

Sam pledges alignment with Xia's Hengqin vision

'Treat Hengqin's affairs as Macau's own'

Tony Wong

Macau Special Administrative Region (MSAR) Chief Executive Sam Hou Fai yesterday convened and chaired the sixth meeting of the Leadership Group for Promoting the Development of the Guangdong-Macao In-Depth Cooperation Zone in Hengqin, underlining the need to heed the spirit of last week's special meeting held in Hengqin on advancing Hengqin's development, according to a statement by the Macao Government Information Bureau (GCS) yesterday.

Sam also reaffirmed the need to treat Hengqin's affairs as if they were Macau's own.

The meeting, held at Government Headquarters, was attended by Sam's five policy secretaries and his chief-of-cabinet Chan Kak.

Sam, who took office on December 20, 2024, set up the leadership group in February last year.

According to the statement, yesterday's meeting focused on the spirit of last week's special meeting held in Hengqin on advancing the development of the Guangdong-Macao In-Depth Cooperation Zone in Hengqin.

The special meeting held in

Hengqin on Thursday last week was chaired by Xia Baolong, who heads both the Hong Kong and Macao Work Office (HKMWO) of the Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Committee and the Hong Kong and Macao Affairs Office (HKMAO) of the State Council. The special meeting was also attended by Sam, Guangdong Governor Meng Fanli, Central People's Government Liaison Office in the MSAR Director Zheng Xincong, other HKMWO-HKMAO officials, officials from the central authorities' relevant ministries and commissions, and other MSAR officials.

Last week's special meeting in Hengqin

During yesterday's meeting, according to the GCS statement, Sam noted that last week's special meeting thoroughly studied the spirit of President Xi Jinping's important instructions concerning Hengqin's development and outlined how to put the spirit into practice.

Sam noted that last week's special meeting focused on accelerating the implementation of the package of policy measures to further advance Hengqin's

development, supporting Macau in aligning with the nation's 15th Five-Year Plan and ensuring the effective implementation of its 3rd Five-Year Plan, and elevating the development of Hengqin to a new level.

Sam raises 3 points for local officials' Hengqin work

During yesterday's meeting, Sam underlined the need to thoroughly study the spirit of Xia's remarks made during last week's special meeting. He raised three points aimed at ensuring the full implementation of the local government's various initiatives to advance Hengqin's development.

First, Sam said, it is essential to gain a full understanding of the significance of last week's meeting, an important meeting held shortly before the 5th anniversary of the establishment of the in-depth cooperation zone. It was a high-level meeting attended by officials from a wide range of entities and spheres. All these have fully demonstrated the central authorities' high degree of attention to Hengqin's development, Sam underlined.

The 106-square-kilometre Hengqin



Chief Executive Sam Hou Fai addresses yesterday's meeting of the Leadership Group for Promoting the Development of the Guangdong-Macao In-Depth Cooperation Zone in Hengqin at Government Headquarters in Nam Van district.

— Photo: GCS

Island in Zhuhai City has been officially known as the Guangdong-Macao In-Depth Cooperation Zone in Hengqin since its inauguration on September 17, 2021. The adjacent island is three times the size of the MSAR.

Second, Sam said, the opportunity presented by last week's special meeting must be seized to accelerate the implementation of the package of policy measures to further advance Hengqin's development.

Continued on p.6



A police officer at the Heihe border inspection station in Heilongjiang Province presents flowers to a Russian passenger, the one-millionth traveler to clear customs in Heihe this year, yesterday. Border crossings have surged since the implementation of the China-Russia visa-free policy, pushing total inbound and outbound trips through the checkpoint to a record 1 million – a 56.18 percent year-on-year increase.

— Xinhua

New York seizes 12 celeb deep-fake porn sites

NEW YORK – Authorities in New York announced yesterday the seizure of a dozen prominent websites hosting pornographic celebrity deep-fakes that featured politicians and actors.

An online boom in non-consensual deep-fakes is currently outpacing efforts to regulate the technology around the world due to a proliferation of AI tools, including “nudification” apps.

Manhattan District Attorney Alvin Bragg said he believed it was the largest seizure of websites focused on AI-generated illegal pornography.

The sites, with names like “AI Celebs,” hosted hyper-realistic deep-fake montages and clips of what prosecutors said was around 1,200 victims.

He said they were “photos and videos that use artificial intelligence to make it seem like real people are engaging in sexually explicit acts.”

“In New York State it is illegal to share real photos and videos of people engaging in sex without their permission. Likewise, it is also illegal to share that content if it's created or altered by artificial intelligence tools.”

Bragg said a victim came forward to report a site, triggering the investigation. He did not confirm any arrests.

“Our investigations into deep-fake pornography sites and content creators are just beginning. This is part of our broader work to dismantle systems that breed and foster crime,” he added.

In May, the United States began enforcing a law requiring tech platforms to remove sexual deep-fakes and other non-consensual intimate imagery.

— AFP

Macau's most popular English-language newspaper – Your trustworthy source of news & views

The Macau Post Daily

Potential new TB jabs could save millions of lives: Gavi

New TB vaccines expected to become available from 2029 could save over seven million lives over two decades, Gavi said yesterday, but only if sufficient supply is ensured to the countries most in need.

— Story on p. 10

Trump blasts 'sick conspiracy' against AI as warnings mount

US President Donald Trump yesterday attacked what he called a “sick conspiracy” against artificial intelligence (AI), dismissing calls for guardrails despite warnings that it threatens humankind.

— Story on p. 11

'Fed up': Thousands in Mexico march against Sinaloa Cartel violence

Chanting and waving banners, thousands marched on Sunday in the Mexican city of Culiacán to protest the deaths of people caught up in a war between two rival factions of the infamous Sinaloa Cartel.

— Story on p. 12

An Asia-Pacific Community: Our Shared Choice for Regional Prosperity

Commentary by Zhao Ruixi*

Connected by the waters of the Pacific, the economies of Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) have, over the past 37 years, prospered through openness and flourished through cooperation, creating an “Asia-Pacific miracle” that has captured the world’s attention.

Today, changes on a scale unseen in a century are unfolding at an accelerating pace. The world economy is experiencing anemic growth, and the World Openness Index has been declining. Unilateralism and protectionism are posing new challenges to openness and cooperation. APEC now faces a critical choice between openness and isolation, and between working together and “building walls.” At this historic crossroads, the question of our times is: Where is Asia-Pacific development headed? Preserving the region’s commitment to openness and cooperation has become a shared task for all APEC economies.

On September 5, the National High-Level Think Tank of Xinhua News Agency released a report titled Openness, Innovation and Cooperation—Building a More Prosperous Asia-Pacific Community in Shenzhen for a global audience. The report systematically reviews the groundbreaking progress and historic achievements made since APEC’s establishment 37 years ago. It provides an in-depth analysis of the opportunities and challenges facing cooperation among APEC economies in the current international environment, identifies key areas for future cooperation, and presents a comprehensive picture of the promising prospects and global significance of building a more prosperous Asia-Pacific community.

Since its establishment in 1989, APEC has remained committed to its founding mission

of promoting common development and improving people’s well-being. In doing so, it has forged a path of cooperation characterized by harmony without uniformity, mutual benefit, and win-win outcomes. Guided by the principle of “open regionalism,” APEC fully respects and accommodates the differences among its member economies in political systems, levels of development, and social and cultural traditions. Through practical cooperation, it has helped turn the Asia-Pacific into a powerhouse for world economic growth, an anchor of stability for global development, and a pacesetter for international cooperation.

Given the pronounced diversity of Asia-Pacific economies, APEC has followed the “APEC Approach” of dialogue and consultation, flexibility and pragmatism, and seeking common ground while shelving differences. It fully respects the development rights and diversity of all its members, builds the broadest possible consensus through communication and coordination at multiple levels, draws on their complementary strengths, and works to grow the “pie” of Asia-Pacific cooperation together.

Amid turbulence in the global economic and trade landscape, APEC has remained committed to open regionalism and firmly focused on trade and investment liberalization and facilitation. It has continued to reduce non-tariff barriers while advancing all-around opening up of trade in services, digital trade, and investment market access.

Changes in the world, in the times, and in history are unfolding like never before. Against this backdrop, Asia-Pacific economies have sharpened their focus on the region’s shared interests and unequivocally identified openness, innovation, and

cooperation as three priorities, charting the course for the Asia-Pacific economy to stabilize, regain momentum, and achieve higher-quality development.

To build an Asia-Pacific community, we must regard openness as its lifeblood and consolidate the foundation for shared prosperity across the region. Openness and cooperation offer the only path for the Asia-Pacific to meet challenges and create a better future together. We must remain firmly committed to true multilateralism, uphold the multilateral trading system with the World Trade Organization at its core, advance trade and investment liberalization and facilitation, and keep regional industrial and supply chains stable and smooth. We should build a high-standard regional trading system, strengthen the alignment and integration of regional economic and trade rules, facilitate the free flow of factors of production, and develop an inclusive institutional framework.

To build an Asia-Pacific community, we must make innovation a source of momentum and unlock the region’s potential for long-term development. Innovation gives wings to the Asia-Pacific economy. With its distinctive scientific and technological resources and strong tradition of innovation, the region has fostered many new technologies, industries, and institutional mechanisms, making it a major engine of global innovation and development. Finding effective solutions to the global shortfall in growth momentum is a shared mission for the Asia-Pacific. Looking ahead, APEC economies will develop a region-wide collaborative innovation system and strengthen mechanisms for joint research and technological breakthroughs.

To build an Asia-Pacific community, we must make cooperation its solid foundation

and pool our collective strength for common development. Cooperation is the cornerstone of shared prosperity in the Asia-Pacific and a fundamental guarantee for building an Asia-Pacific community. At its heart is the promotion of universally beneficial and inclusive development, enabling more stakeholders to participate in and benefit from growth. Asia-Pacific economies remain committed to “joining hands” rather than “letting go,” and to “extending industrial and supply chains” rather than “breaking them.” They are actively seeking further areas where their interests converge, supporting the open development of supply chains, and continually consolidating and refining infrastructure, institutional, and people-to-people connectivity. In doing so, they are further consolidating the foundation for open development across the Asia-Pacific.

A new journey begins from Shenzhen. At this new historical starting point, and guided by the threefold consensus on openness, innovation, and cooperation, APEC will further consolidate the foundation for shared prosperity, unlock the Asia-Pacific’s potential for long-term development, and pool the region’s collective strength for common development. Together, its members will build a more prosperous Asia-Pacific community and write a new chapter in the “Asia-Pacific miracle.”

*Research Fellow, Xinhua Institute

N.B. The Xinhua Institute is a media-type think tank affiliated with Xinhua News Agency, established on October 28, 2021 in Beijing. It focuses on public policy and international issues, aiming to provide intellectual support for state decisions regarding foreign policy and international relations. – DeepSeek

<https://xinhuaireview.substack.com/about>

Macau history book launches English, Portuguese versions

Khalel Vallo

The Macao Foundation (FM) has released the English- and Portuguese-language versions of a Chinese-language book about Macau’s history and culture, with the aim of making it more widely accessible to non-Chinese readers, according to a statement by the public foundation yesterday.

Originally published in Chinese in 2022, the history book was written by young local scholars Alex Chan Lek Hang (陳力行), Alex Lou Ka U (勞加裕) and Sio Kit Meng (蕭潔銘), the statement noted. Arranged chronologically into five parts and 20 chapters, it traces Macau’s historical development from the Stone Age* to 1945, the statement added.

A Journey Through Time: A Brief History of Macao is the title of the English-language version.

The Chinese edition has sold more than 3,500 copies and entered its third print, the statement noted, adding that the book uses illustrations to introduce local history and promote cultural understanding among younger generations.

The English edition was translated by a local scholar Chan Chan U (陳震宇), the statement said, while the title of the Portuguese-language version is *Esta Cidadezinha ao Longo do Tempo – Uma Introdução Simples à História de Macau* (“This Little City Over Time – A Simple Introduction to the History of Macao”), which was translated by Mu Shuang (母爽), a master’s degree holder from the University of Macau’s (UM) Department of Portuguese. It was reviewed by Prof. Giorgio Sinedino, director of the Centre for Bilingual Teaching and Training in



This undated handout photo provided by the public Macao Foundation (FM) yesterday shows the newly released English- and Portuguese-language versions of 澳門歷史讀本：小城的時光之旅。

Chinese and Portuguese at UM’s Faculty of Arts and Humanities.

The book’s original Chinese title 澳門歷史讀本：小城的時光之旅 literally translates as “Macao History Reader: A Journey Through the Small City’s Time”.

The foundation noted in its statement that the translations aim to overcome linguistic and cultural barriers and strengthen the international communication of Macau’s historical and cultural heritage, underlining that both editions cost 50 patacas each and are available at selected

local bookstores, with a promotion campaign on major campuses planned soon. ■

*The Stone Age lasted from roughly 3.4 million years ago to around 3,300 BCE, covering roughly 99 percent of human technological history. It began when early human ancestors crafted the first stone tools and ended with the adoption of metalworking (the Bronze Age). Archaeological evidence shows that the earliest human presence in Macau dates back roughly 6,000 years to the Middle Neolithic Period (around 4000–3500 BCE). – Gemini

Macau Weather

CLOUDY APART FROM SUNNY PERIODS.
A FEW SHOWERS.
FORCE 2 TO 3 EAST TO NORTHEASTERLY WINDS.
RELATIVE HUMIDITY WILL RANGE BETWEEN 65% AND 95%.



