Simoncelli, in Misano Adriatico, northern Italy yesterday. — AFP

MotoGP

MISANO ADRIATICO, Italy – Resurgent reigning MotoGP world champion Marc Marquez powered to victory in the San Marino MotoGP yesterday ahead of his brother Alex to go top of the standings.

Seven-time MotoGP champion Marquez, riding a Ducati, moved level on 274 points with Aprilia's Jorge Martin, who finished fifth.

Marquez has the edge over Martin with more wins this season despite missing the races in Le Mans and Catalonia to undergo surgery on his foot and shoulder.

"It's a present, I was out, I was over, but now we are leading, how? I don't know," said Marquez, who

has won five of the last seven races.

"Let's see, there are a lot of races to go, now we are leading but the most important is that here we take the points and are leading."

Marquez completed the double having also won Saturday's sprint race as he targets his eighth top-class championship and his 10th overall.

The 33-year-old finished 0.657sec ahead of his younger brother riding for the Ducati-Gresini team, with Spaniard Pedro Acosta of KTM crossing in third.

Pole-sitter Marco Bezzecchi crashed out of his home race in a blow to his title hopes, as he now sits 33 points behind Marquez and Martin.

The Italian Aprilia rider, who

is chasing his first MotoGP world title this year after finishing third last season, crashed into the gravel on the first of 27 laps.

Despite his own form, Marquez conceded Bezzecchi's mishap could be his in the next race in Austria.

"Riding at the limit, Bezzecchi had a little mistake but the next race we can be that rider. I'm human," said the Spaniard.

"I'm a rider who tries to work a lot, especially this season on the mental side, to be super precise in everything I do especially after the surgery.

"The most important is that I feel super calm and relaxed and will try to do my maximum."

— AFP

World championship leader Antonelli wins Spanish GP

F1

MADRID – Kimi Antonelli extended his lead in the world championship with his eighth victory of the season at the Spanish Formula One Grand Prix at the Madring yesterday.

The 20-year-old Mercedes driver finished clear of Max Verstappen (Red Bull) and Lando Norris (McLaren) and is now 81 points ahead of nearest rival, his Mercedes teammate George Russell, in the title race.

Ferrari's Charles Leclerc (Ferrari) finished fourth ahead of fellow Briton Russell and Liam Lawson in the second Red Bull.

Franco Colapinto (Alpine), Oscar Piastri (McLaren), Arvid Lindblad (Racing Bulls) and Niko Hulkenberg (Audi) rounded out the top 10.

Seven-time world champion Lewis Hamilton, who had scored points in every race this season, missed out completely, retiring his Ferrari on lap seven because of brake failure.

George Russell was another big loser, with the Mercedes driver suffering badly from his team's decision to put him on two-stop

strategy – the only one of the main runners to have this – which blew his chances of podium and left him even further behind his teammate in the title race.

Norris will also rue his team's poor strategy.

The reigning world champion drove a blistering lap on Saturday to claim pole position and was leading comfortably until the intervention of the virtual safety car (VSC) on lap 15.

While Antonelli and Verstappen immediately dived into the pits to change their tyres McLaren kept Norris out for an extra lap.

As he prepared to come in, the VSC finished meaning he lost time against his rivals, and the Briton wasn't helped by a slow pitstop of seven seconds.

By the time he came out Norris was down in fifth with Leclerc, who hadn't boxed, and George Russell also ahead of him.

He clawed his way past Russell and moved into third when Leclerc finally boxed on lap 48 of the 57, at which point the lead was handed to Antonelli who cruised home to take the chequered flag. — AFP

Former captain De Villiers hails 'fantastic' Springboks

Rugby

JOHANNESBURG, South Africa – Former South Africa captain Jean de Villiers said yesterday that the 43-28 series-clinching victory over New Zealand was a "fantastic performance by a fantastic team".

The Springboks outscored the All Blacks by six tries to four in American city Baltimore on Saturday to complete a 3-1 triumph in the four-Test 'Greatest Rivalry' showdown.

"This success will live long in the memory. We must celebrate how we recovered from losing the first Test to win three in a row," De Villiers told SuperSport TV.

Fellow former South Africa skippers Victor Matfield and Schalk Burger and ex wing Breyton Paulse also hailed the reigning Rugby World Cup champions and top ranked team.

"This team has an incredible ability to turn things around. We were trailing in the series just a few weeks ago and now we are jubilant," said Matfield.

"A key factor was the aerial battle. I was worried about that aspect of the game before the series, but we grew stronger as the series developed.

"We must also salute (head coach) Rassie Erasmus. He did not panic after the first Test loss. He said then that we could still win the series."

Burger, a flanker who led the Springboks 11 years ago when centre De Villiers and lock Matfield were unavailable, said the men in green and gold "always find a way (to win)".

