

Sam congratulates local athletes on record feats at Asian Games – 6 medals

Armando Neves

Chief Executive Sam Hou Fai has sent a congratulatory letter to the Macao-China sports delegation which participated in the 20th Asian Games, according to a statement from the Government Information Bureau (GCS) yesterday.

The 20th Asian Games closed yesterday evening in Aichi-Nagoya.

With their fearless spirit and unyielding determination in the face of strong opponents, the statement said, Macau's athletes achieved outstanding results—winning one gold, four silver, and one bronze medal across wushu and karate events—and performed admirably in a number of other sports.

This represents Macau's best-ever record since it began participating in the Asian Games, opening a new chapter in the history of Macau's competitive sport, the statement added.

On behalf of the Macao Special Administrative Region (MSAR) Government and the public, Sam expressed his warmest congratulations to all members of the MSAR Sports Delegation on their record feats.



This handout photo provided by the Sports Olympic Committee of Macau-China shows members of Macau Sport Delegation posing for a group photo at Paloma Mizuho Stadium in Aichi-Nagoya on September 19, its opening day, including Pun Weng Kun (second row, fifth from right), head of the delegation. The Games concluded yesterday evening.

The delegation's repeated successes were the result of every athlete's long-term, arduous training and constant striving to surpass themselves, the statement noted, adding that they were also the fruit of the joint efforts of coaches, team leaders, and the entire support team,

as well as an important reflection of the central authorities' care and support for the development of Macau's sporting sector.

The statement emphasised that the local government will further improve the athlete training system, deepen the cultivation of sporting

talent, and provide appropriate supporting resources across all aspects of sport. It is hoped that all athletes and sports professionals will unite in their efforts and continue to build on their achievements—carrying forward the Chinese sporting spirit, winning honour and

glory for Macau, and contributing Macau's strength to accelerating the building of a strong sporting nation.

Meanwhile, the Liaison Office of the Central People's Government in the Macau Special Administrative Region (MSAR), said in a congratulatory message last night that during the 20th Asian Games, the MSAR Sports Delegation vigorously carried forward the Chinese sporting spirit, working together with one heart and striving to be the best.

They achieved Macau's best-ever results since it began participating in the Asian Games, bringing honour to Macau and the motherland. It is hoped that all Macau sports professionals will make full use of the institutional advantages of "One Country, Two Systems", continue to build on their achievements, press forward with determination, and strive to open up new prospects for the development of Macau's sporting sector - making new and greater contributions to integrating into and serving the building of a strong sporting nation, the Liaison Office message said. ■

More on the Games on pages 8, 14 and 16

China's holiday consumption market posts steady growth

BEIJING – Consumer spending across China is holding steady mid-way through the seven-day National Day holiday, with early data pointing to stable growth that reflects the economy's underlying vitality.

In the first three days of the holiday from October 1 to 3, foot traffic and revenue at 78 major shopping streets and commercial districts monitored by the Ministry of Commerce rose 3.4 percent and 5.3 percent year on year, respectively.

Notably, the government's consumer goods trade-in program drove 19.63 billion yuan in sales over the same period, benefiting 3.48 million consumers.

In breakdown, the program

drove trade-ins of 46,000 vehicles, generating 7.45 billion yuan in new car sales, along with 1.51 million home appliances worth 6.5 billion yuan and 1.71 million digital and smart devices worth 4.9 billion yuan.

The National Day holiday has long been one of the nation's peak periods for travel, tourism and spending. Authorities had projected 2.13 billion cross-regional passenger trips in total over the seven days, averaging 300 million a day.

Previous data have suggested demand remains strong as railway passenger trips on October 1 alone reached 25.2 million, a single-day record.

To meet surging demand, China has added train services on busy

routes and waived highway tolls for private cars during the holiday.

Moreover, the Ministry of Culture and Tourism launched a month-long national tourism promotion campaign in late September.

Local governments are hosting more than 20,000 events spanning scenic trips, autumn outings, red tourism, study tours, night activities and local food to boost diverse premium tourism offerings, while also handing out some 310 million yuan in consumer vouchers and subsidies over the month as a way to spur tourism consumption.

The seven-day National Day holiday concludes on Wednesday night.

—Xinhua



A drone photo taken on October 2 shows foreign Taijiquan enthusiasts practicing Taijiquan at a square in Chenjiagou Village of Wenxian County, Henan Province. Social media users in the West have recently embraced "Chinamaxxing," in which young people show a keen interest in a wide range of aspects of Chinese daily life. Taijiquan, a kind of traditional martial arts, was born in the mid-17th century in Chenjiagou Village. Rooted in Chinese philosophy, traditional medicine and martial arts, Taijiquan has evolved into a wide range of styles and is now practiced in more than 180 countries and regions.