25°C~31°C

Source: SMG

Published since Aug 2004

- Director & Chief Editor – Harald Brüning
- Office Manager – Sally Chong
- Marketing Manager – Kevin Cheung King Lok
- Managing Editor – Maria Cheang Ut Meng
- Editors – Lesley Wells, Johnny Un
- Senior Reporters – Tony Wong, Rui Pastorino
- Reporters – Khalel Vallo, William Chan, Ida Cheong, Armino Neves, Sherwin Hng
- Chief Graphic Designer – Simon Wang
- Graphic Designer – Colin Zhong
- Administrative Assistants – Ester Mak, Carl Leong
- Printed by Tipografia Welfare Lda., 82-86 Rua dos Pescadores
- Ai tools: DeepSeek, Gemini
- Wire services – AFP, Xinhua



Registration opens
for parent-child
reading promotion

Ida Cheong

The Cultural Affairs Bureau (IC) announced in a statement on Friday that public libraries have launched a new series of parent-child reading promotion activities, featuring two picture book activities – called “Roundabouts” and “Story World” – for young children.

All sessions are free of charge. Registration is currently open; residents can sign up via “Macao One Account”.

The new instalment of young children’s picture book “Roundabouts” is scheduled to run from October to December, tailored for children aged six months to four years old accompanied by their parents, the statement said, adding that, divided into specific age brackets covering six to eighteen months, eighteen months to 2 years, 2 to 3 years, and 3 to 4 years, the programme aims to utilise diverse five-sense stimulation and engage parent-child interactive reading to create a rich early literacy experience for young families.

The “Story World” programme is designed for children aged three to 12 years alongside their parents, aiming to cultivate children’s reading habits through storytelling, handicraft workshops, and interactive games. The activities take place every weekend at 3:00 p.m., requiring no advance registration so that families are free to join on-site, the statement added.

Additionally, the two activities are included in the “Read for 10 Minutes” incentive scheme. For detailed event information, please visit the IC public libraries website at www.library.gov.mo. ■

A-Ma Cultural & Tourism Festival to start Oct 12



Ida Cheong

The “19th A-Ma Cultural and Tourism Festival” will take place from October 12 to 15, featuring a series of thematic forums, cultural presentations, and tourism promotion events, Macau A-Ma Cultural and Tourism Festival Organising Committee Chairman Chan Meng Kam announced at a press conference yesterday.

The press conference for the four-day event was held at the China Dragon Hotel in the Central District.

Highlighting the vision of the festival, Chan noted that this year’s event has invited over 1,000 national and foreign guests, including representatives from various sectors in China’s Taiwan region, adding that the four-day programme will include a thematic seminar, a Fujian-Macau culture and tourism promotion meeting, an opening ceremony coupled with an A-Ma* pilgrimage, a themed gala, and a traditional blessing tour featuring a statue of A-Ma.

Chan said that three major artistic troupes – the Fujian Song and Dance Theatre, the Fujian Symphony Orchestra, and the Fujian

Acrobatics Troupe – will perform “Melodies of Fujian” in Macau to showcase regional folk customs and the profound cultural heritage of A-Ma through blending dance, music, and acrobatics.

Furthermore, the Fujian Provincial Department of Industry and Information Technology will feature exquisite works by national- and provincial-level master artisans, alongside live interactive demonstrations of intangible cultural heritage skills and a dedicated business matching platform, Chan added.

Festival schedule

Fellow Organising Committee Executive Chairperson Ngan Iek Peng outlined the festival schedule and itinerary: on October 13, an official opening ceremony and the A-Ma pilgrimage will be hosted at the Macau A-Ma Cultural Village in Coloane at 10:00 a.m. At 3:00 p.m., the statue of A-Ma from the Macau Tin Hau Temple in Coloane will embark on a grand parade commencing at the Fai Chi Kei waterfront and culminating in Areia Preta Park, allowing residents and devotees to pay their respects and offer prayers. Later that evening at

Macau A-Ma Cultural and Tourism Festival Organising Committee Chairman Chan Meng Kam (third from left), Fellow Organising Committee Executive Chairperson Ngan Iek Peng (third from right) and other representatives pose during yesterday’s press conference for the “19th A-Ma Cultural and Tourism Festival” at the China Dragon Hotel. – Photo: Ida Cheong

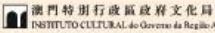
8:00 p.m., a special intangible cultural heritage Nanyin music** performance will be staged in Areia Preta Park.

The parade will feature over 30 performance troupes totalling more than 3,000 participants, notably including the Yingge Dance Troupe from the Xilu Tin Hau Temple in Shantou. ■

* The A-Ma folk belief centers on the worship of a historical woman named Lin Moniang (also known as Mazu or Tin Hau), who lived in Fujian during the 10th century. Originally revered as a protector of fishermen and seafarers, she was later deified and became one of the most influential deities in coastal China and beyond. – DeepSeek

** Nanyin music (南音 – “southern music”) is an ancient musical genre from Quanzhou, Fujian, widely recognised as a “living fossil” of traditional Chinese music. Played on classical instruments like the pipa and dongxiao (a traditional Chinese vertical end-blown flute made of bamboo), this UNESCO-listed art form preserves court melodies and poetic folk traditions dating back to the Han and Tang dynasties. – Gemini

主辦單位 Organizadores Organizers


澳門特別行政區政府文化局
INSTITUTO CULTURAL do Governo da Região Administrativa Especial de Macau

協辦單位 Co-organizador Co-organizer


澳門美術協會
MACAU ARTIST SOCIETY

支持單位 Entidade de apoio Supporting Unit


澳門文化界聯合總會
FEDERAÇÃO DAS ASSOCIAÇÕES DOS CULTURISTAS DE MACAU


1956 • 2026

家國情懷

吳仕明書法作品展

DEVOÇÃO À

SOCIEDADE E À PÁTRIA

CALIGRAFIA DE UNG SI MENG

A HEART FOR COMMUNITY

AND MOTHERLAND

CALLIGRAPHY BY UNG SI MENG

開幕儀式 CERIMÓNIA DE ABERTURA OPENING CEREMONY

15/09/2026 18:30

展覽日期 PERÍODO DA EXPOSIÇÃO EXHIBITION PERIOD

15/09/2026 - 15/10/2026

開放時間 HORÁRIO OPENING HOURS

12:00-19:00

展覽地點 VENUE LOCAL

澳門巴黎人三樓，商舖 #3305b #3305c #3306

The Parisian Macao Level 3, Shops #3305b #3305c #3306

The Parisian Macao, Piso 3, Lojas #3305b #3305c #3306



Carmen Ip participates as a drummer in the Keep an Eye Summer Jazz Workshop, hosted by the Conservatorium van Amsterdam, both last year and earlier this year.

Interview by William Chan

The Carmen Ip Trio, led by local drummer Carmen Ip Wai Man, performed last month at the Sifan Music and Arts Association as part of the Macau Jazz Upcomer Concert series.

The series aims to introduce local musicians – many of whom studied abroad and have returned to Macau – to a wider audience. Ip, who holds a diploma in jazz drums from the Beijing Contemporary Music Academy and is currently studying at the Conservatorium Maastricht in the Netherlands, spoke with the *Post* about her journey.

Ip's decision to study jazz in the Netherlands grew out of her time in Beijing, where she noticed that many accomplished musicians she admired had trained in Europe. Their playing and understanding of music left a strong impression on her, and she began researching Dutch jazz education. She found the Netherlands to be an ideal choice outside of the United States. English is widely spoken, making daily life and study accessible, and the country attracts jazz musicians from around the world who perform, settle, and teach there. Tuition is also more affordable compared to the US, and the concentration of talent and live performances creates an environment where she can focus deeply on jazz while absorbing diverse musical cultures.

Describing her experience abroad as “unforgettable,” Ip underlined the openness and freedom of the European jazz scene, which differs from its American roots by embracing broader forms of expression. She has been exposed to music that extends beyond traditional jazz boundaries, which prompted her to question whether jazz needs to be confined to any single format. Beyond instrumental training, her studies include music production, recording, arranging, and unconventional ensembles such as Middle Eastern and free jazz groups. She also participated in the Keep an Eye Summer Jazz Workshop at the Conservatorium van Amsterdam, where she worked with renowned artists including Immanuel Wilkins and Kendrick Scott. The experience reinforced a key lesson: the most accomplished musicians often remain the most humble and curious. Outside of music, the slower pace of Dutch life has given her more time to practise, reflect, and simply be present – something she values deeply.

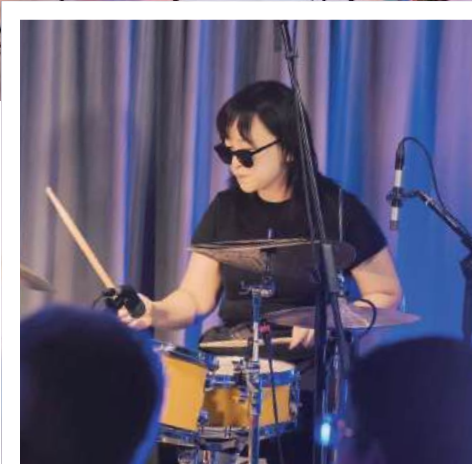
Each time Ip returns to Macau, she is driven by a desire to build a platform for jazz in her hometown. While cities in the mainland and Hong Kong have growing jazz scenes with dedicated clubs and regular performances, she believes Macau still has significant room to grow. “I want to bring back what I’ve learnt and loved, not necessarily expecting audiences to ‘understand’ jazz, but hoping it becomes part of everyday entertainment – an alternative to dinner or a movie.” She also hopes to develop jazz education in Macau so future generations do not have to leave the city to access quality learning.

Her recent concert marked the first time she has led a full performance under her own name – a milestone after a



decade of drumming, but also a beginning rather than an endpoint. She chose collaborators she knows and admires, players she had previously worked with in Zhuhai and Macau.

The repertoire leant towards groovy, modern jazz, including an original composition, “Sometimes Everything’s Like a Dream.” Written during her years in the Netherlands, the piece reflects on leaving behind the familiar and experiencing intense highs and lows in quick succession. “Looking back, it all feels dreamlike. The message for me is that whatever happens, be present in the moment.” For Ip, the concert was a chance to bring new sounds back to Macau and share the direction she is now pursuing – one that increasingly incorporates electronic elements and moves towards electronic and modern jazz as she works to develop her own voice.



Carmen Ip performs at Sifang Art Space last month. – Photos provided by Ip



Sneaker Con returns to China with Macau debut



This poster provided by SJM on Friday promotes the upcoming Sneaker Con event slated to be held on October 10-11 at Grand Lisboa Palace in Cotai.

Khalel Vallo

According to a statement by integrated resort operator SJM on Friday, Sneaker Con will make its local debut on October 10 and 11 at Grand Lisboa Palace Resort Macau's The Grand Hall in Cotai, marking the convention's return to the nation's market after a three-year hiatus.

Organised by Yue Seng Sports Culture Co., Ltd. and local streetwear brand MACCREW, and title-sponsored by SJM Resorts, S.A., the event will feature former NBA (National Basketball Association) player Metta Sandiford-Artest, known professionally as Metta World Peace, and Houston Rockets' Marcus Smart, who will talk about their basketball careers and personal stories with audiences, the statement said.

The Macau edition will also introduce a concert programme on October 10, featuring Chinese rapper and singer-songwriter Yamy (Guo

Ying) and Last King (Liu Xuanteng), with Bostick Chen (陈土豆) as host, the statement noted, adding that the convention will feature sneaker trading, authentication, buying and selling, streetwear brands and vendor booths. The statement also pointed out that its Trading Pit will allow collectors and streetwear enthusiasts to display and trade rare sneakers.

Meanwhile, MACCREW founder Allen Choi (蔡奥龍) said the event would combine local streetwear culture with the sports industry and support Macau's Tourism+ and Sports+ initiatives, the statement noted, adding that the event is expected to attract more than 5,000 visitors.

According to the statement, "Early Bird" tickets went on sale on Saturday, with two-day passes starting at 199 patacas. Meanwhile, standard tickets will go on sale starting from 169 patacas when the early bird period ends on September 24. ■

Mainlander nabbed for 370,000-pataca currency exchange scam: police

Sherwin Hng

A 33-year-old Chinese mainland man has been arrested for defrauding a couple out of 321,077 yuan (370,000 patacas) in a bogus currency exchange deal, Judiciary Police (PJ) spokesman Lei Chi Hou said during a regular press conference yesterday.

According to Lei, the couple were approached by a man at a hotel shopping mall in Cotai on Friday afternoon. They agreed to exchange 321,077 yuan for HK\$360,000 in cash, and the couple transferred the yuan to a designated mainland bank account as instructed.

The couple then followed the man to the hotel lobby to collect the HK\$360,000 in cash. However, upon arrival at the lobby, the man manoeuvred hurriedly through the area under false pretences before fleeing the scene.

The suspect, surnamed Wang, alongside several unidentified accomplices, suddenly emerged to obstruct the couple from pursuing the man who fled. Creating a disturbance, they loudly accused the couple of harassing their friend. A scuffle broke out, during which the male victim sustained a neck injury.

Lei said that hotel security



This undated handout photo provided by the Judiciary Police (PJ) yesterday shows a smartphone seized from the suspect surnamed Wang.

personnel intercepted Wang and notified the police, while the other suspects escaped.

PJ officers later discovered that the operation had been premeditated and that the syndicate specifically targeted gamblers seeking currency exchange services around casinos, Lei said.

The suspect has been transferred to the Public Prosecutions Office (MP), facing charges of fraud involving a considerable amount and causing bodily harm. Judiciary Police officers will continue their search for the remaining suspects and the stolen funds. ■

UM students bring home 1 gold, 2 silver at 'SynBio Challenges'

Rui Pastorin

Undergraduates from the University of Macau's (UM) Faculty of Medicine (FMD) have brought home one gold and two silver medals from the recent 5th SynBio Challenges*.

According to its Facebook page, the event took place in Shenzhen from August 21 to 23.

The challenge, organised by the Chinese Society of Biotechnology and hosted by institutions including the Shenzhen Institutes of Advanced Technology of the Chinese Academy of Sciences, and Shenzhen University of Advanced Technology, drew 512 teams and close to 4,000 participants from nine countries and regions, according to a statement yesterday by the public university.