"I was a little concerned that we built only a three-point lead by half-time. We made six entries into the All Blacks 22 and scored just two tries.

'Amazing'

"But the second half was a

different story. We dominated the aerial battle and I thought (wing) Kurt-Lee Arendse was outstanding.

"It was also tremendous to see so much green (South African supporters) in an American stadium. This augurs well for the 2031 World Cup in the USA.

Paulse also highlighted how virtually every aerial contest in Baltimore was won by South Africa.

"This is the result of many hours of extra work at the training grounds. A decade ago we really battled in this facet of the game.

"Kurt-Lee (Arendse) is not a tall player, yet he won numerous aerial duels. That is amazing, truly amazing.

"Looking at the whole series, (hooker) Malcolm Marx gets my vote as the outstanding player. His strength, his skill, his commitment. What a Springbok."

After four intense, bruising battles with second ranked New Zealand, South Africa return to action on September 29 against 2027 World Cup hosts Australia in Perth.

Erasmus has hinted that Springboks who did not face the All Blacks, including fly-half Handre Pollard and lock/loose forward Franco Mostert, will feature against the Wallabies.

In November, they are away to Italy, France and Ireland in the second half of the Nations Championship league phase.

After facing the Irish in Dublin on November 21, the Springboks travel to London for a three-day finals series the following weekend.

Winning in Baltimore gave South Africa a 7-1 Tests record this year. Before tackling New Zealand, they beat England, Scotland and Wales in the Nations Championship and Argentina. — AFP

World Athletics stance on Russia unchanged, says Coe

Luke Phillips

BUDAPEST, Hungary – World Athletics president Sebastian Coe insisted yesterday that his stance on sanctions imposed on Russia by track and field's governing body were unchanged.

Russia's athletics federation has lodged a new claim at the Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS) to challenge the World Athletics sanctions, arguing not only for the admission of Russian athletes with an eye on qualifying for the 2028 Los Angeles Olympics, but also the restoration of its rights.

The global body for track and field announced in July it was keeping in place a ban on Russian and Belarusian athletes that was imposed in March 2022 following Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

The Russian federation, Russian Athletics, claims the sanctions are "selective and politicised".

"The current restrictions infringe on the organisation's rights and prevent it from fully representing the interests of Russian athletes on an international level," it said.

The International Olympic Committee (IOC) has announced that Russian athletes will be allowed to compete in team events and qualifying competitions for

the Los Angeles Olympics.

"We made it clear that we wanted to ensure all athletes have the possibility to compete at the Olympic Games and not be held responsible for their government's actions," IOC president Kirsty Coventry said.

Ukraine slammed the IOC decision on Russian involvement in Los Angeles as "premature" and "unfounded" while Moscow's invasion drags on through its fifth year.

The stance of World Athletics, headed by Britain's two-time Olympic 1,500m gold medallist Coe, is in contrast to the federations of other Olympic sports.

World Gymnastics and the International Skating Union, for example, have eased restrictions on Russian competitors.

Not about politics

Coe, speaking on the sidelines of the inaugural Ultimate Championship in Budapest yesterday, said he still fully believed in World Athletics' policy.

"First of all, our position hasn't changed," said the 69-year-old Briton.

"This isn't about politics or passports, it's about the integrity of competition.

"From the age of 18, I believe that

Every position I've taken, whether it was during the creation of the first IOC athletes' commission or positions I've personally taken, it's about integrity and it's about competition.

"That matters to me, so our position won't change."

Coe said last month that he intended to be personally present at CAS to defend that position.

Russian Athletics executive director Boris Yaryshevsky, in an interview with the Russian TASS news agency last week, said Coe had crossed the line of political neutrality with that statement.

"It is very clear that he has something personal," Yaryshevsky said.

"He is no longer speaking on behalf of World Athletics as a federation. He is speaking for himself, saying that he personally will go to court to defend this.

"I believe this is simply his personal position, not the position of World Athletics."

Coe conceded yesterday that a solution to the impasse was needed.

"Yes, this does need to be resolved and I'm acutely aware of that," he said.

"It is important. We want a full complement of people on a global level competing in our sport and that has to be our overall objective, of course it does." — AFP

Danish WWII drama wins top prize at Venice festival

Adam Plowright / Alexandria Sage

VENICE – The Venice Film Festival awarded its top prize on Saturday to a Danish-made drama about a woman trying to hide a wartime relationship with a Nazi – the only feature film with a female director in the competition.

“Woman Unknown” had been a major talking point of the festival due to its subject matter, which has rarely been explored in film, and because director May el-Toukhy was almost alone as a woman director in the event.

Only one other woman – Israel’s Rachel Szor, co-director of the chilling documentary “NAZA” about Israel’s war on Gaza – was behind the 21 films vying for prizes at the star-studded closing ceremony in Venice.