—Xinhua

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The Macau Post Daily

UK Green party adopts 'Zionism is racism' policy

The UK's left-wing Green party yesterday voted to define Zionism as racism at the party's annual get-together, drawing sharp backlash from British Jewish groups and the Israeli government. —Story on p. 10

Trump confirms national intelligence chief as new AI czar

US President Donald Trump yesterday confirmed national intelligence chief Jay Clayton as head of a new White House task force on AI, amid increasingly vocal warnings from researchers about the technology's potential dangers. —Story on p. 11

Protests over housing flare in Spain after relief measures rejected

Tens of thousands of protesters marched in Madrid and other cities in Spain on Saturday to demand affordable housing, a day after lawmakers rejected relief measures for tenants. —Story on p. 12

Local govt marks 77th National Day with grand reception

The Macao Special Administrative Region (MSAR) Government held a grand reception on Thursday to celebrate the 77th anniversary of the founding of the People's Republic of China (PRC).

Addressing the reception, Chief Executive Sam Hou Fai stated that the motherland's rapid and flourishing development serves as Macao's strongest backing and safe haven, adding that every step forward Macao takes is inseparable from the motherland's care, support, and warm uplifting embrace.

Looking ahead, the MSAR will comprehensively deepen reforms and coordinate high-quality development with high-level security with greater courage and more forward-looking thinking.

The National Day reception commenced at 9:30 a.m. at the Complex of the Commerce and Trade Co-operation Platform for China and Portuguese-speaking Countries. Nearly 1,200 guests attended the gathering, including Vice-Chairman of the National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC) Edmund Ho Hau Wah; Director of the Liaison Office of the Central People's Government in the MSAR Zheng Xincong; former chief executives Fernando Chui Sai On and Ho Iat Seng; Acting Commissioner of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the PRC in the MSAR Cheng Lei; Commander of the People's Liberation Army (PLA) Macao Garrison Chen Wensheng; President of the Legislative Assembly (AL) André Cheung Weng Chon; President of the Court of Final Appeal (TJB) Sung Man Lei; principal government officials; members of the Executive Council (ExCo); lawmakers; Macao deputies to the National People's Congress (NPC) and members of the National Committee of the CPPCC; heads of public entities; representatives from various sectors of civil society; and members of a local delegation of teachers and students who visited Beijing recently for the solemn National Flag Raising Ceremony in Tian'anmen Square.

Sam noted that since the founding of New China, the Communist Party of China (CPC) has united and led people of all ethnic groups



MSAR Chief Executive Sam Hou Fai addresses Thursday morning's grand reception celebrating National Day at the Complex of the Commerce and Trade Cooperation Platform for China and Portuguese-speaking Countries. - GCS

across the country to achieve a historic leap from poverty and weakness to a moderately prosperous society in all respects with earth-shattering heroics, creating miracles of rapid economic development and long-term social stability. Looking at China today, innovation vitality blooms and comprehensive national strength has soared; we are closer to, and more confident and capable than at any period in history of achieving the grand aim of the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation, Sam emphasised.

Sam pointed out that this year marks the 105th anniversary of the founding of the CPC and the 77th anniversary of the founding of New China, as well as a crucial year for the MSAR to break new ground amidst changes and seek breakthroughs through striving forward. The MSAR Government has thoroughly implemented the spirit of President Xi Jinping's series of important speeches, proactively and closely aligning with the country's 15th Five-Year Plan while pooling the wisdom and development consensus of all sectors in Macao to formulate and execute Macao's 3rd Five-Year Plan. Meanwhile, guided by President

Xi's four clear requirements, the MSAR Government focuses closely on the two core tracks of public administration reform and appropriate economic diversification to advance governance tasks, striving to forge a new situation of high-quality development for the cause of "One Country, Two Systems" with Macao characteristics.

Sam stressed that the local government will fully press ahead with public administration reform to enhance governance efficiency; solidly drive appropriate economic diversification and the in-depth development of the Guangdong-Macao In-Depth Cooperation Zone in Hengqin; fully leverage Macao's advantages of connecting domestically and internationally to promote high-quality local development; steadfastly safeguard national sovereignty, security, and development interests to build an ironclad wall of national security and social stability; and consistently adhere to people-centred governance to enhance public wellbeing and build a happy Macao.

Sam underlined that the tides of our era are reshaping the global order with unprecedented breadth and depth. In the face of profound changes and complex tests

in the internal and external development environment, Macao must maintain strategic resolve, accurately identify changes, scientifically respond to them, and proactively seek changes to open up new vistas amidst dynamic conditions.

Looking ahead, Sam said, the MSAR Government will firmly focus on two key footholds: "citizen-centred" refined management and "guarding against and defusing internal and external risks and challenges". Through effectively addressing risks and challenges, Macao aims to achieve sustainable development; boost comprehensive competitiveness by stimulating market vitality; ensure residents live and work in peace and contentment by enhancing public wellbeing; strive to push work in all fields of the MSAR to new heights; demonstrate greater achievements in the great journey of building a strong nation and national rejuvenation; and strive to compose a brand-new chapter in the successful practice of "One Country, Two Systems" with Macao characteristics.