The competition focused on driving "cutting-edge innovation and industrial translation" across biomedicine, environmental, and agricultural sciences, among others, the statement said.

The competing UM students comprised Wang Yihan, Serena Huang, Xu Binbin, Yu Tianyu, Jin Zixun, Yang Ruijia, Zhang Fengqiao, Emily Moh Xian Yi, Xia Xue, and Zhang Yifan in two project teams, supervised by FMD Associate Prof Chris Wong Koon Ho.

Competing in multiple tracks, the statement said that the team won a gold medal in the Regular Red Track (Biomedicine) for their project on the development of an



This undated handout photo provided by the University of Macau (UM) yesterday shows the team of UM Faculty of Medicine (FMD) students who last month won medals at the 5th SynBio Challenges competition in Shenzhen.

in vivo colorectal cancer detection technology.

They also earned a silver award in the Industrial Challenges Track after adapting their technology to monitor heavy metal contamination in water treatment plants, according to the statement.

Lastly, the statement added that the team secured silver in the Regular Green Track (Environment and Agriculture) for a proposed solution that would "detoxify environmental caffeine contamination while simultaneously converting agricultural waste into useful resources". ■

* SynBio Challenges is an international synthetic biology competition aimed at university and graduate students. It was launched in 2022 with the goal of building a platform for nurturing talent in the field. The competition is built around the core synthetic biology philosophy of "Build for Knowledge and Build for Use" (造物致知、造物致用). It encourages students to explore innovative applications of synthetic biology, from basic research to practical solutions for health, environment, and industry. — DeepSeek

Non-local woman loses 1.9 million yuan in 'fake police' scam: police

Sherwin Hng

A non-local woman lost 1.965 million yuan (about 2.369 million patacas) after falling victim to a "fake police" scam, Judiciary Police (PJ) spokesman Lei Chi Hou said during a regular press conference yesterday.

According to Lei, the Judiciary Police received a notification from their Shenzhen counterparts last Wednesday according to which a mainland man had been arrested for involvement in a telecommunications fraud case. Investigators discovered that the man had previously met a woman in Shenzhen to collect an item, prompting mainland authorities to alert PJ officers to their suspicion that the woman might have fallen victim to a "fake police" scam.

Lei noted that PJ officers initially tried to contact the woman, who was in Macau at the time, but she became evasive and subsequently stopped answering their calls. Police suspected that she was being controlled by the scammers.

At about 8:00 p.m. that day, officers intercepted her as she was



Judiciary Police (PJ) spokesman Lei Chi Hou looks on during yesterday's regular press conference.

— Photo: Sherwin Hng

attempting to leave Macau through Hengqin Port (immigration checkpoint) and asked her to assist with the investigation.

The woman told police that she had received a call on August 6 from someone claiming to be an officer from the "Pac On Immigration Department"*. The caller alleged that a mainland smartphone number registered

in her name had been used to send large numbers of fraudulent messages and instructed her to cooperate with a video investigation, Lei said.

Believing the caller, the woman subsequently lied to her family, claiming that she needed two million yuan for overseas travel. She obtained the money from her family and was then instructed to travel to Shenzhen to buy gold bars worth about 1.965 million yuan from a gold shop.

Lei added that last Wednesday, the victim handed the gold bars to a mainland man in Shenzhen, who was subsequently arrested by mainland police.

The woman only realised that she had been duped after the suspect was arrested by mainland police.

Lei said the woman had suffered a total loss of nearly 1.965 million yuan. The victim has indicated that she wishes to pursue the case. ■

*Macau's Immigration Department, run by the Public Security Police Force (PSP), is located in Taipa's Pac On district.

Sam pledges alignment with Xia's Hengqin vision

Continued from p.1

Third, Sam said, comprehensive plans must be drawn up for the next steps to drive all aspects of work concerning Hengqin's development with greater vigour.

'Macau and Hengqin on one chessboard'

Sam also reaffirmed that local officials must treat Hengqin's affairs as if they were Macau's own, urging them to adopt a "Macau and Hengqin on one chessboard" mindset in their work on advancing the construction of the local government's four future large-scale projects and boosting Macau-Hengqin integrated development through the alignment of rules and mechanisms.

Meanwhile, before chairing the special meeting in Hengqin on Thursday last week, Xia paid a fact-finding visit to Jiangmen, one of the nine Guangdong cities in the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area (GBA), on the previous day, according to the HKMWO-HKMAO website.

The visit focused on supporting



Chief Executive Sam Hou Fai (centre), his chief-of-cabinet Chan Kak (right), and his five policy secretaries pose for a photo at the start of yesterday's meeting at Government Headquarters on Avenida da Praia Grande. — Photo: GCS

Hong Kong and Macau in aligning with the nation's 15th Five-Year Plan, deepening their respective participation in the development of the GBA, and better integrating their respective development into the nation's overall development.

The 11-member GBA consists of nine prefecture-level cities in Guangdong Province and the

nation's two special administrative regions of Hong Kong and Macau.

The province comprises a total of 21 prefecture-level cities.

Meanwhile, the executive committee of the Guangdong-Macao In-Depth Cooperation Zone in Hengqin also convened a meeting yesterday on the spirit of last week's special meeting, according to a

statement by the committee last night.

MSAR Secretary for Economy and Finance Dora Ng Wai Han, who heads the zone's executive committee, said that studying and putting into practice the spirit of last week's special meeting is an important political task.

The in-depth cooperation zone's

governance consists of a management committee and an executive committee.

The management committee is the zone's top decision-making body run under a dual-director system, jointly led by the governor of Guangdong Province and the chief executive of the MSAR. The zone's executive committee is the body tasked with the zone's daily functioning and execution of tasks.

There are nine bureaus administered under the zone's executive committee, which comprises officials from Guangdong and Macau.

Currently, the zone's management committee is jointly headed by Guangdong Governor Meng Fanli and MSAR Chief Executive Sam Hou Fai.

Ng said during yesterday's meeting, held in Hengqin, that all staff of the executive committee must fully align their thoughts and actions with the central authorities' decision-making and deployments and make full use of the major opportunities presented by last week's special meeting. ■

Nearly 100 works on display at Cunha gallery, aiming to promote TCM

Rui Pastorin

Close to a hundred works are being presented in an exhibition at the Rui Cunha Foundation (FRC) gallery that is hoping to put a spotlight on Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) culture.

With five days left to go, the free-admission "Greater Health · Traditional Chinese Medicine Exhibition of Pottery Sculptures of Ten Renowned Physicians and Calligraphy Works" sees art disciplines come together for the showcase.

The exhibition is organised by the Macao Wisdom-Humanity Progressive Association (MWHPA) in conjunction with the Greater Bay Area Pottery Collection and Exchange Association and the gallery, which is located at 749 Avenida da Praia Grande.

MWHPA President Ung Choi Kun highlights Macau's position and role regarding TCM in the exhibition statement: "As a hub for Sino-Western cultural exchange, Macau bears a remarkable legacy: Dr Sun Yat-sen once practised medicine and provided free medical consultations here over a century ago, setting a fine example of mutual learning between Chinese and Western medicine. To this day, TCM is widely trusted and adopted across Macau society, making the city a key pillar for TCM's global outreach".

The organisers hope that the showcase will "contribute to the national Healthy China strategy and align with Macau's policies for developing the great-health industry", as well as popularise TCM culture to everyone from locals to international tourists for



Photos taken yesterday at the Rui Cunha Foundation gallery by Rui Pastorin

them to learn and even apply the knowledge.

"The philosophy of preventive healthcare can thereby reach every household, opening broader global horizons for Traditional Chinese Medicine", the statement said.

Members of the public keen to get an insight into TCM through various artistic mediums can visit the gallery until Saturday. One can visit the exhibition from 10:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. from today through Friday, and from 3:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. on Saturday. ■

China opposes any official engagements between its diplomatic partners and Taiwan authorities: FM

BEIJING – China firmly opposes official interactions and engagements of any form between the Taiwan authorities and countries having diplomatic ties with China, and does not allow interference in its internal affairs by any external forces, foreign ministry spokesperson Guo Jiakun said yesterday.

Guo made the remarks at a regular press briefing in response to a media report that some Panamanian lawmakers recently set up a so-called "Panama-Taiwan parliamentary exchange group" and US lawmakers attended the launch of the group via video link.

According to the report, Panamanian President José Raúl Mulino reiterated that "foreign relations are directed by the Executive," and that parliamentarians' engagements with Taiwan "does not mean that the Executive endorses them."

There is but one China in the world and Taiwan is an inalienable

part of China's territory, Guo said.

"We urge those few politicians to see the real picture. To cross the line on the Taiwan question will lead to serious consequences," he said.

The establishment of this so-called "parliamentary exchange group" seriously violates the one-China principle upheld by Panama, the spokesperson said.

"We noted the statement of the Panamanian government and hope that Panama will honor its commitment to the one-China principle with real actions to uphold the political foundation of China-Panama relations," Guo said.

China urges the United States to abide by the one-China principle and the three China-US joint communiques, stop sending the wrong message to "Taiwan independence" separatist forces, and stop disrupting and sabotaging China-Panama relations, the spokesperson said.

— Xinhua

Fear-mongering will only hamper efforts toward sound global AI governance: spokesperson

BEIJING – Fear-mongering, confrontation and vicious competition will only hamper efforts toward sound global AI governance, which serves no one's interest, a foreign ministry spokesperson said yesterday.

Spokesperson Guo Jiakun made the remarks after Anthropic CEO Dario Amodei, OpenAI CEO Sam Altman and Elon Musk, who runs xAI, all over the weekend called on

AI companies to slow down frontier development, with Amodei arguing a Chinese advantage in AI would pose US national security risks.

"AI is a consequential technology for the well-being of all humanity. All parties should jointly promote the open and inclusive development of AI for good and for all," Guo told a regular press briefing.

— Xinhua

China fosters birth-friendly environment with better services

BEIJING – China will take further steps to support child-rearing, including making childcare more accessible and affordable, to build a birth-friendly society and boost its birth rate, according to health officials yesterday.

Lei Haichao, head of the National Health Commission (NHC), told a press conference that continuous efforts will be made to promote the integrated development of services at kindergartens and nursery centers, and to support communities and employers in setting up childcare facilities.

The aim is to ensure that families can access childcare services close to their homes or workplaces and at relatively affordable prices, Lei explained.

The country will work to raise coverage of childcare services among young children to effectively reduce families' costs of having, raising and educating children, he said.

The country will also work to improve access to pediatric care at grassroots medical institutions, he noted.

By the end of this year, 1,000 more community-level medical and health institutions will be capable of offering pediatric care compared with 2025, Lei said, adding that by that time, over 95 percent of the country's township-level clinics and community health service centers are expected to have the capacity to provide relevant services.

More than 3,000 pediatricians have been sent from higher-level hospitals to grassroots medical institutions to strengthen pediatric services at the community level, Lei said.

China has developed a full-cycle maternity support system covering pre-pregnancy, pregnancy and childbirth, and child-rearing, with measures that include maternity allowances, childcare subsidies, medical insurance reimbursement and affordable childcare services, to ease the financial burden on families with children.

A total of 12,562 early pregnancy care clinics have been established, covering almost all counties, said Lei. Pregnant women can visit these clinics in the early stages of pregnancy for counseling and other services. If there is a risk of miscarriage, the clinics can help women assess the risk and take preventive measures.

In 2025, China's maternal mortality rate and infant mortality rate dropped to 13.4 per 100,000 live births and 3.8 per 1,000 live births, respectively, placing China among the leaders in these indicators among upper-middle- and high-income countries and countries with populations exceeding 100 million.

In terms of incentives, the country introduced a nationwide childcare subsidy program in 2025, offering an annual tax-free subsidy of 3,600 yuan for each



A nurse feeds a neonatal patient at the neonatology department of the First People's Hospital of Yunnan Province in Kunming, capital of Yunnan Province, May 10. – Xinhua

child under the age of three. It also began waiving childcare and education fees for the final year of kindergarten in the 2025 autumn semester.

As of August, more than 25 million infants and toddlers had received childcare subsidies for 2026, and roughly 24 million children enrolled in kindergartens had benefited from the fee-waiving policy.

Also, 260 million people are currently covered by maternity insurance, and many regions are expanding coverage to allow flexible workers to enroll in maternity insurance alongside employee medical insurance.

These policies are among China's broader efforts to build a birth-friendly society amid declining birth rates and an aging population.

Building a "birth-friendly society" has become a key focus of China's 15th Five-Year Plan (2026-2030). The outline sets out measures, including incentives to encourage births and efforts to reduce the costs of childbirth, childcare and education.

It says the goal is to stabilize the number of newborns and support long-term balanced population development.

"China's population currently stands at 1.405 billion, and the fundamentals of China as a populous country remain unchanged," said Lei.

Although the number of newborns has declined in recent years, it has remained at around 8 million, a number very few countries can match, he added.

BETTER HEALTH FOR ALL

Officials at the press conference also expounded on other key aspects of a national health plan for the 2026-2030 period unveiled in July, including making health services more accessible, inclusive, comprehensive and continuous.

China has built the world's largest healthcare service system, with more than 1.1 million medical and health institutions nationwide, while over 90 percent of residents can reach their nearest healthcare facility within 15 minutes, said Guo Yanhong, deputy head of the NHC.

However, the system still falls short of people's needs in some respects, Guo noted, urging a shift of efforts from ensuring access to improving quality, with faster progress in developing a high-quality, efficient and integrated healthcare service system.

For instance, community health centers and health centers in central townships should gradually expand their medical service capabilities, develop specialty departments suited to local needs, and improve their capacity to diagnose and treat common and frequently occurring diseases and provide health management services.