“‘Woman Unknown’ is about the female body as a battleground and a public matter. And at the same time, the film tells the tale of women who are invisible, unseen and voiceless,” el-Toukhy told the ceremony.

The head of this year’s jury, US actor-director Maggie Gyllenhaal, had questioned the dearth of women-directed films on the opening day, but she declined to discuss the issue further at a final press conference.

“I think I’m tired of talking about this same subject over and over,” she said. “I just want to

celebrate a brilliantly made movie that I felt was like a laser beam.”

Other winners

The prize ceremony on Saturday wrapped up 10 days of often dark, disturbing programming that chief organiser Alberto Barbera had promised would echo the war-torn and anxiety-filled state of the world.

The second-place Silver Lion went to “Possible Love”, a poignant relationship study by South Korean auteur Lee Chang-dong, which was one of the most highly praised movies of the festival.

The best director prize went to Russian-born Ilya Khrzhanovsky for his vast, riotous and experimental cinema project “DAU” that chronicles the life of the troubled father of the Soviet nuclear programme, Lev Landau.

The over three-hour film began two decades ago and involved 2,000 people, many of them actors who lived for months in character on a full-scale reconstruction of a secret Soviet research institute as Khrzhanovsky filmed.

“Not everyone believed that the movie will be finished, but I always believed,” he told the audience, while dedicating the prize to the people of Ukraine “who are fighting in this terrible war for their freedom”.



Danish director May El-Toukhy, winner of the Golden Lion for Best Film for “Kvinde Ukendt” (“Woman unknown”) attends a photocall on the red carpet following the closing ceremony of the 83rd Venice Film Festival at Venice Lido on Saturday. – AFP

The best actor award went to John Malkovich for his role as a jaded CIA agent in dark comedy “Wild Horse Nine,” which sees him take a break with a colleague on Easter Island in Chile ahead of the 1973 US-backed military coup there.

Film magazine *Variety* said Malkovich was “drumming up awards buzz” and tipped him for a possible first best actor Oscar at the next awards ceremony.

Best actress was picked up by Denmark’s Mathilde Arcel in her

first film role as a bride-to-be who is desperately trying to hide the shame of a past relationship with a Nazi in “Woman Unknown”.

The 30-year-old told AFP in Venice she disliked fame and celebrity, but Gyllenhaal tipped her for even greater success.

“I think she is going to blow our socks off,” Gyllenhaal told reporters.

Gaza film

“NAZA”, by Oscar-winning Israeli directors Yuval Abraham

and Rachel Szor, had been tipped by some critics for the prize for best film after a record-breaking 25-minute ovation at its premiere on Thursday.

It won a special jury prize instead, an award handed out each year by the jury to recognise an outstanding work.

In their 80-minute film, Abraham and Szor spoke to 24 different Israeli military or intelligence whistleblowers who outlined the AI-powered targeting systems used to bombard Gaza that have killed tens of thousands of civilians.

“The Israeli intelligence officers we spoke with talked to us about how this mass killing is systemic: not by accident, but by design, actions of murder and policies that are based on the total dehumanisation of Palestinians,” Abraham told the audience.

The film was described as an “urgent, gut-punch” by film magazine *Screen*, while The Hollywood Reporter said it inspired “outrage” and “most certainly disgust, on a profound level, for the current Israeli regime”.

The Israeli military has criticised the use of anonymous testimonies in the film, saying on Friday the identities of the whistleblowers “cannot be verified”.

Israel denies deliberately targeting civilians. – AFP

Stallone biopic ‘I Play Rocky’ receives standing ovation at TIFF

TORONTO – “I Play Rocky,” a new film which traces the path of a then-unknown Sylvester Stallone fighting to create the movie that would make him a star, premiered ON Saturday at the Toronto International Film Festival (TIFF), where it garnered a standing ovation.

Directed by Peter Farrelly, who won an Oscar for the 2018 film “Green Book,” the film recounts Stallone’s initial struggles as he tried to break into Hollywood.

His big break came when he

wrote a screenplay about a boxer who, against all odds, gets his moment in the ring and seizes the opportunity – a story that reflected his own reality.

Poor to the point that he had to sell his dog because he could not afford to feed it, Stallone turned down studio offers for the script over one condition: he would only sell it if he could star in it.

“The depth that Stallone had gone to before he made this movie, and the battle was even when he was shooting the movie, it all got

me, because I didn’t know it all,” Farrelly told AFP on the red carpet in Toronto.

‘Just hang in there’

The filmmaker said he aimed to convey the same message in his film as the 1976 original: “Just hang in there, be tough, you take some shots, but if you have integrity, you will win in the end.”

Shot on a shoestring budget, “Rocky” ended up becoming the highest grossing film of 1976, catapulting Stallone to stardom and garnering 10 Academy Award nominations, winning three, including Best Picture.