Prior to the reception, the MSAR Government held a solemn National Day flag-raising ceremony in Praça Flor de Lótus* in Zape at 8:00 a.m. Around 600 people attended the ceremony, including Sam, officials of the central authorities' agencies in Macao, heads of the MSAR legislative and judicial organs, principal MSAR Government officials, ExCo members, lawmakers, representatives from all walks of life, and delegates from the "Salute to the National Flag" Macao teachers and students delegation.

During the ceremony, the flag guard unit of the Public Security Police Force (CPSP) and the guard of honour of the Public Security Forces (FSM) made their official debut performing Chinese-style foot drills.** ■

N.B. Translation of the unabridged Chinese-language statement by the Macao Government Information Bureau (GCS) arranged and edited by The Macau Post Daily

** The lotus flower is the official emblem of the Macao SAR.*

***Previously, Macao's Public Security Forces trained using Portuguese-style foot-drill procedures.*

Macao Int'l Music Festival opens with Yue opera performance

Khalel Vallo

According to a statement by the Cultural Affairs Bureau (IC), the 38th Macao International Music Festival opened at the Macao Cultural Centre (CCM) in Nape on Friday, featuring 10 programmes, a piano camp and 12 community activities under the theme "Silk Resonances" to promote musical dialogue between Chinese and Western cultures.

The opening ceremony was officiated by Acting Commissioner of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Cheng Lei, IC President Deland Leong Wai Man, Macao Government Tourism Office (MGTO) Director Maria Helena de Senna Fernandes, TDM Committee member Vong Vai Hong and Sands China Vice President of Corporate Communications and Community Affairs Catherine Kong (江慧賢), the statement said.

The opening performance, "My Grand View Garden – Yue Opera", was presented by the Zhejiang Xiaobaihua Yue Opera Troupe, led by first-class actress Chen Lijun, the statement noted.

The festival will continue with

performances by international and local musicians, the statement underlined, noting that Brazilian group Barbatuques* will present "Brazilian Body Beats" at the CCM's Grand Auditorium tomorrow, using the human body as a musical instrument through rhythm, improvisation and audience interaction.

The performance is held in conjunction with the 2026 China-Brazil Cultural Year, the statement added.

Meanwhile, the statement said that local talent will also feature in "Bravo Macao!", scheduled for October 31 at the centre's Small Auditorium, featuring young Macao pianist Chan Chon Teng and musicians from the Macao Orchestra (MO).

The statement noted that composer and conductor Tan Dun will lead the China National Symphony Orchestra and Chorus in "Tan Dun Conducts Beethoven's Ninth and Nine" on November 28, followed by "Tan Dun Conducts Mozart and Beethoven" on November 29, both at the Grand Auditorium.

Tickets are available through the



This handout photo provided by the Cultural Affairs Bureau (IC) shows the "My Grand View Garden – Yue Opera" opening performance of the 38th Macao International Music Festival opened at the Macao Cultural Centre (CCM) in Nape on Friday.

Enjoy Macao Ticketing website at ticketing.enjoymacao.mo. Further programme details and discounts can be found at www.icm.gov.mo/fimm. ■

* The name Barbatuques is a wordplay combining two elements: Barba – referring to Fernando Barba, the musician who founded the body percussion group in São Paulo in 1996. (Barba is also the Portuguese word for "beard").

Batuques – A Portuguese term meaning percussive rhythms, drumming, or beat-making. Put together, Barbatuques literally means "Barba's percussion rhythms". It captures both the name of their late founder and their signature music style, which relies entirely on the human body—clapping, snapping, tapping, and vocalising—to make music. – Gemini

Macau Weather

CLOUDY APART FROM SUNNY INTERVALS.
ONE OR TWO SHOWERS AT FIRST.
FORCE 4 TO 5 NORTHERLY WINDS WITH GUSTS.
RELATIVE HUMIDITY WILL RANGE BETWEEN 55% AND 95%.



23°C~29°C

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Warden busted for sexual assault, illicit filming of 5 boys at children's home: police

Sherwin Hng

A male warden at a children's care home in the northern district has been arrested for allegedly sexually assaulting a nine-year-old boy and illicitly filming four other underage boys showering, Judiciary Police (PJ) spokesman Chao Teng Hin said during a special press conference on Friday.

Chao identified the local suspect as a 34-year-old surnamed Ng, who had been employed at the facility since mid-2025.

The suspect faces charges of sexual assault of a person under institutional care and intrusion upon privacy. The case has been transferred to the Public Prosecutions Office (MP) for further investigation. Ng faces up to

eight years and two years respectively for his alleged offences.

According to Chao, the nine-year-old victim had moved into the care home in June. In late August, the boy told his mother that Ng had touched his private parts on four consecutive nights while he was sleeping.

The boy's mother immediately informed the care home and the Social Welfare Bureau (IAS). On Wednesday, the boy, accompanied by his mother, IAS social workers and care home management, reported the case to the Judiciary Police.