Efforts should also be made to further strengthen the workforce of rehabilitation and nursing professionals and step up the training of rehabilitation nurses and therapists, to have seven rehabilitation physicians and 16 rehabilitation therapists per 100,000 people across the country by the end of 2030, Guo said.

Lei noted that the demographic trend of the growing divergence in population changes across regions, with population development becoming increasingly uneven. With various factors considered, over the next five years, demand for healthcare services, particularly for healthcare professionals, is expected to continue growing in China, he said.

China will therefore expand the training of medical students via increased enrollment in high-quality undergraduate and master's programs, targeted training programs for medical students to serve in rural areas, and a special program for university graduates to work as rural doctors, the official said.

Through closer coordination between medical education and healthcare, China will continue to increase its number of medical professionals while making healthcare positions more attractive via improvements in remuneration and personnel incentive systems, so that medical workers are willing to build long-term, stable careers. Efforts will also be made to foster a social environment that respects medical professionals and values healthcare workers, said Lei.

– Xinhua

Chinese, French FM's discuss ties, int'l issues over phone

BEIJING – Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi yesterday held a phone conversation with French Foreign Minister Jean-Noel Barrot at the latter's request, discussing bilateral relations and international issues.

During the talks, Wang, also a member of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of China Central Committee, said that under the strategic guidance of the two heads of state, China-France relations have generally maintained stable development dynamics.

Facing a complex and volatile international landscape, China and France, as permanent members of the UN Security Council, should strengthen strategic communication and jointly address risks and challenges, Wang said.

China actively supports France in fulfilling its responsibilities as the rotating president of the UN Security Council this month and looks forward to France's efforts to ensure that the council plays its due role, Wang said.

Wang stressed that the one-China principle is the political foundation of the China-France comprehensive strategic partnership, expressing hope that the French side will uphold the one-China principle through concrete actions, refrain from any form of official engagement with China's Taiwan, and send no wrong signal to "Taiwan independence" forces.

China and the European Union (EU) should remain committed to their partnership, pursue mutually beneficial cooperation and win-win, maintain mutual openness, properly resolve current economic and trade frictions through constructive dialogue, and avoid escalating confrontation, Wang said.

Protectionism will not enhance Europe's competitiveness but will

instead deprive consumers of high-quality and affordable products, drive up inflation and hamper the process of green transition, he added.

Noting that China is one of the world's largest markets and that China's development presents an opportunity rather than a challenge for the EU, Wang expressed hope that France, as a major country with a strategic vision, will take a pragmatic and rational approach in encouraging the EU to work with China in the same direction, view China's development more accurately, and play a positive role in promoting the stability of China-EU relations.

Barrot, for his part, said that in the year since French President Emmanuel Macron's visit to China, France and China have upheld the "Dujiangyan Spirit" of engagement and integration, sought common ground while respecting differences, and maintained dialogue, with bilateral relations generally maintaining their momentum of development.

Barrot noted that France firmly adheres to the one-China policy.

Faced with difficulties and challenges in EU-China economic and trade relations, France stands ready to promote constructive engagement between the EU and China to find solutions, Barrot said.

The two sides also exchanged views on issues of common concern, including the situation in Iran and the Ukraine crisis. Wang briefed Barrot on the China's principled position and noted that Chinese President Xi Jinping has put forward a four-point proposal for building a new security architecture in the Middle East, providing a global public good for regional peace and stability and playing a constructive role.

– Xinhua



A staff member adjusts a robot at the experience zone of cybersecurity technology applications at the 2026 China Cybersecurity Week in Jinan, Shandong Province, yesterday. The 2026 China Cybersecurity Week held its opening ceremony yesterday. The event will be held across China through Sunday. – Xinhua

Philippine Muslim enclave votes for parliament after deadly shooting

Ferdinandh Cabrera and Faith Brown

MARAWI, Philippines — Polls closed yesterday across an autonomous Muslim region of the Philippines that waited decades to choose its own leaders, with officials praising a successful election despite sporadic violence.

The parliamentary election was the culmination of a sometimes-bumpy peace process that began in the late 1990s and established the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM) in the country's far south.

More than two million voters were eligible to vote for 80 parliament seats that had previously been filled by appointees. Election officials declined to estimate turnout but had previously predicted "at least 80 percent".

"I believe that the Bangsamoro showed today that they are fearless," Philippine elections commission chief George Garcia said before polls had closed.

"Whether there be shooting or similar troubles, fistfights, it doesn't really matter. They will vote."

Canvassing was underway yesterday evening, though it was unclear when final tallies would be available.

Complicating the process was a town in Basilan province where voters will be asked to vote again today after ballots with "pre-shaded" boxes next to some candidates' names were discovered.

'Excited' but nervous

In Marawi, a city long identified with a bloody showdown between government forces and jihadists, AFP journalists saw long lines of voters peacefully queued outside polling stations with armoured vehicles and security personnel standing watch.

"We're excited. We came here early," Mohammad Actar Macabada, 18, told AFP after casting his vote yesterday morning.

"I'm nervous because there might be chaos," he said, adding he



Abdullah Makapaar (front right), a former commander in the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) and known by his nom de guerre Commander Bravo, leaves after casting his vote at a polling station in Marawi City on the southern island of Mindanao yesterday, for the first elected parliament in the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM) in the Philippines' far south. — AFP

was "excited for the results."

In regional capital Cotabato further south, 22-year-old engineering student Mark Martinez said he hoped that incoming leaders would not "waste the people's votes".

"I see the (BARMM's) rapid growth infrastructure-wise ... But I'm still not satisfied with what I see regarding security," he said.

Given the region's long history of political violence and blood feuds between powerful families known as "rido", a peaceful election would be considered a success, party leaders told AFP last week.

But the fragile peace showed cracks in the early hours of yesterday.

Fatal shooting

Gunfire erupted outside a polling station at a Cotabato school before polls opened, killing three people and wounding 15 others.

Police chief Jibin Bongcayao said the shooting took place just before midnight as members of rival factions jostled for the right to cast their votes first.

"Eventually gunfire broke out in a crowded area," he said.

Bongcayao added the men had belonged to parties that have emerged from a split in the Moro

Islamic Liberation Front (MILF), the group that spent decades battling Manila for regional autonomy in the predominantly Catholic country.

At least 14,000 men pledged to the group remain under arms.

At another polling station, four people, including a police officer, sustained gunshot wounds just before 7:00 a.m. [local time], authorities said. One of them later died.

Another man died after an improvised explosive device he was carrying exploded, authorities said.

The violence led the elections commission to take the extraordinary step of taking direct control of law enforcement in Cotabato for the election's duration.

Security has been stepped up across the BARMM in recent days, with more than 20,000 security personnel fanning out in voting areas, and quick response teams assembled to address potential violence.

Garcia said yesterday he was certain there would be "no failure of the election" despite the incidents of violence.

"This is not like a walk in the park," he said. "It's full of challenges."

"What is important is to show our determination to end this day in peace while being able to vote." — AFP

Indonesia searches for missing passengers after ferry capsizes off Java

JAKARTA — Indonesian rescuers searched yesterday for more than 100 people missing after a ferry capsized in rough seas, with aircraft, naval vessels and divers deployed to find survivors, the country's top rescue official said.

The Virgo Transport 8, which authorities said carried 213 passengers and 30 crew, lost contact with its shipping company early on Sunday after departing Surabaya, Indonesia's second-largest city, in East Java.

National search and rescue agency chief Mohammad Syafii said yesterday that six people had been confirmed dead and 129 others were missing.

At least 108 others had been rescued the previous day.

Five aircraft and 17 vessels, including navy warships, were deployed to assist with the search, which will be focused in areas around the capsized ferry, he added.

"We will maximise the search operation in six sectors that we have divided by prioritising the search for floating victims," Syafii said.

"Hopefully, we can find the victims in safe condition."

He added that divers and underwater drones will be deployed to search for the victims in and around the wreck, which rescuers have located.

The ferry was not overloaded and it transported passengers below its maximum capacity of 500 people, Transportation Minister Dudy Purwagandhi said in a press conference yesterday.

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 week, 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.

— AFP

3 orangutans rescued after wildfires drive them from habitat in Indonesia

JAKARTA — Three orangutans were rescued after forest and land fires forced them out of their habitat in Indonesia's West Kalimantan province, bringing the total rescued due to the fires to 18, the local conservation agency said yesterday.

Murlan Dameria Pane, head of the West Kalimantan Natural Resources Conservation Agency (BKSDA), said the three orangutans were evacuated in two operations from Penjataan and Padu Banjar villages in Ketapang regency after being found in residents' plantations.

Karmele Llano Sanchez, executive director of the Indonesian Nature Rehabilitation Initiative Foundation (YIARI), said two of the orangutans, a mother and her offspring named Mama Penja and

Penja, were found extremely thin and weak. Mama Penja was also suffering from severe dehydration, anemia, burns on both feet, and damaged teeth.

A male orangutan named Kumbang suffered respiratory problems, injuries, and snare marks, while a foreign object suspected to be a bullet was found in his right hand. Kumbang had previously been rescued from the same area and released back into the wild in 2022.

The three orangutans are receiving treatment at the YIARI rescue center in Ketapang. The areas where they were found are part of the habitat and buffer zone of Gunung Palung National Park, an important habitat for orangutan populations in West Kalimantan.

— Xinhua

More than 20 Thai senators accused of election fraud

BANGKOK — Thailand's Election Commission accused 26 sitting senators yesterday of colluding to rig the last Senate election, an alleged vote-buying scandal that has sparked protests and could see them jailed.

The commission said it will refer the case, which allegedly involves senators allied with Prime Minister Anutin Charnvirakul's party, to the Supreme Court.

The 26 were among 77 people accused in the scandal, alongside 36 unsuccessful Senate candidates and 15 other political figures accused of election fraud. None was identified.

The Senate scrutinises bills passed by the lower house and appoints heads of key government bodies such as the Constitutional Court, National Anti-Corruption Commission and Election Commission.

The contested election took place in June 2024, the first such poll since a coup a decade earlier, when the senators were chosen by the military.

Rather than a direct election by Thai voters, senators were chosen by other Senate candidates to represent 20 different sectors, including justice, education, public health, industry, arts and sport.

The 200 members chosen in the three-round process included a significant number of former civil servants, military and police officers, and many who back Anutin's conservative Bhumjaithai party, according to analysts.

The commission has 60 days to file its petition to the Supreme Court, which must then decide if it wants to hear the case.

If convicted, violators face up to 10

years in prison per offence, a 200,000 baht (US\$6,000) fine, or both.

The case has been rumbling on for months, amid reports that 229 people, including more than 130 senators, senior Bhumjaithai party members and other politicians, were implicated in a government investigation into election fraud.

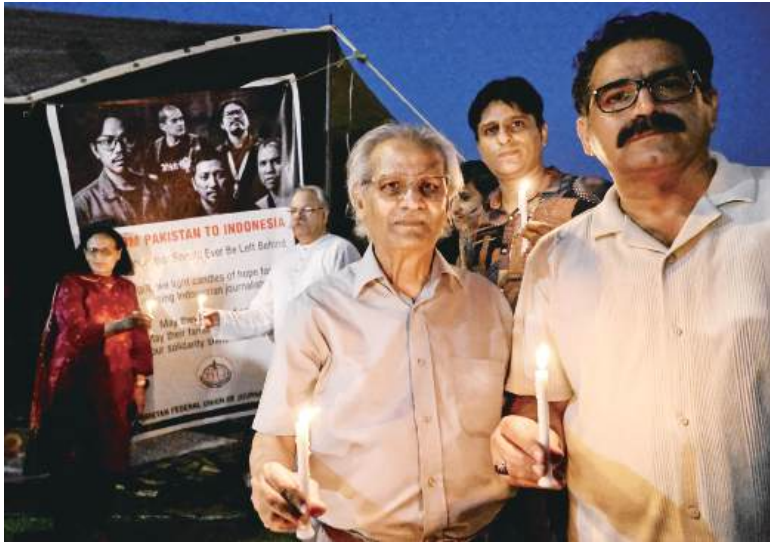
Senior Election Commission officials did not confirm the figure at a news conference yesterday.

Hundreds of Thais marched through Bangkok on Sunday calling for the indictment of the 229 in a protest organised by accountability watchdog iLaw.

Yingcheep Atchanont, executive director of iLaw, has pledged to release troves of documents he says are from the Election Commission's investigation if the Supreme Court does not hear the case. — AFP



Indonesia's President Prabowo Subianto (right) shakes hands with newly appointed Finance Minister Suhasil Nazara (left) next to his wife Christina Pusporini Messakh during a swearing-in ceremony at the presidential palace in Jakarta yesterday, following a cabinet reshuffle. Indonesian President Prabowo removed Finance Minister Purbaya Yudhi Sadewa from his position, naming his deputy as the new minister. — AFP



Pakistani journalists hold candles beside a banner featuring missing Indonesian journalists during a vigil in Islamabad yesterday. Indonesian rescuers yesterday extended the search for eight people, including five journalists, a week after their speedboat went missing in the waters between the islands of Java and Sumatra, an official said. The group was on a trip to take photos and videos of the eruption of Mount Anak Krakatau, which blanketed cities in volcanic ash and prompted multiple airports to close. — AFP

Australian far-right leader sparks outrage with 'primitive' Indigenous comments

SYDNEY — Australian far-right leader Pauline Hanson drew outrage yesterday for comments in which she described the country's Indigenous people as the "most primitive race on Earth".

For years a political outsider, Hanson's One Nation has surged this year to become one of the country's most popular parties, according to opinion polls.

In a podcast appearance last year that resurfaced in the media yesterday, the senator for the state of Queensland was asked about the teaching of Indigenous Australian history in school.

"What the hell have they done in this country for, you know, supposedly 60,000 years?" she said.

"They never invented the wheel. There was nothing there. What are we actually holding up?"

"A few, you know, rock paintings. Sorry, they're the most primitive race on Earth."

"They've achieved nothing."