Before the movie screened, Farrelly personally thanked Stallone for giving his blessing to make the film.

“I said from the beginning I’m not going to make the movie unless Sylvester Stallone signs off on it,” Farrelly told AFP.

“And he read the script and said ‘go ahead,’ and he saw the movie, he was very happy, thank God.”

The film stars 27-year-old actor Anthony Ippolito as Stallone, who landed the role by sending in an audition tape before casting even began, Farrelly said.

“The movie shows that it’s not really that easy to be an actor sometimes, and it’s just... absolutely surreal,” Ippolito said.

TIFF concludes this Sunday.

– AFP



US actor Anthony Ippolito poses on the sidelines of the premiere of “I Play Rocky” during the 2026 Toronto International Film Festival at Princess of Wales Theatre on Saturday in Toronto, Ontario. – AFP

Céline Dion kicks off first full concert in 6 years

PARIS – Céline Dion on Saturday kicked off her first full concert in six years in Paris, as she returned to the stage after battling a rare neurological disorder.

Wearing a strapless black gown, the 58-year-old French-Canadian singer was visibly moved as she sang her 1990s French-language ballad “On ne change pas” (“One doesn’t change”) to a crowd of some 30,000 fans.

She paused briefly and was overcome with emotion as she made her much-awaited comeback, after Stiff Person Syndrome forced her to cancel shows and left her struggling to perform.

Enthralled fans chanted her name at the end of the first song.

“I have to admit, the path was rockier than expected, the journey longer than expected, with

unplanned stopovers, but I held on to a faint ray of light in the distance, deep in the mountains,” she told the audience.

“And now, the sun is here, the sun is in front of me. So tonight, I want to sing for you, sing for myself, sing for life,” she said.

Fans from around the world had flocked to the Plénitude Arena on the western edge of the French capital for the opening night of her 26-show run.

Saturday’s performance was the first of 16 sold-out shows in September and October, before Dion is slated to return to Paris for another 10 next May.

The series, produced by event promoter AEG Presents, is estimated to generate hundreds of millions of euros in economic benefits for the French capital. – AFP

World Weather

CHINA	ASIA-PACIFIC	WORLD	LUSOPHONE
Beijing 15°C~28°C	Manila 24°C~33°C	New York 14°C~25°C	Lisbon 18°C~32°C
Shanghai 20°C~30°C	Bangkok 25°C~33°C	London 17°C~24°C	Rio de Janeiro 19°C~21°C
Hong Kong 24°C~30°C	Tokyo 23°C~30°C	Frankfurt 14°C~24°C	Luanda 19°C~23°C
Taipei 23°C~31°C	Singapore 25°C~32°C	Vancouver 12°C~17°C	Maputo 16°C~27°C
Guangzhou 23°C~31°C	Kuala Lumpur 25°C~35°C	Paris 15°C~26°C	Dili 21°C~33°C
Nanjing 17°C~28°C	Jakarta 23°C~35°C	Moscow 9°C~19°C	São Tomé 24°C~31°C
Guilin 20°C~32°C	Seoul 14°C~27°C	Las Vegas 23°C~37°C	Praia 24°C~31°C
Xi'an 17°C~28°C	Sydney 14°C~25°C	Monte Carlo 20°C~28°C	Bissau 23°C~31°C



Area of conservation & protection

Rhinos are pictured at the Bothongo Rhino and Lion Nature Reserve in Gauteng Province, South Africa, on Saturday. Nestled in the heart of the Cradle of Humankind, the reserve is home to hundreds of animals spanning a wide range of wildlife species.

— Xinhua



Highlighting endangered species

People look at British artist and stage designer Es Devlin's multimedia work 'Come Home Again' during her solo show 'Es Devlin, Come Home Again' at Futura Seoul art space in Seoul on Friday.

— AFP



Not for the roads!

Driver Graham Sykes competes on his steam rocket bike entitled 'Force of Nature' at the Euro Finals drag racing event at the Santa Pod Raceway near Wellingborough, central England on Friday.

— AFP



Pigs in paradise

A Mediterranean black pig swims at a beach on the private island of Atokos, in the Ionian Sea, Greece, on Thursday.

— AFP



'Dance of the gods'

Indian artists arrive to perform 'Theyyam', a traditional dance form of Kerala, during a cultural event in Chennai, India yesterday.

— AFP



Lots of puff needed!

Young alphorn players react after posing for a picture during the first edition of the Federal Youth Yodelling Festival, in the Alpine resort of Grindelwald, Switzerland, on Saturday. Grindelwald is hosting the first-ever Federal Youth Yodeling Festival, bringing together young talents aged 5 to 25 from across Switzerland to celebrate yodelling, alphorn and Buchel playing, as well as flag throwing.

— AFP