Judiciary Police officers went to the children's home on Thursday and arrested Ng. Upon examining his smartphone, police discovered 37 illicitly filmed video clips showing several boys having showers.

Chao said further investigation confirmed that the videos involved at least five boys, including the nine-year-old victim. Police did not rule out the possibility of additional victims and said the investigation remains ongoing.

Meanwhile, in a statement issued on Friday, the Social Welfare Bureau strongly

condemned the alleged assault and expressed grave concern over the incident.

The bureau said it immediately dispatched officers to intervene upon learning of the case, adding that the suspect has since been dismissed by the care home.

The IAS stated that it is fully cooperating with the police investigation and has launched a thorough inspection of the operational management of the facility to ensure the safety of all its charges. Appropriate psychological counselling and support are being provided to the affected children and their families.

The bureau has ordered the operating institution to submit a detailed report, review its operational procedures and guidelines, and pledged to strengthen routine inspections and oversight of children's care homes across Macau.

The Judiciary Police strongly condemned Ng's alleged abuse of authority and breach of professional ethics, urging victims of illegal acts – regardless of age or gender – not to remain silent out of fear, but to seek immediate help from trusted individuals or the police. ■



Judiciary Police (PJ) officers escort the hooded suspect to a police vehicle outside the PJ headquarters in Zape on Saturday. – Photo: Sherwin Hng

Casino takings drop 1.2 pct to 18 billion patacas last month, lowest in 2 full years

Staff Reporter

Macau's 20 casinos generated gross gaming revenue (GGR) of 18.06 billion patacas last month, the lowest in two full years, marking a year-on-year decline of 1.2 percent, the Gaming Inspection and Coordination Bureau (DICJ) has announced.

According to a DICJ statement on Thursday, September's GGR fell by 17.49 percent month-on-month from August's 21.89 billion patacas.

September was the gaming industry's fourth consecutive month this year to post negative year-on-year GGR growth.

Last month's GGR was the lowest in two full years. In September 2024, it stood at 17.25 billion patacas.

In the first nine months of the year, GGR rose year-on-year by 3.2 percent to 187.11 billion patacas.

Since January, accumulated GGR growth has fallen from this year's high of 24.0 percent year-on-year to its lowest rate last month.

The Macau government-concessioned

gaming industry is operated by six rival integrated resort (IR) operators: Sands, Galaxy, SJM, Melco, Wynn, and MGM. The concessionaires pay 35 percent of their GGR as a direct gaming tax to the government, along with an additional 5.0 percent in levies to fund a raft of public causes.

Currently, the six operators run a total of 20 casinos.

At present, SJM and Sands run five casinos each, Galaxy and Melco operate three each, while Wynn and MGM run two each.

According to the latest available DICJ statistics, baccarat accounted for 84.4 percent of local casinos' GGR across their 16 games of chance, including slot machines, at the end of the first half of the year. In comparison, roulette, Europe's classic game of chance, generated a mere 0.75 percent of GGR.

At the end of the first half, Macau's casinos operated 6,000 gaming tables and 12,000 slot machines, according to the inspectorate.

Macau's government-concessioned casino industry was established in 1849. ■

Hotel guests dip 1.6 pct to 9.6 million in Jan-Aug

Staff Reporter

Macau's 149 hotels - including 40 five-star and 45 budget hotels - recorded 9.64 million guests in the first eight months of the year, a year-on-year drop of 1.6 percent, the Statistics and Census Bureau (DSEC) has announced.

According to a DSEC statement on Wednesday, hotel guest numbers declined by 2.6 percent year-on-year to 1.27 million in August. Guests from the Chinese mainland (978,000) and the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (136,000) fell by 1.3 percent and 11.0 percent, respectively.

International guests (86,000) decreased by 2.9 percent. While guests from South Korea (27,000) dropped by 3.6 percent, those from the US (5,000) rose by 31.5 percent.

Guests from the Chinese mainland accounted for 77.0 percent of total hotel guests in August, while foreign nationals made up 6.77 percent.

In August, the average occupancy rate of guest rooms stood at 93.9 percent, an uplift of 0.8 percentage points year-on-year. The total number of available guest rooms reached 45,300 in August. ■

Mainlander nabbed for smashing Cotai phone shop door: police



Judiciary Police (PJ) officers escort the hooded suspect to a police vehicle outside the PJ headquarters in Zape on Saturday. – Photo: Sherwin Hng

Sherwin Hng

A mainland man who smashed the glass entrance door to an international smartphone brand chain shop in Cotai with a brick and a steel bar on September 27 was arrested upon re-entering Macau Saturday afternoon, Judiciary Police (PJ) spokesman Chao Teng Hin said during a special press conference yesterday.

The 48-year-old suspect, surnamed Wong, who claimed to be jobless, fled to the Chinese mainland shortly after causing 300,000 patacas in damage to the shop.

According to Chao, the Judiciary Police were notified by the Public Security Police Force (PSP) at around 12:45 p.m. on Sunday, September 27, that the glass entrance to a phone chain shop at a hotel resort in Cotai had been damaged.