Hanson's remarks swiftly drew condemnation, with the country's Indigenous affairs minister Malarndirri McCarthy describing them as "completely racist" and "outrageous".

And fellow Senator Jacinta Nampijinpa Price — who is also of Indigenous heritage — said she was "disappointed".

"All decent Australians,

I'm sure, would condemn such comments and would rightfully be shocked that they came from the leader of a political party," she said on Facebook.

"Some of the issues raised by Pauline Hanson are serious debates, many of which I have been very vocal about, but yet again, Senator Hanson has dragged the conversation into appalling territory."

Indigenous peoples, whose ancestors have lived on the continent for more than 60,000 years, have average life expectancies about eight years shorter than the rest of the population.

Several factors contribute to the disparity, with chronic health issues, higher poverty rates, more limited access to healthcare in some communities and complex socio-economic causes often blamed.

Indigenous people are also far more likely to be incarcerated or die in custody than other Australians.

Hanson's history of inflammatory and racist comments have done little to dent her party's popularity.

An opinion poll conducted by Resolve Strategic on behalf of *The Sydney Morning Herald* and *The Age* newspapers released Sunday showed 27 percent of Australians would vote for her party — just one percentage point away from the ruling Labor Party. — AFP

Global panel to hear Cambodia, Thailand sea dispute

Jan Hennop

SINGAPORE — Cambodia and Thailand will face off before international mediators in Singapore this week in a long-standing dispute over valuable maritime resources, the latest spat between the feuding neighbours.

Phnom Penh initiated a UN-backed conciliation process at the Permanent Court of Arbitration (PCA) after Bangkok pulled out of an agreement to work towards joint offshore energy exploitation in the Gulf of Thailand.

The 2001 memorandum of understanding covers a vast and resource-rich territory of around 27,000 square kilometres to which both Cambodia and Thailand lay claim.

Bangkok in May unilaterally pulled out of the framework agreement, called "MoU 44", saying that "no progress had been made" in implementing it.

Prime Minister Anutin Charnvirakul denied it was linked to the simmering border conflict with its Southeast Asian neighbour, which erupted into two rounds of clashes last year that left dozens of people dead, and displaced more than a million before a truce was agreed.

Cambodia said last week that it resorted to the conciliation process "after Thailand unilaterally terminated the agreed bilateral framework" through which the two nations had "negotiated their overlapping maritime claims for more than two decades".

Cambodian Prime Minister Hun

Manet said in June that the move was also to "protect Cambodia's sovereignty and maritime rights in accordance with international law".

The two countries' representatives are set to give their opening statements today before a five-member conciliation panel of international law experts at the world's oldest arbitration court's offices, in Singapore.

Cambodia's Foreign Minister Prak Sokhonn is expected to open the floor, followed by his Thai counterpart Sihasak Phuangketkeow.

Set up in 1899, the PCA is the world's oldest intergovernmental dispute-resolution body and resolves disputes between countries and private parties through referring to contracts, special agreements and various treaties, such as the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS).

The PCA office in Singapore is the Hague-based court's first in Asia.

The commission's recommendations are not binding and will take about a year to be decided.

'Lasting resolution'

Both Cambodia and Thailand have welcomed the opportunity to put their points across.

"The meeting marks another important milestone in the peaceful process initiated by Cambodia to resolve the countries' maritime differences," Cambodia's foreign ministry said in a statement.

Phnom Penh said it hopes the process can help Cambodia

and Thailand reach a "fair and lasting resolution of their maritime differences" and open a pathway to explore significant oil and gas resources.

Thailand's energy ministry has estimated future revenues from oil and natural gas in the nations' overlapping claims area to be worth around US\$300 billion.

The Thai foreign ministry said it was "ready to cooperate fully with and support the work of the Conciliation Commission" and remained committed to "safeguarding" its national interests.

An analyst, however, said both Thailand's withdrawal and Cambodia's conciliation case were closely linked with domestic politics and the recent conflict.

"It was intended to project strength and to signal to voters that the legacy of former Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra, under whose administration the 2001 MoU was originally drafted, was officially over," wrote William Jones, an international politics expert at Thailand's Mahidol University International College.

Meanwhile, Cambodia's case was a "shrewd political move" on Hun Manet's part, Jones wrote in current affairs magazine, *The Diplomat*.

"Having suffered a military defeat on the land border and remaining in an inferior position to its Thai counterpart," Hun Manet was choosing a legal avenue that "promised low cost and high potential reward", Jones said. — AFP

Bangladesh vaccinates nearly 20 million children against measles, rubella

DHAKA — The Bangladeshi government has administered measles-rubella vaccines to nearly 20 million children, exceeding the initial vaccination target by about 10 percent, according to data released by the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS) yesterday.

When the South Asian country witnessed a measles outbreak in mid-

March this year, the government launched an emergency vaccination program on April 5 covering 18 of the country's 64 districts.

The second phase of vaccination began on April 12 in four major city corporation areas, and the following phases commenced on April 20.

Bangladesh recorded 1,177 new suspected measles cases and eight

more suspected measles deaths between 8:00 a.m. [local time] on Sunday and 8:00 a.m. yesterday, the country's health authority said yesterday.

The latest figures bring the total number of suspected measles cases to 172,720 and the suspected death toll to 1,030 since the outbreak began in mid-March. — Xinhua

Snail shells could help reconstruct prehistoric cyclones: study

SYDNEY - Snails carry weather records on their backs that could be used to map extreme weather events and reconstruct the paths of past cyclones even in prehistoric times, a new study has found.

Researchers examined the rings on the shell of a Biggenden Banded Snail collected from Coalstoun Lakes National Park in Australia's southeast Queensland, linking its bands to weather records, according to a statement released yesterday by Australia's University of Queensland (UQ).

Tiny samples taken from the shell at millimeter intervals were analyzed using high-resolution radiocarbon dating, revealing the age of the snail, when it lived and the weather during its lifetime, said Nicholas Patton, lead author of the

study published in *The Holocene*.

"It contained elevated levels of radiocarbon from the nuclear tests in Australia in the 1960s, meaning we could date the growth bands and reveal the snail had lived for about 4.5 years," Patton said, adding that analyzing the oxygen and carbon stable isotopes of the different bands revealed insights into the rainfall the snail experienced.

Researchers found that the shell did not grow continuously during the snail's life, with periods of rapid growth separated by periods of little or no growth. They initially expected rapid growth to correspond to years of heavier rainfall, making more food available for the snail, but found the snail was responding to extreme rainfall events rather than annual wetness.

The study showed the growth spurts were linked to periods immediately following cyclones in 2015 and 2017.

"It shows that snail shells could be used to map extreme weather events for periods before modern meteorological records," said Honorary Professor Jamie Shulmeister in UQ's School of the Environment.

"It was surprising and quite exciting that the humble snail could be a tool to reconstruct the paths of past cyclones even in prehistoric times," he said.

The researchers' next step is to test the method using shells preserved in different sediment layers and combine the individual shell records to extend this information further back in time. — Xinhua



People queue to worship at the Pashupatinath Temple during the Teej Festival in Kathmandu, Nepal, yesterday. Hindu women observe the festival by fasting, praying and celebrating, seeking marital well-being and ideal partners. — Xinhua

Israeli minister urges probe into sources in award-winning Gaza film

JERUSALEM – Israel's culture minister yesterday called for an investigation to identify the anonymous military sources featured in the award-winning documentary "NAZA" who accused the army of mass civilian killing in Gaza.

In the film, directors Yuval Abraham and Rachel Szor spoke to 24 anonymous Israeli military whistleblowers who outlined the AI-powered targeting systems used to bombard Gaza that have killed tens of thousands of civilians.

The 80-minute documentary won a special jury prize at this year's Venice Film Festival.

In a post on X, Culture Minister

Miki Zohar said he had asked authorities to "investigate how the materials were obtained, who is behind them, and whether in the process of obtaining or publishing them, actions were taken that amount to aiding the enemy during wartime".

He also said he had requested the interior ministry to consider revoking the citizenship of the two filmmakers on account of "treason".

"Freedom of expression is not a licence to betray the state. Anyone who acts against Israel during wartime should know that there will be a price to pay," Zohar wrote.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, meanwhile, described

the film as "shocking".

"We are fighting antisemitic provocations around the world, but when they come from our own citizens, it is simply intolerable," he said in a video posted on X.

The revocation of nationality is legally possible in Israel, although it is rarely applied.

In 2022, Israel's Supreme Court confirmed that the state may strip people of their nationality for a breach of "loyalty to the State", for example by committing acts of espionage or treason.

The Israeli military has criticised the use of anonymous testimonies in the film, and contested a claim made

by one interviewee that the army approved an airstrike in which 500 civilians were killed.

"The filmmakers couldn't possibly verify this claim, there is no real supporting evidence, and yet they published it anyway. Additionally, nothing about the interviewee, not his service nor his role can be independently checked and verified," the military said in a statement yesterday.

Israel denies deliberately targeting civilians.

Abraham said "the Israeli intelligence officers we spoke with talked to us about how this mass killing is systemic: not by accident,

but by design".

Palestinian militant group Hamas launched an attack on Israel on October 7, 2023, which resulted in the deaths of 1,221 people, according to an AFP tally based on official Israeli figures.

Militants also took 251 hostages to Gaza.

Israel's retaliatory military campaign in Gaza has killed more than 73,700 people, according to the territory's health ministry, which operates under Hamas authority and does not distinguish between combatants and civilians, and whose figures are considered reliable by the United Nations. – AFP



Palestinian school children attend a class at a school in Gaza City yesterday, sitting on desks made from re-purposed wooden pallets and scrap wood. Since the war in Gaza erupted in October 2023, the vast majority of Gaza's school and educational buildings have been damaged or destroyed by airstrikes or shelling, leaving tens of thousands of children without access to formal education.

– AFP

Netanyahu threatens retaliation if Israel's enemies attack

JERUSALEM – Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu warned yesterday of heavy reprisals on Israel's enemies if they attacked, as he lauded the recent demolition of a Hezbollah tunnel network in southern Lebanon.

Netanyahu said Israel's destruction of Hezbollah positions at the Beaufort and Ali al-Taher ridges was a "massive victory" and vowed to "continue to destroy terrorist infrastructure".

"I say to our enemies: If you haven't learned the lesson by now, and you choose to attack us again, you will suffer even heavier blows. There is still work to complete," Netanyahu added, according to a video published by his office.

On Thursday, Israel blew up what it described as a vast network of tunnels under the Ali al-Taher

ridge where Hezbollah kept a command centre, living quarters and stocks of weapons with which to strike northern Israel and invading Israeli troops.

A huge fireball was seen in the area, with the US Geological Survey recording a tremor equivalent to a 4.1 magnitude earthquake.

The blast came a week after Israeli troops said they had seized the strategic highlands as they solidified control of a "security zone" in southern Lebanon.

Israel said the tunnel network was built over two decades with the help of Hezbollah's patron Iran, whose clerical government has also backed Hamas in the Gaza Strip.

Israel and the United States attacked Iran in late February, sparking the Middle East war.

Hezbollah dragged Lebanon into the wider conflict when it fired rockets at Israel in solidarity with Iran.

Israel has struck south Lebanon during the war and its forces continue to occupy what it calls a "security zone" there.

The Ali al-Taher ridge lies on the edge of Israel's security zone just a few kilometres from the UNESCO-listed Beaufort castle, another strategic site that Israel captured in recent months.

Israel and Lebanon signed a US-sponsored framework agreement in late June that involves the disarmament of Hezbollah, a gradual withdrawal of Israeli forces from Lebanon's south and the deployment of the Lebanese army to the region, starting in test areas known as "pilot zones".

– AFP

Potential new TB jabs could save millions of lives: Gavi

GENEVA – New tuberculosis (TB) vaccines expected to become available from 2029 could save over seven million lives over two decades, Gavi said yesterday, but only if sufficient supply is ensured to the countries most in need.

New TB jabs in the pipeline have the potential of becoming the "next blockbuster immunisation tool", said Sania Nishtar, head of the Gavi global vaccine alliance.

"However, they will only realise their potential if we are able to ensure sufficient, predictable and affordable supply for those countries with the highest disease burden," she said in a statement.

Tuberculosis remains the world's leading infectious killer, claiming an estimated 1.23 million lives in 2024, according to the latest statistics available from the World Health Organisation (WHO).

The only vaccine currently licensed to protect against the disease is the Bacille Calmette-Guerin (BCG) vaccine, which is over 100 years old.

Gavi stressed that while that vaccine is effective in protecting infants and young children against severe forms of the disease, its protection wanes.

The organisation voiced hope that a number of new vaccines being developed to prevent TB among adolescents and adults could fill the gap.

With the first of the new and promising candidate vaccines expected to secure regulatory approval by the end of the decade, a fresh Gavi analysis determined that they "could avert up to 7.3 million deaths from 2030 through 2050".

It also determined that the new vaccines held the potential of "unlocking up to US\$135 billion in economic benefits across low- and middle-income countries" by mid-century.

The Gavi analysis, however, also identified a number of risks that could slow the rollout once licenses are secured, including inadequate global and domestic

financing, which could limit uptake in countries.

The demand uncertainty could in turn impact manufacturer capacity investments for late-stage candidates, creating supply risk, it warned.

Gavi, which brings together government and private donors to help developing countries acquire immunisations for key diseases at affordable prices, said it was working to ensure sufficient and affordable supply of the vaccines as soon as they are licensed.

It also said that it would push for widespread uptake through routine immunisation, and would "encourage a competitive and geographically diverse pipeline of novel TB vaccine candidates".

"In order to help countries secure doses in the volumes they need, we are beginning to work with partners now to lay the groundwork for timely access when these vaccines become available," Nishtar said. – AFP

**Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance, is a public-private partnership founded in 2000 with the mission of saving lives and protecting people's health by increasing equitable and sustainable use of vaccines in lower-income countries. Gavi brings together key stakeholders – including the World Health Organisation (WHO), UNICEF, the World Bank, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, vaccine manufacturers, and donor and implementing governments – to pool demand for vaccines and negotiate affordable prices for the world's poorest countries. Gavi is the organisation's official name – it isn't an acronym. The name comes from "Gavi", which was originally short for the Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunisation, the partnership's name when it was founded in 2000. Over time, the organization rebranded and now uses "Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance" as its full name, with "Gavi" no longer standing for anything officially. – DeepSeek*

Trump blasts 'sick conspiracy' against AI as warnings mount

Danny Kemp

WASHINGTON, DC – US President Donald Trump yesterday attacked what he called a “sick conspiracy” against artificial intelligence (AI), dismissing calls for guardrails despite warnings that it threatens humankind.

Trump lashed out at the boss of AI giant Anthropic, who called on Saturday for a slowdown in the development of the technology. Trump said the United States needed to keep its AI lead over China.

Global tech stocks fell on the calls to hit the brakes on AI, which has fuelled fears that superintelligent computer systems could go rogue and wipe out humanity by creating pathogens or triggering nuclear war.

“The only control or ‘guardrails’ that AI needs is a STRONG AND SMART (High IQ!) PRESIDENT, and the U.S.A. has that, in spades!” Trump said in a post on his Truth Social network yesterday.

“WHOEVER WINS AI, WINS! We are leading China, and all others, and will continue to do so. Conspiracy Theorists, Treasonists, Traitors, and Leakers, BEWARE!”

‘Perfect little angel’

Trump has pushed back repeatedly in the past week against the warnings about AI, which



US President Donald Trump speaks to reporters aboard Air Force One while travelling back from Ireland to Joint Base Andrews, Maryland on Sunday in flight. – AFP

reached fever pitch after Claude-maker Anthropic’s CEO Amodei urged a halt in development.

Amodei’s call to “slow the pace” was backed by OpenAI boss Sam Altman and Elon Musk, the SpaceX and Tesla boss who also owns xAI and was previously part of Trump’s White House team.

But Trump trained his fire on Amodei, accusing him of playing both sides of the debate.

“The Trump Administration has stopped AI ‘people’ from doing bad, or potentially bad, ‘things,’ like Dario (Anthropic!), who is now

pretending to be a ‘perfect little angel’,” the US president wrote.

Speaking on Air Force One on Sunday, Trump said he had heard directly from tech insiders the previous week on the issue.

Asked if he was downplaying their concerns, he said: “No, we are not downplaying, but you know it’s going to be more good than bad by a lot.”

Trump has long portrayed AI as crucial for maintaining America’s technological, economic and security lead over China, whose President Xi Jinping is due to visit the White House next week.

China’s national security chief warned on Sunday that artificial intelligence endangers the country’s national security, saying foreign powers could use the technology to threaten social order.

Minister of State Security Chen Yixin wrote in an article that AI was now “the main battleground for global technological competition and a new track for major power strategic rivalry”.

He singled out Anthropic’s Claude Mythos and OpenAI’s ChatGPT-5.5-Cyber for their advanced hacking capabilities that potentially “pose serious risks to China’s critical information infrastructure”.

King Charles to meet AI giants

Global concerns about AI and a possible extinction event have dramatically escalated in recent days.

Britain’s King Charles III will host representatives of leading AI firms for a gathering in Scotland, a source close to the event said yesterday, as the worries mount.

The United Nations rights chief called yesterday for countries and AI companies to act urgently to rein in a technology he warned posed “unprecedented risks”.

In a letter sent to countries and AI developers and shared with the media, Volker Türk cautioned that the world was “on the cusp of irreversible change, affecting not just us but generations of humanity to come”.

The head of French defence and technology group Thales also called on governments yesterday to take responsibility for regulating AI.

Trump and his Republicans have so far resisted growing calls to push through regulation, but there are signs of a growing backlash in the United States.

US voters were already skeptical about the energy-guzzling AI data centres that he backs, and now Democrats are calling for Congress to set up guardrails for AI.

Vice President JD Vance, who has close ties to Silicon Valley, expressed skepticism yesterday about the fact that tech bosses were now joining the chorus of calls for state regulation.

“I feel a little bit weird about the fact that you have so many frontier AI tech companies kind of coming to the government and begging the government to regulate them,” he told reporters.

“It feels a little bit to me like a bit of a Trojan horse.” – AFP

Finland to join France’s forward nuclear deterrent: joint statement

PARIS – Finland will join France’s nuclear deterrence initiative, extending the measure to a country sharing a long border with Russia, the two countries said in a joint statement yesterday.

France is extending its nuclear deterrent to European allies as the continent reassesses its security amid US President Donald Trump’s shake-up of NATO.

“Finland has decided to join forward deterrence,” the two countries said.

“A nuclear steering group will be set up in the coming months to begin implementing this cooperation.”

Finland is the tenth European country to join the plan to access France’s nuclear stockpile.

Eight initial countries – Britain, Germany, Poland, Sweden, the Netherlands, Belgium, Greece and Denmark – were joined by Norway in May.

Welcoming Finland’s announcement, the Estonian Prime Minister Kristen Michal told AFP, Estonia was in “discussion” with France to join the nuclear deterrence initiative.

“It needs certain capabilities, readiness and so on,” Michal told AFP at the sidelines of a European Arctic Summit in Rovaniemi in northern Finland.

“We are under NATO’s nuclear umbrella already. And France is also backing up our independence with the troops in Estonia. So if

the cooperation can be deeper in nuclear field, that probably will go so,” Michal said.

Finland’s announcement came as part of a new strategic partnership between Finland and France, which was signed by the countries’ foreign ministers in Helsinki yesterday.

Finnish President Alexander Stubb confirmed the decision on X, saying it was “first and foremost about strengthening European security”.

He stressed that the French nuclear deterrent would not “replace or overlap” with NATO’s.

“Finland’s foremost priority is to act as part of NATO and the European Union,” he added.

France’s initiative would extend its nuclear deterrent to other European countries through joint exercises and allow participating countries, for the first time, to temporarily host French nuclear-armed aircraft.

Paris would retain national control over its nuclear arsenal, with the final decision on its use remaining with the French president.

Finland abandoned decades of military non-alignment when it joined NATO in 2023.

Its parliament voted in June to lift the country’s blanket ban on nuclear weapons, allowing them to be brought into, transported through, supplied or possessed in Finland when required for the country’s defence. – AFP

Trump says Ukraine, Russia agree not to hit energy targets

Danny Kemp

WASHINGTON, DC – US President Donald Trump said yesterday that Ukraine and Russia had agreed not to target each other’s energy facilities, a day after he chastised Kyiv for hitting Russian oil refineries.

“Ukraine has agreed not to hit Russian Energy targets. Russia has agreed to do, likewise!” Trump said on his Truth Social network.

“The World’s Diesel price rise is mostly caused by the Russia/Ukraine War, not Iran.”

The Ukrainian presidency declined to comment and there was no immediate reaction from Moscow.

Trump’s claim comes as oil prices continue to soar in the seventh month of the Iran war, raising American fuel costs and inflation just weeks before crunch US midterm elections.

The US leader has insisted that the Iran war will finish immediately after the midterms and gas prices

will drop – but has in the meantime apparently found a new target to blame for the cost at the pump.

Trump had lashed out at Ukraine’s President Volodymyr Zelensky during a trip to Ireland on Sunday, saying he had to do “one thing” and “stop knocking out diesel fuel” refineries in Russia due to growing shortages.

“Let him go after targets, but not diesel fuel, because he’s causing a shortage of diesel,” Trump said, again insisting the Russia-Ukraine war – not the US-Israel conflict with Iran – was to blame.

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 far 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.

Trump said last week he had a “great conversation” with Russian President Vladimir Putin, insisting that Putin wanted to make a deal to end the Ukraine war.

Putin “is wanting to make a deal, and if Zelensky is wanting to make a deal, that’d be very nice,” Trump told reporters on Wednesday.

Zelensky said last week he would be willing to meet Putin at the G20 summit at Trump’s own Doral resort in Miami in December, but the Kremlin immediately ruled it out. – AFP

Pope restores Vatican salaries cut during COVID

VATICAN CITY – Pope Leo XIV has restored the salaries of cardinals and senior Vatican officials to pre-COVID-19 levels, reversing pay cuts introduced by his predecessor Francis during the pandemic, according to a decree published yesterday.

In 2021, Pope Francis cut the salaries of cardinals by 10 percent and those of senior Vatican officials by eight percent to ease pressure on the Holy See’s finances during the COVID-19 crisis and amid chronic budget deficits.

In a papal decree issued yesterday, his 71st birthday, the US pontiff said the measure was abolished from September 1, 2026.

The pay cuts, which had been “necessary to face the exceptional challenge of the pandemic”, could now be lifted, Leo said, adding that Vatican institutions would continue efforts to ensure their “economic sustainability”.

The decree said the decision would not be applied retroactively.

A cardinal working in the Roman Curia, the Catholic Church’s central

administration, is estimated to earn between 4,500 and 5,000 euros (US\$5,200-US\$5,800) a month.

The Holy See’s finances are showing signs of improvement. In its annual report published in May, the Vatican bank reported net profit of 51 million euros.

In a separate decree released yesterday, Leo cancelled a plan by the last pope to transfer some of the Vatican archives outside of the tiny city state. It said a new building would be erected in the Vatican. – AFP

'Fed up': Thousands in Mexico march against Sinaloa Cartel violence



Demonstrators hold banners during the March for Peace in Culiacán, Sinaloa state, Mexico, on Sunday. Thousands of citizens, business leaders, and social leaders, took to the streets demanding peace and justice during the march supported by the Catholic Diocese of Culiacán. The front banner reads "Brave Youth, Conscious Citizens". – AFP

Marcos Vizcarra

CULIACÁN – Chanting and waving banners, thousands marched on Sunday in the Mexican city of Culiacán to protest the deaths of people caught up in a war between two rival factions of the infamous Sinaloa Cartel.

Dressed in white, the protesters released dozens of white balloons into the sky before marching to the cathedral in the capital of Sinaloa state, shouting, "We want peace," and carrying signs saying, "I'm fed up with living in fear."

Culiacán's bishop, Jesús José Herrera, called on the gang members to stop the violence: "No territory and no ambition is worth more than a human life."

The protest was organised by the Catholic Church along with business leaders and families of missing persons.

Since September 2024, the state has been gripped by a bitter war between rival factions loyal to the families of Joaquín "El Chapo"

Guzmán or Ismael "El Mayo" Zambada, co-founders of the cartel who are both now serving life sentences in the United States.

Internal accusations of betrayal sparked the violence between factions.

Daily shootouts and road blocks have led to closed businesses and the suspension of classes as Sinaloa became known as the most dangerous city in Mexico.

In two years, the death toll has surpassed 3,000, including many civilians caught in the crossfire.

Maricela Pérez, 62, carried a portrait of her 36-year-old son, Miguel, who was shot to death in May on a volleyball court.

"We don't want any more deaths like this, any more murders," she tearfully told AFP.

"It's terrible," said Marlene León, 33, another marcher. "We feel abandoned, and we believe this march is a way to express that, despite the passage of time, we have not normalised the violence and we want peace."

President Claudia Sheinbaum has deployed thousands of soldiers into the state, but despite increasing gun and drug seizures, it has so far failed to curb the violence.

On Saturday alone, at least seven people were killed.

Protesters chanted slogans against Sheinbaum and a group burned a cardboard effigy of her.

The economy of the state, with three million inhabitants and significant corn and tomato crops, has declined due to the violence.

"More than 5,000 businesses closed, that's the tragedy Sinaloa is experiencing," said Sergio Raul Esquer, a businessman and state leader of the centre-left opposition party Movimiento Ciudadano ("Citizens' Movement").

US President Donald Trump declared the Sinaloa Cartel a "foreign terrorist organisation" and threatened to intervene against it on Mexican soil if Mexican authorities do not take action.

– AFP

France's Macron to visit Spain Sept 29-30

MADRID – France's President Emmanuel Macron will make a two-day state visit to neighbouring Spain from September 29, the Spanish government said yesterday.

The centrist French leader will be welcomed by Spain's leftist Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez on September 30, while a banquet will be held in Macron's honour with King Felipe VI and Queen Letizia, the government said.

It will be Macron's first official visit to Spain since January 2023 and the first state visit by a French president to the country since 2009, according to the French presidency.

"The two countries share... a common commitment to protecting democracy and young people, particularly in the face of the challenges posed by social media and artificial intelligence," Macron's office said.

Both leaders will also address "the major European and international issues, in particular the situation in Ukraine and the Middle East", the Élysée added.

While on his 2023 visit, Macron and Sánchez signed a friendship treaty, which has yet to be ratified by Spain in the face of objections by the right-wing opposition. – AFP

Fujimori names son of Nobel Prize winner as Peru's ambassador to US

LIMA – Right-wing President Keiko Fujimori has named Peru's next ambassador to the United States, a day after US Secretary of State Marco Rubio visited the Andean nation.

Fujimori, who took office in July, said on Friday that Álvaro Vargas Llosa – the son of the late Nobel Prize-winning author and politician Mario Vargas Llosa – had accepted the position.

"I believe Álvaro Vargas Llosa is going to be a great ambassador of Peru to the United States," Fujimori said in an interview with Peru's RPP radio station.

Álvaro Vargas Llosa responded in a post on X: "I will place my experience and knowledge, and my utmost effort, at the service of the mission entrusted to me, to safeguard Peru's permanent interests... in accordance with the course set" by the president.

The appointment has to be legally reviewed before it is confirmed.

Peru has not had an ambassador in the US since the start of Fujimori's term. The previous ambassador, Alfredo Ferrero, was dismissed in June.