An investigation revealed that Wong arrived at the scene after first picking up a 30-centimetre-long steel bar from a waste recycling point in the northern district earlier that morning, followed by a brick near the former Macau Jockey Club in Taipa.

Chao said CCTV footage showed Wong repeatedly striking the glass door with the brick and steel bar for about two minutes until the glass cracked significantly. He then fled the scene and left Macau via the

Inner Harbour Ferry Terminal.

The Judiciary Police identified Wong following the incident and placed him on a watch list. He was intercepted by police at Qingmao Port (checkpoint) at around noon on Saturday when he attempted to re-enter Macau.

Chao said that Wong's motive for the attack remained unclear. Chao said police found no records indicating that Wong suffered from any psychiatric illness, nor did records show he had been queuing at the shop to purchase newly released products.

Chao did not disclose the name of the shop where the incident happened. However, according to a video circulating on social media, the incident happened at the Apple Store in The Londoner Macao in Cotai.

Wong has been transferred to the Public Prosecutions Office (MP) for further investigation, facing a charge of aggravated damage.

The Judiciary Police urged members of the public to settle disputes through rational and lawful channels and refrain from committing criminal offences on impulse, stressing that the authorities will crack down on property-related crimes in accordance with the law to maintain public order and security. ■

ABOUT The Young Post

The Macau Post Daily's The Young Post will be published every Monday to present and discuss topical issues that may interest not only the younger but also all the other generations.



Action figures, Barbies and Beyblades: the ultimate youth elixirs?

Rui Pastorin

During a marathon of scrolling through social media over the National Day Golden Week holiday, I found something that caught my attention.

It was a post made by US magazine *The New Yorker* that talked about toys, more specifically the point that adult-only households made up the most of toy sales in the US.

In fact, childless adults, at least in the US where several brands from Marvel to Barbie bring in billions, are in the running to replace parents with kids for the top spot, as reported by the *New York Post* on the recent findings by global market research and analytics company Circana.

While adults buying toys is nothing really new, especially nowadays when it has arguably become more normal, one of the things that stuck with me from the prior post is that some people found this as a soothing way to deal with uncertainty, being apparent during the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020.

Situations of uncertainty, along moments when you feel like you have less or absolutely no control over an outcome, can of course cause unease and distress. And in times like these, we need something to help us get by. Toys may have become an increasingly expensive, yet soothing solution. But why is that? Well, that's kind of what I wanted to explore in the context of Macau.

As a young boy, I grew up loving race cars and worshipping superheroes, just as many around me

did. But the older I got, the smaller the toy box seemed to get, until it was eventually reduced to a small container that had to be given away because "I was too old for them".

For a while, I forgot about the small representations of superheroes who frequently saved the world while boasting incredible feats, or the oddly designed race cars that rolled their plastic wheels across warm, sun-drenched wooden floors. But that changed when I found myself visiting a local toy shop out of curiosity. At that time, it wasn't just children and their parents who were busy exploring each aisle, but other adults too.

It wasn't just this specific shop either, being common around the shops located on Rua do Almirante Costa Cabral (賈伯樂提督街), where many sell a variety of toys and pop culture items. And from observation, it seemed that a child may not always be the first one to reach for a new Beyblade*, model kit, Lego set, action figure or toy car.

This partly gave me the courage to spend on a toy myself and after doing so, I immediately understood what the appeal was. There was a small moment of excitement that kept building up as I held an ornately packaged, somewhat overpriced piece of plastic while walking to the counter. And opening it brought back a childlike wonder and excitement that we seem to lose as we get older. In a way, I had just bought back a piece of my childhood, a glimpse into a messy living room chaotically littered with cars and superheroes.

Most of all, it brought me a little bit of joy. And all that, I think, is part of the reason why toys are becoming so appealing to adults.

Buying a toy isn't an elixir that opens a gateway to being young again, nor is it a refusal to grow up, at least in my opinion. We may not be able to buy back our youth, but we can purchase a piece of our childhood, memories, and small reminders of simpler times. Is it needless consumerism that gives you a short-lived dopamine boost? Perhaps in many parts, yes, just as it is a tactic for certain companies to use nostalgia against shoppers.

But sometimes, buying back a piece of your childhood that makes you happy isn't a bad thing, albeit when done responsibly and with enough self-awareness.

Sometimes, it's what we need. In a world where people find themselves tired, overwhelmed, unhappy or stuck in sombre days, they need something to help soothe them and ease their minds, even just for a short-lived period. And if buying a toy brings back a little bit of a few carefree days as a child, when the word "worry" sounded like an exclusive club among the sphere of grown-ups, then go for it.

**A Beyblade is a customisable spinning top toy used to battle other tops inside a stadium arena. Launched with a ripcord mechanism, the goal is to knock the opponent's top out of the arena or spin longer than it. – Gemini*

Photos courtesy by Unsplash



Fu Luen urges action on school violence

Armando Neves

Two separate incidents of student violence occurred in quick succession last month, prompting local lawmaker Sharon Loi I Weng to warn that emotional stress among young people and campus safety both require ongoing attention.