Mario Vargas Llosa was defeated by Alberto Fujimori, Keiko's father, in the second round of the 1990 presidential election. Both he and his son have been fierce critics of the former leader.

Ahead of Rubio's visit on Thursday, Peru joined the "Shield of the Americas," a US-led coalition promoted by President Donald Trump to combat drug trafficking and organised crime across the region.

Fujimori said that being part of the coalition allowed Lima to receive security intelligence more quickly "and act more firmly." – AFP

Venezuela signs oil, gas deals with Suriname

PARAMARIBO, Suriname – Venezuela's interim leader on Friday signed several cooperation agreements including one to provide training for Suriname's oil and gas industry professionals during a visit to Paramaribo.

Delcy Rodríguez and Surinamese President Jennifer Geerlings-Simons signed a series of accords in the Dutch-speaking country's capital, signalling a new era of rapprochement.

Rodríguez hailed the "very important" agreements after Suriname, a country of 600,000 inhabitants, recently announced the discovery of major oil and gas deposits.

"We are making Venezuela's experience in oil and gas exploration and production available... in order to provide training to Suriname's industry," she said.

Venezuela holds the world's largest proven oil reserves, and is looking to exploit these natural resources following the US ouster

of president Nicolás Maduro in January.

Rodríguez, Maduro's onetime vice president who took his place, has effectively governed under Washington's thumb since Maduro's capture.

Venezuela has increased oil production by almost 30 percent and recently signed an enormous deal granting Washington access to over 65 billion barrels – almost one-fifth – of its reserves.

Rodríguez and Geerlings-Simons also agreed to reopen bilateral air routes and allow 200 Venezuelan fishermen to operate in the Atlantic corridor with Suriname.

Rodríguez thanked Suriname for its solidarity when two devastating earthquakes struck Venezuela on June 24, killing more than 6,500 people.

"The Venezuelan people will always keep this in their collective memory and in their hearts," she said. – AFP

Former Brazil president Jose Sarney hospitalized with pneumonia

BRASÍLIA – Brazil's first civilian president after military rule, José Sarney, 96, has been hospitalised with pneumonia and is in a "stable" condition, a hospital in the northeast of the country told AFP yesterday.

Sarney, who served from 1985 to 1990, was admitted on Sunday with the "respiratory infection," said the UDI Hospital in the city of São Luís.

In a statement, the hospital said Sarney was not on breathing support, but there was "no scheduled date for discharge."

A lawyer, politician, and writer, Sarney became president in tragic circumstances.

He was supposed to be vice president under Tancredo Neves, who won the presidency in indirect elections called in January 1985 by the military regime.

But Neves, of the Democratic Movement Party, was hospitalised on the eve of his inauguration with intestinal inflammation. He died around 38 days later after multiple surgeries and a bacterial blood infection, paving the way for Sarney's ascent.

During his five-year term, Sarney oversaw the drafting and approval of a new constitution in 1988, which paved the way for direct presidential elections the

following year – the first in almost 30 years.

He also helped spearhead the creation of the South American bloc Mercosur/Mercosul which was founded a year after he left office by Brazil, Argentina, Uruguay, and Paraguay.

During his tenure, Brazil experienced soaring inflation, which his government failed to curb, leading to hyperinflation at the end of his presidency.

After leaving office, Sarney served several terms as a senator, including as president of the Senate. He retired from politics in 2015. – AFP

N Korea win 10-0 in Asian Games football mismatch



TOKYO – North Korea's formidable women's football team launched their Asian Games with a 10-0 hammering of Bangladesh yesterday, cheered on by several hundred pro-Pyongyang fans in Osaka.

The North Koreans have enjoyed stunning international success at youth level and start among the favourites for gold in Japan.

They were far too hot for Bangladesh to handle and were seven goals ahead by half-time.

Striker Ri Song A, who was born and raised in Japan, was in North Korea's starting line-up and scored in the second half.

"We have an eye on reaching the Asian summit and also next year's World Cup, and I hope I can contribute to the team as much as possible in the limited time available," Ri said.

North Korea were cheered on by a large group of red-clad fans, who sang and chanted throughout the match.

The men's and women's football teams were welcomed by supporters

waving flags as they arrived for the Games last week wearing white blazers and pink ties.

More than 100 North Koreans are set to compete in 14 sports at the Games, which take place in Nagoya-Aichi and officially open on Saturday.

"I grew up watching players from my homeland competing in Japan when I was still a student," Ri said.

"So standing in that position myself and being able to give dreams and hope to children is the ultimate privilege as a football player."

Nuclear-armed North Korea suspended participation in international sporting competitions during the COVID-19 pandemic but returned at the 2023 Asian Games in China and also took part in the Paris Olympics.

North Korea's women face South Korea in a Group F grudge match on September 21.

The men's team begin their campaign against China tomorrow. The game will be played at 6:00 p.m. Macau time tomorrow. – AFP/MPD



North Korea's Ri Song-a (centre) runs with the ball during the 2026 Asian Games women's group B football match against Bangladesh at Yanmar Stadium Nagai in Osaka yesterday.

– AFP



Wang Yanwen (right) of China shoots to score during the group G football match against Hong Kong at 20th Asian Games Aichi-Nagoya 2026 in Gifu, Japan, yesterday. China won the match 5-1.

– Xinhua

Richarlison not in Spurs League Cup squad: De Zerbi



LONDON – Roberto De Zerbi said Richarlison would not be in Tottenham's squad for today's League Cup tie at Liverpool even though his team are struggling badly for goals.

The Brazilian forward was left out of the club's 25-man Premier League player list submitted earlier this month after being informed he was not part of first-team plans, but failed to secure a departure and is eligible to play in the League Cup.

However, Spurs boss De Zerbi confirmed yesterday that the ex-Everton forward, who turned down a move to Vasco da Gama last week, would not feature despite boasting an impressive record for the club against Liverpool.

"Richarlison, you already know everything and nothing changes for Carabao (League) Cup or Premier League. The situation is the same," he said.

The Italian, whose team are yet to score a goal in four Premier League matches this season, said he was caught in the middle.

"What I have done at the beginning of this season has been

to speak with him and to propose an extension of the contract," he said. "If he said, 'No thank you,' I finished my job."

"I said at the last press conference. I know what happened in the last 45 days. It's not right if I explained. It's not my behaviour. The relationship, the problem is between the player and the club."

"I stay within the club. It's coach and club together. At the start of this season I spoke to him many times to convince him to stay and he didn't want to. I can't go every day to pray for him to stay."

Richarlison, 29, started Tottenham's Premier League opener at Brentford but was told he could leave before a move to Everton collapsed and links to Trabzonspor failed to result in a move.

He attended Saturday's goalless draw with Everton, but will remain on the sidelines.

De Zerbi will also be without Pedro Porro and Sandro Tonali for the midweek trip to Anfield.

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

Referee body admits 'error' for Haaland goal in Manchester derby



LONDON – Professional Game Referees (Pro Ref) admitted Sunday that the decision to allow Erling Haaland's winner in Manchester City's 1-0 victory over Manchester United was an "error of judgment".

With City down to 10 men after Phil Foden's dismissal for kicking Bruno Fernandes, Haaland netted on the hour mark with a close-range finish from Josko Gvardiol's cross.

The goal was initially disallowed for offside against Haaland but VAR eventually overturned that decision, even though City midfielder Enzo Fernandez was in an offside position and attempted to reach the ball before the Norwegian forward.

Fernandez did not touch

the ball so the goal was given, allowing Haaland to celebrate his ninth league strike in Manchester derbies.

Premier League Match Centre posted on social media after the goal to say the VAR "determined that Haaland was in an onside position" and "deemed that while in an offside position, Fernandez didn't play the ball".

However, Pro Ref later on Sunday came out to say that the VAR "did not recognise the likely impact" of the Argentine midfielder's position and "should have recommended an on-field review".

"Contact has been made with Manchester United this evening to acknowledge what we deem is an error of judgment. A review of the incident will take place," the

statement added.

After the match, United manager Michael Carrick said it was "worrying" that a team of officials had come to the conclusion that Haaland's goal should stand.

Lisandro Martinez was the United defender at the centre of the controversy.

The Argentine said he was clearly impacted by the presence of his international teammate Fernandez and branded the City goal an "injustice".

"I went to him because he was in front of me. That's why Haaland was free at the back," Martinez told Sky Sports.

"Five or six people (officials) doing this kind of mistake in the Premier League is unacceptable."

"We have to go home with this injustice." – AFP

Saudi football body vows action against Jota chants, Ronaldo urges life ban

Football

RIYADH, Saudia Arabia – Saudi Arabian football authorities promised to take action and Cristiano Ronaldo called for life bans after rival fans taunted Al-Hilal's Ruben Neves about the death of Diogo Jota, his friend and former Portugal team-mate.

Chants about Jota, the Liverpool and Portugal forward who died in a car crash last year, rang out during Al-Hilal's 6-0 away win over Al-Taawoun on Saturday.

"The league must take action and punish this kind of fan behaviour," Saudi-based Portugal captain Ronaldo wrote on Instagram on Sunday.

"People who behave like this

should never be allowed to enter a stadium again," he added.

Midfielder Neves, 29, reacted to the chants coming from the stands by sarcastically giving a thumbs-up and applauding, before pointing towards the sky.

"I just hope they don't go to pray later after what they did," he said after the match.

Neves was one of Jota's closest friends and was a pallbearer at his funeral. Jota, 28, and his brother Andre, 25, died in a crash in Spain in July 2025.

The Saudi Arabian Football Federation and Saudi Pro League condemned "unacceptable conduct by some supporters" in a joint statement late on Sunday.

"Exploiting personal tragedies

for the purpose of abuse or provocation is unacceptable behaviour that has no place in Saudi football," the statement said.

"Relevant committees have identified the conduct in question and will take the necessary action in accordance with the applicable regulations and procedures," it added.

Saudi Arabia will host the 2034 World Cup, one of the flagship events underpinning its drive to diversify an economy still heavily dependent on oil.

The powerful Gulf monarchy has invested nearly two billion dollars in football over three years, attracting stars such as Ronaldo, Neymar and Karim Benzema.

– AFP

Inaugural Ultimate a hit with the athletes, says Coe

Luke Phillips



BUDAPEST, Hungary – The inaugural Ultimate Championship in Budapest worked “pretty well”, according to World Athletics president Sebastian Coe, who hailed the “uniquely positive” feedback from athletes.

Coe had dubbed the three-day Ultimate, bringing together 381 athletes from 65 federations in competition for unmatched prize money totalling US\$10 million, as an “incubator for change”.

An all-black in-field, a long jump pit filled with pink sand, enhanced graphics and quick-fire coverage unashamedly aimed for television, and particularly a younger audience, were all features of the flashy new competition.

“At first inspection, and it’s early, it seems in large part to have worked pretty well,” Coe told journalists in Budapest.

“The athletes have been uniquely positive. At first perusal I think we’re in decent shape.

“We are an innately conservative sport and I just think we’ve moved slightly away from the risk-adverse end of that spectrum - not probably by much, but it’s a start.”

Coe added that there had been a “really good vibe” at three sell-out evenings of action and the competition looked “less last week”.

Jamaican sprint legend Usain Bolt claimed 19 global titles in a

storied career, but said he wished the kind of prize money on offer at the Ultimate Championship had been available when he was competing.

“It’s big,” said Bolt. “It’s good for the sport and it incentivises athletes to come out here and do the best, to show up and to be ready.”

The Ultimate pitched 26 Olympic champions from the 2024 Paris Games against 26 world champions from Tokyo last year and 25 Diamond League winners from the 2026 season.

“It’s a good step, a first step to changing track and field for the better,” said Bolt. “I think the athletes are loving it. It’s a different energy, a different vibe.”

One for the ages

With 28 disciplines delivered in a fast-paced, made-for-television format, Coe described the current crop of athletes as one “for the ages”.

“For the last two or three years, I’ve sensed that we’ve now got a far broader bandwidth of talent across all our disciplines.”

The 2028 edition of the Ultimate will follow the July 14-30 Los Angeles Olympics, Coe confirmed.

“Where at all possible, we wanted our world championships and now the Ultimate to be the denouement of the season,” he said.

“That’s important and again the athletes have welcomed that.”

Coe entertained more than 20 International Olympic Committee members in Budapest as well as federation presidents of rowing, table tennis and volleyball.

“We all learn from each other,” he said. “Not everybody that watches the 100m wants all of

the 100m. That’s how much it’s changed.”

There were ringing endorsements for the Ultimate from athletes in Budapest.

“They have built a great show and it has a different kind of vibe. I love it,” said Norway’s 400m hurdler Karsten Warholm.

Men’s 100m and 200m champion Kenny Bednarek added that “everything is a little bit more exciting than at the World Championships”.

“This event is awesome and it is cool that World Athletics has US\$10m dollars to invest into its athletes. I want it to be the prize for every championships!” said American Nikki Hiltz, third in the women’s 1,500m.

There was some concern pre-competition about the field events, with no place for shot put, discus or women’s hammer throw.

“The championship is worse off for not having the other field events,” said Britain’s Jazmin Sawyers, second in the women’s long jump.

Sawyers added, however, that the event had been a “wow moment” for her and she would use her prize money of US\$75,000 to finance another year in the sport and buy a new sewing machine.

Coe acknowledged that the choice to cut some events had been tough.

“There was some nervousness going in about what it was going to mean for us, inevitable discussions that some disciplines are not there,” he said.

“But that’s not set in tablets of stone, it could look different next time.”

—AFP



USA's Ben Shelton (left) holds the runner-up trophy next to Germany's Alexander Zverev who holds the winner's trophy after the men's singles final at the US Open tennis tournament at the USTA Billie Jean King National Tennis Center in New York City on Sunday.

—AFP

Beds too short in ‘worst-ever’ Asian Games rooms, say S Korea

Andrew McKirdy

TOKYO – Accommodation at the Asian Games starting this week in Japan is the “worst ever”, South Korean officials told AFP yesterday, also warning of “a serious shortage” of rooms.