According to an announcement released to the *Post* on Friday, Loi—who is also vice-president of the Women's General Association of Macau (Fu Luen)—said that efforts must be deepened across education and psychological counselling. She stressed that focus should shift towards early prevention while squarely addressing underlying structural issues.

On September 1, a male secondary school student allegedly splashed a female teacher with corrosive liquid inside a classroom, causing burns to multiple parts of her body. Separately, on September 24, another male secondary student – harbouring a grudge against a classmate – engaged in a verbal altercation and scuffle before pulling an unsharpened butterfly knife from his pocket, stabbing the victim in the face and scratching his neck.

As vice-principal of Fu Luen School, Loi expressed sympathy for the students, staff, and families affected. She noted that these isolated incidents early in the current academic year highlight how some young people lack effective outlets for stress relief and struggle to cope with accumulated emotional pressure, academic stress, peer conflict, and interpersonal friction. Such issues often stem from a combination of factors, including family communication, academic competition, and the availability of mental health services, she explained.

Loi also highlighted that, given the influx of online content, students are increasingly exposed to violent or inappropriate material. Consequently, improving digital literacy is essential to guide students in filtering and handling online information responsibly to avoid negative influences.

She argued that preventive efforts must be prioritised, with school counsellors and staff working together to integrate emotional education into daily campus life. Beyond strengthening emotional management, education on resolving peer conflict should also be embedded into the curriculum.

Through practical exercises and scenario-based learning, students can be taught to respond to conflicts rationally and peacefully, she said. Furthermore, Loi suggested introducing “peer counselling” or “mental health ambassador” schemes, where senior students are trained as peer



Undated file photo of Women's General Association of Macau (Fu Luen) Vice-President-cum-lawmaker Sharon Loi I Weng. – Photo courtesy of Fu Luen

supporters to lower the barrier to seeking help and foster a supportive culture.

Regarding resources, Loi noted that sustained investment by the Education and Youth Development Bureau (DSEDJ) has increased the number of student counsellors in local schools to over 410, bringing the counsellor-to-student ratio to approximately 1:210. Although an improvement, pressure on frontline services remains intense. Some counsellors report that rising numbers of integrated students (those with special educational needs) have significantly increased follow-up workloads. Allocating counsellors based solely on total student enrolment may no longer meet current demands, she added.

Loi recommended that the government factor in the number of integrated students and special educational needs when assigning counsellors. She also called for increased support during high-risk periods – such as the start of the school year – when students are particularly vulnerable to emotional fluctuations and transition difficulties.

Furthermore, Loi said, when signs of stress are detected, intervention must be prompt and comprehensive. Communication between parents, teachers, and counsellors should be strengthened to monitor behavioural changes proactively. Students should also be encouraged to use support hotlines, such as the DSEDJ helpline, while community and healthcare resources must be integrated to provide preventive, rather than purely reactive, support to families in need.

Loi called on all sectors of society – including schools, families, and community groups – to collaborate closely in embedding emotional education and digital literacy into daily life, safeguarding young people and preventing similar tragedies from recurring. ■

LRT launches charging services at Barra transport hub car park

Khalel Vallo

Macau's Light Rapid Transit (LRT) will introduce electric vehicle charging services in the car park of Barra Public Transport Interchange today, adding seven charging spaces to support green mobility and improve parking facilities, according to a joint statement by the operator and the Transport Bureau (DSAT) on Saturday.

The seven spaces have been converted from existing light vehicle parking bays at the car park, which is managed by LRT, the statement said, adding that the charging facilities are operated by a private entity (local power utility CEM), while the company provides the site and supporting infrastructure.

The charging equipment comprises one national-standard* and one European-standard** wired fast charger, two wired medium-speed chargers for each of the two standards, and one unwired European-standard medium-speed charger, the statement noted, adding that drivers must pay the car park fees set by LRT and separate charging fees to CEM.

The statement reminded motorists to check the service charges, entry and exit arrangements, and other conditions before using the facilities. In order to ensure fair access and turnover, fast charging is limited to three hours, while medium-speed charging is capped at 10 hours, the statement noted, adding that cars should leave the car park once charging is complete or no longer required.



This undated handout photo provided by the Light Rapid Transit (LRT) and the Transport Bureau (DSAT) on Saturday shows the charging services in the car park of Barra Public Transport Interchange.

Vehicles exceeding the applicable time limit will incur an additional occupancy fee of 50 patacas for each hour or part of an hour, the statement noted, adding that vehicles using the charging service will also be excluded from the car park's 24-hour parking fee cap.