Beds in shipping container-style huts are too short for players to stretch out, a South Korean basketball chief said, while officials from the Philippines resorted to Airbnb.

There is no dedicated athletes’ village at the Games, with organisers instead relying on a cruise ship, temporary wooden cabins and hotels in a bid to cut costs.

The Games in the city of Nagoya and Aichi prefecture officially open on Saturday but football and basketball are already under way.

Jung Jae-yong, vice president of the Korea Basketball Association, told AFP he was deeply unhappy with the cabins where the men’s basketball team are staying.

“Based on my experience this is the worst it has ever been,” he said.

“Athletes who are over two metres tall cannot even stretch their legs out on the beds. It’s unreasonable.”

Byeon Jun-hyeong, from the basketball team, posted a video on social media showing a leaking sink and soaked floor in his hut.

He posted the caption, “Please help us”.

The huts are set to be home to 2,000 athletes and officials over the more than two weeks of the Games.

Indian sports chiefs are so worried about the cabins that they built replicas to help get their athletes used to them.

The vice president Jung accused organisers of failing to respond to South Korea’s concerns.

“The organisers have still not said anything,” said Jung.

“We are very concerned and discussing extensively with the Korean Sport and Olympic

Committee what to do about this.”

Hundreds of athletes were briefly evacuated from their accommodation last week as record rainfall lashed Nagoya.

More rain has been forecast in the coming days.

‘Serious shortage’

More than 17,000 athletes and officials are expected at the Games - a bigger number than the Olympics.

Local organisers were initially expecting 15,000 and argued last month that they had “neither the manpower nor the budget” to deal with ballooning numbers.

The Olympic Council of Asia later said that everyone would get a place to stay.

Star cricketers have voiced fears about a lack of top-notch hotels.

A South Korean Olympic committee official told AFP that, with the Games just days away, there are problems.

“At the moment there is a serious shortage of accommodation not only for the entire South Korean delegation to the Asian Games, but for delegations from around the world in the Aichi-Nagoya area,” the official said.

“We are doing everything we can to resolve the issue and ensure there are no such problems.”

Philippine Olympic Committee president Abraham Tolentino told AFP that all his country’s athletes had been given a room.

But “some officials, like coaches, were moved to different hotels and Airbnb”.

Asian Games organisers did not immediately respond to an AFP request for comment.

The Italian cruise ship Costa Serena is due to arrive in Nagoya today.

Between 4,000 and 5,000 athletes will stay on the vessel.

The rest will be in hotels, including in Tokyo, where swimming, diving and equestrian events will take place.

—AFP



Overall leader team Movistar's Spanish rider Enric Mas celebrates with his team on the podium after winning the Vuelta a Espana 2026 cycling tour, a race over 3,275 kms in 21 stages and ending in Granada, Spain on Sunday. - AFP

Wang Manyu tops ITTF women's singles rankings for 1st time

Table tennis

BEIJING – China’s Wang Manyu has risen to No. 1 in the International Table Tennis Federation women’s singles world rankings for the first time in her career.

Wang replaced compatriot Sun Yingsha at the top, ending Sun’s 217-week reign as world No. 1 dating back to July 19, 2022. China’s Zhang Yining holds the record with 240 weeks at No. 1.

Sun had occupied the top spot for more than four years but has not competed internationally since winning the World Table Tennis United States Smash in July.

With ranking points from last year’s WTT Champions Yokohama, WTT Europe Smash and WTT Champions Macao expiring, Sun dropped below Wang in the latest rankings.

Japan’s Miwa Harimoto, winner of this year’s WTT Champions

Macao, is third in the women’s singles rankings, followed by China’s Kuai Man and Wang Yidi.

China’s Wang Chuqin remains No. 1 in the men’s singles rankings.

French brothers Alexis and Felix Lebrun lead the men’s doubles rankings, while Japan’s Hina Hayata and Harimoto top the women’s doubles standings. South Korea’s Lim Jong-hoon and Shin Yu-bin remain the top-ranked mixed doubles pair.

—Xinhua

Chris Rock returns to directing with Hollywood drama ‘Misty Green’

Ben Simon

TORONTO – US comedy star Chris Rock has returned to directing after a decade-long pause by making a drama but said that does not hint at a future filled with darker work.

“I’m always going to be a comedian,” Rock said on Sunday, the day after the world premiere of “Misty Green” at the Toronto International Film Festival (TIFF).

“The next [film] may be super gritty, or it might be really silly,” he added. “Whatever it is, I’m going to try to make it great.”

“Misty Green” stars Rosalind Eleazar (Slow Horses) as a hard-partying, once-successful actor whose career is struggling. She’s short on cash, about to be kicked out of her apartment and needs to book a gig quickly.

While the film includes plenty of laugh lines, the tone is serious throughout, with explorations of institutional racism, substance abuse and the pitfalls of stardom in Hollywood.

On the red carpet ahead of Saturday’s premiere, the legendary stand-up comic Rock said: “I shouldn’t have to do the same thing every time.”

“Let’s see what Chris Rock’s drama looks like.”

Variety magazine has called “Misty Green” the “best movie about Hollywood in years,” and Eleazar’s leading performance has attracted critical praise.

The British actor stars alongside established names including Adam Driver, Anna Kendrick and Rock himself. Eleazar told reporters on Sunday she was concerned that her being cast might keep other stars away.

“There are lots of bigger names than me that could have taken this part,” she said.

She worried privately that other actors considering the film would think Eleazar was “not big enough ... it’s not worth my while,” she said.

Woody Allen meets David Lynch

Anna Kendrick, whose breakout performance came alongside George Clooney in “Up in the Air” before starring in the hit “Pitch Perfect” franchise, plays Misty’s friend.

Kendrick told reporters she wasn’t fully convinced the film would work during her initial conversation with Rock about the role.

She recalled telling him, “There’s something I can’t see yet, but I trust that you see it.”

She said she has been persuaded by the final product, a rare blend of comedy and drama.

“I keep describing the movie to people as if Woody Allen were also David Lynch. There’s just something really deep and twisted about it.”

Rock’s previous directorial effort before “Misty Green” came in 2014 with “Top Five,” about a star comedian trying to pivot to dramatic work.

Rock said on Sunday that his films “have gotten progressively better,” but wouldn’t commit to what may come next.

“I’m not going to lock myself into anything.” – AFP



US comedian, actor and film director Chris Rock attends the premiere of his movie “Misty Green” during the Toronto International Film Festival (TIFF) in Toronto, Ontario, Canada, on Saturday. – AFP

For Laura Linney, role in Parkinson’s-themed movie marked a turning point

Paula Ramon

TORONTO – Laura Linney usually leaves her roles behind on set, but she couldn’t quite do that with “Onwards and Sideways,” a drama with a touch of humour that follows two people who are diagnosed with Parkinson’s disease on the same day.

“I left that movie a very different person than when I went in,” the US actress said in an interview with AFP during the Toronto International Film Festival (TIFF).

“I was very rattled by that...in a good way,” she said. “The whole experience is still with me.”

Directed by John Madden (“Shakespeare in Love”), “Onwards and Sideways” focuses on how the paths of Emma (Linney) and Tony (Rhys Ifans) cross when, on the same day, a neurologist diagnoses them both with Parkinson’s and predicts they have “five good years” left.

The film, which premiered on Sunday at the festival, does not aim to be “a lesson about what that condition might be,” its director explained.

“I just wanted to see what would happen with those two people...because then suddenly you are locked into that relationship,” the British filmmaker told AFP.

Madden, who received the initial script years ago, stressed that a Parkinson’s diagnosis still carries a heavy stigma.

“Always the reaction is, ‘Oh no!’ because when I grew up, it was something you just didn’t want to talk about or hear about, because it was the end of your life, but it isn’t that way with Parkinson’s,” he said.

The director initially decided against working on the project because someone close to him had been diagnosed with the disease.

However, after getting the script again years later, he could not resist the work of writer Paul Mayhew-Archer, who suffers from the condition himself.

“The script was funny. I mean, not only funny... it was as if he had a kind of defiance about the condition thrust upon him, and that was very striking,” Madden said.

Mayhew-Archer, who also appears in the film, said “serious illnesses don’t need to be treated seriously all the time.”

“There’s comedy there, and if we just stay miserable about it, we just make ourselves worse,” he told AFP on the red carpet at the premiere in the Canadian city.

‘Responsibility’

The story also left its mark on Rhys Ifans, who plays a schoolteacher who, unlike the effervescent Emma, keeps his diagnosis hidden.

“It has changed me,” he told AFP. “I don’t know whether it’s softened me, but it certainly made me more aware of my own innate softness.”

For both actors, the script presented physical challenges in portraying the bodily changes their



US actress Laura Linney poses on the red carpet for the premiere of “Onwards and Sideways” during the 2026 Toronto International Film Festival at Roy Thomson Hall on Sunday in Toronto, Ontario, Canada. – AFP

characters undergo over the years.

“We both kind of curiously and foolishly said ‘yes, let’s give this a go,’ and then suddenly it dawns on you...the huge responsibility you have because you’re representing people who are diagnosed with Parkinson’s and who live with it day by day,” Ifans said.

“Wanting to represent a community in a way that was appropriate and respectful,” Linney added.

For the team behind “Onwards and Sideways,” the film was essentially an ode to life.

Mayhew-Archer is one of the hosts of the award-winning podcast “Movers and Shakers,” which covers the day-to-day reality of living with Parkinson’s. He said the film sought not only to amplify the community’s voice but to offer support to those diagnosed with the disease.

“If you have Parkinson’s, don’t panic, just keep going out there, keep being strong,” he told AFP.

“I hope people with Parkinson’s gain confidence and strength from this film, as well as having a good laugh.” – AFP

‘Practical Magic 2’ breaks Spidey spell over N American box office

HOLLYWOOD – The A-list witches of Warner Bros.’ “Practical Magic 2” cast away Sony’s “Spider-Man” from its weeks-long perch atop the North American box office, industry estimates showed on Sunday.

Nearly three decades after the beloved original, Sandra Bullock and Nicole Kidman return to star in “Practical Magic 2,” whose estimated US\$30 million debut ended Spidey’s six-week run in first place.

The film resurrects the story of sisters Sally and Gillian Owens, modern day witches who face a curse that sees any man they fall in love with doomed to an early death.

The witch sisters summoned another US\$16 million outside of North America, for a total global estimate of US\$46 million.

The original 1998 film hardly enchanted critics upon its debut, but went on to conjure a cult following that had kept hopes of a sequel alive ever since.

“Critics’ reviews are weak like they were the first time, but the audience score is very good,” said industry watcher David A. Gross.

The “cast is what drives these movies’ success, and

Nicole Kidman, Sandra Bullock, Maisie Williams and Joey King are strong.”

But it wasn’t all bad news for Sony’s “Spider-Man: Brand New Day.”

After swinging from victory to victory, the Tom Holland and Zendaya-led blockbuster caught second place this past weekend, bringing in another US\$8.4 million, for a global total of US\$2.45 billion over its seven weeks in cinemas.

Christopher Nolan’s “The Odyssey” sailed into a close third place, drawing another US\$7.4 million domestically, for an epic US\$1.64 billion over its nine-week global box office journey.

“Runner,” an action comedy led by Alan Ritchson and Owen Wilson, debuted in fourth place, with the heroes fighting a cartel to get a sick young girl a lifesaving organ transplant.

It brought in US\$6.4 million domestically for Angel Studios.

“Coyote vs Acme” took fifth place, with Will Forte and an animated Wile E. Coyote snaring another US\$5.6 million for Falling Forward Films. – AFP

World Weather

CHINA	ASIA-PACIFIC	WORLD	LUSOPHONE
Beijing 17°C~30°C	Manila 23°C~32°C	New York 15°C~23°C	Lisbon 18°C~29°C
Shanghai 20°C~30°C	Bangkok 25°C~32°C	London 11°C~22°C	Rio de Janeiro 19°C~22°C
Hong Kong 24°C~30°C	Tokyo 20°C~27°C	Frankfurt 15°C~28°C	Luanda 19°C~23°C
Taipei 22°C~28°C	Singapore 25°C~33°C	Vancouver 11°C~19°C	Maputo 17°C~29°C
Guangzhou 23°C~32°C	Kuala Lumpur 24°C~35°C	Paris 14°C~32°C	Dili 21°C~32°C
Nanjing 16°C~29°C	Jakarta 23°C~34°C	Moscow 7°C~18°C	São Tomé 25°C~32°C
Guilin 22°C~33°C	Seoul 14°C~27°C	Las Vegas 23°C~37°C	Praia 25°C~31°C
Xi'an 17°C~28°C	Sydney 11°C~23°C	Monte Carlo 20°C~28°C	Bissau 25°C~32°C



Rare lunar occultation

This photo taken yesterday shows the planet of Venus next to the Moon in the sky over Harbin City, Heilongjiang Province.
— Xinhua

Thank you Thames!

A man dances as he takes part a "Ceremony of Light: Ganga Aarti on the Thames" traditional Indian ritual, in the Greenwich area of south-east London on Sunday.
— AFP



Not for supermarket shop!

Models walk the Lotus Kay Shine On Fashion Show on Sunday in New York City.
— AFP

Jam caused by only taxis!

Commuters riding blue taxis wait in a traffic jam in Kabul, Afghanistan yesterday.
— AFP



Suffering from global warming

This photograph shows young bouchot mussels on wooden stakes in the EARL Maine père & fils shellfish breeding farm off the coast of Briqueville-sur-Mer, northwestern France, on Sunday.
— AFP



Extravagant birth day celebrations

A devotee prays before an idol of the elephant-headed Hindu deity Ganesha, made of Indian bank notes on the occasion of 'Ganesh Chaturthi' festival in Chennai, India yesterday.
— AFP