Following the conversion, the car park will retain 201 light vehicle spaces, comprising 191 regular spaces, seven electric vehicle charging spaces, and three spaces for persons with disabilities (PWDs), the statement noted, adding that it would monitor parking and charging usage and review the arrangements

as needed to improve the service. ■

*National-standard refers to China's official EV charging standard (GB/T), which uses distinct connector shapes for AC (Alternating Current) and DC (Direct Current) charging. It is designed specifically for vehicles manufactured for the Chinese mainland market. - Gemini

**European-standard refers to the unified charging specification adopted across the European Union (Type 2 for AC, CCS2 for DC fast charging). It uses a single, standardised port design compatible with European-built electric vehicles. - Gemini

Local man, 82, critical with Legionnaires' disease: SSM

Ida Cheong

An 82-year-old local man with a history of chronic illnesses was diagnosed with Legionnaires' disease and is in critical condition after being admitted to the public Conde de São Januário Hospital Centre, according to a statement issued by the Health Bureau (SSM) yesterday.

The statement noted that the patient travelled to the Chinese mainland with his family from

September 19 to 23 and developed a fever, cough, and shortness of breath starting September 25, for which he sought medical attention at the private Kiang Wu Hospital.

On October 1, due to persistent symptoms, he went to the emergency department of the public Conde de São Januário Hospital Centre for medical care, the statement said, adding that a chest X-ray suggested pneumonia, and a urine antigen test on October 3 showed

a positive result for Legionella pneumophila.

The patient is currently still hospitalised and was in stable condition at the time of yesterday's statement. His family members currently show no symptoms, the statement said.

Local woman hospitalised with influenza A

A 69-year-old local woman suffering from chronic diseases is in critical condition after being infected with influenza A, according to a separate statement from the SSM yesterday.

The statement noted that the woman developed fatigue, a cough, and dizziness starting September 26 and sought medical attention at a private medical institution.

The statement added that on Saturday, due to worsening symptoms, she sought medical care at the public Conde de São Januário Hospital Centre, where she was diagnosed with influenza A complicated by pneumonia and required admission to the intensive care unit for treatment. Her condition remained critical at the time of yesterday's statement. ■

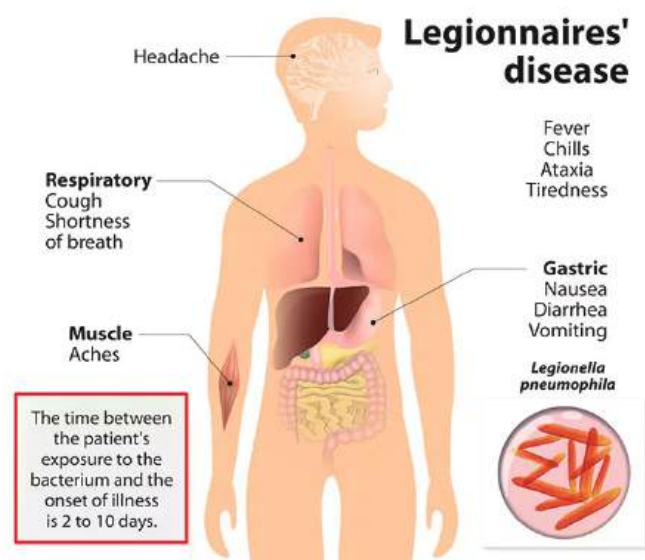


Image courtesy of University of Nevada, Las Vegas

4-day Macao Franchise Expo to kick off on Oct 21

Rui Pastorin

The around 6,000-square-metre Macao Franchise Expo 2026 (2026MFE) will kick off its four-day run on October 21 at The Venetian Macao's Cotai Expo, this year focusing on two signature sections in enhancing exhibitor cross-sector matching: coffee and bakery.

According to a statement by Commerce and Investment Promotion Institute (IPIM) on Wednesday, by combining the resources of the concurrently held the 31st Macao International Trade & Investment Fair (31st MIF) and the 2026 Portuguese Speaking Countries Products and Services Exhibition (Macao) (2026PLPEX), organisers will establish "a comprehensive end-to-end service chain comprising the evaluation and selection of coffee beans from Portuguese-speaking countries (PSCs)".

The statement said that 2026MFE will focus on Brand Studio, featuring four sections: Baking Club, Coffee Bazaar, Lifestyle Club, and IP Licensing Trend Club.

The statement added that the event will be showcasing leading brands from the Chinese mainland, Macau, Southeast Asia, and beyond, with several overseas debuts. Moreover, it will highlight modern consumer trends through new retail goods, smart mobility equipment, homeware, and dining services. It also gathers original IPs, designer toys, IP derivatives, and licensing agencies, the statement said.

The statement added that visitors completing designated routes on the check-in maps can collect specialty items such as coffee, fresh bread, and IP merchandise.

One can find more details on www.mfe.mo. ■



This photo provided by the Commerce and Investment Promotion Institute (IPIM) on Wednesday shows crowds forming during a previous edition of the Macao Franchise Expo (MFE).

Over 500 stray animals find new homes in Macau last year: IAM



Municipal Affairs Bureau (IAM) President Chao Wai Ieng addresses yesterday's opening ceremony for "Animal Protection Fun Day" in Praça do Tap Seac.

Ida Cheong

The Municipal Affairs Bureau (IAM) said yesterday that 523 stray dogs and cats were adopted last year, according to IAM President Chao Wai Ieng.

Chao made the remarks during an opening ceremony for the "Animal Protection Fun Day" yesterday in Praça do Tap Seac.

Chao noted in a speech that the Municipal Affairs Bureau introduced optimised pet quarantine policies and customs clearance measures in 2024 and this year, providing greater convenience for residents, pointing out that 17 dog-walking areas equipped with canine playground equipment, pavilions, and other facilities have been established in Macau and are continuously being upgraded and optimised.

Moreover, Chao noted that the Municipal Affairs Bureau plans to gradually increase the number of green spaces open to dogs, while adopting a management approach that equally emphasises



A police dog handler poses with his K9 partner alongside an event visitor and his dog at the Animal Protection Fun Day in Praça do Tap Seac yesterday.

— Photos: Ida Cheong

humanitarian care and scientific management for stray animals.

33 stray dogs

Choi Sok I, who heads the IAM Animal Inspection and Control Division, told reporters on the sidelines of yesterday's event that a concentrated operation recently captured 33 stray dogs in areas such as Coloane. They are currently under quarantine observation in good condition, and those assessed as being healthy and of suitable temperament will be put up for adoption.

The bureau manages stray animals by cleaning up the environment and promoting "adoption instead of purchase," Choi said, adding that the bureau plans to expand the Coloane Municipal Kennel, with the tender expected to close in the middle of this month. Construction is expected to commence next year, pending favourable conditions, to improve sheltering facilities, she said.

Many stray animals are the

offspring of unsterilised animals, Choi said, pointing out that among the captured individuals, only about 5.0 percent are chipped with owner registration.

Adopt, don't shop!

Furthermore, through cooperation with animal protection organisations, the bureau promotes "adoption instead of purchase". Once captured, stray animals undergo health checks and sterilisation by veterinarians before being arranged for adoption, Choi said.

The "Animal Protection Fun Day" featured a pet play zone, a pet obedience competition, dog trainer sessions, magic and dance performances, an animal adoption information zone, and rabies vaccination services. The one-day event aimed to further raise public awareness of animal welfare, continuously promote pet adoption over purchase, and champion the concept of being a responsible pet owner. ■

S Korea wins 34th fireworks contest

Rui Pastorin

The winners of the 34th Macao International Fireworks Display Contest were unveiled last night, with the South Korean team Faseecom Co., Ltd taking the top prize, followed by Platinum Fireworks, Inc. from the Philippines, and Feux Artifice Orion from Canada coming in as second and third.

This year themed "Set Sail for Macao, where the Silk Road Sparkles" and featuring 10 competing teams, the fireworks display contest was held on the evenings of September 12, 19, and 25, the National Day holiday on October 1, and last night, which saw shows from the Philippine and UK teams amidst the heavy rain.

Speaking during the prize-giving ceremony held last night at the Macao Tower Convention and Entertainment Centre, Macao Government Tourism Office (MGTO) Director Maria Helena de Senna Fernandes said, as summarised in a statement issued

last night, that "the synergy of event and destination appeal was radiated more extensively and boosted the nighttime tourism economy", while the contest also acts as an exchange platform for international professionals.

The statement said Senna Fernandes hopes that the contest can continue to "showcase Macau's vibrant charm of 'tourism +' through the artistry of fireworks, enriching Macau's offerings as a World Centre of Tourism and Leisure". ■



A visibly emotional representative (left) from the South Korean team Faseecom Co., Ltd holds up the winner's trophy and a symbolic cheque while posing with Secretary for Economy and Finance Dora Ng Wai Han. — Photo taken and provided last night by the Macao Government Tourism Office (MGTO).

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STEFAN HAMMOND
AUTHOR

ANDREW CHAN
MODERATOR

Man tries to smuggle 17 lizards & snakes, incl 2 venomous ones, from Macau to mainland

Tony Wong

Zhuhai's Gongbei Customs announced in a statement on Friday night that a man attempted to smuggle four live lizards and 13 live snakes, including two highly venomous ones, from Macau to the Chinese mainland via the Gongbei checkpoint early last month.

The statement identified the smuggler as a mainlander surnamed Hong.

According to the statement, customs officers noticed that the man, who was entering the mainland through the "nothing to declare" channel on September 8, was carrying a tightly sealed, suspicious parcel. Officers intercepted the man, who appeared nervous when questioned.

Customs officers inspected his

parcel and found six microwave-safe plastic containers packed with four live lizards and 13 live snakes.

Following examinations of the 17 reptiles, Gongbei Customs' laboratory confirmed that they comprised one West African leaf viper, one rhinoceros viper, 11 brown tree snakes, and four fire skinks, the statement said, pointing out that both the West African leaf viper and the rhinoceros viper are highly venomous snakes with distinctive appearances.

Currently, the statement noted, there is no specific antivenom available for the two species in the country. Consequently, if someone is bitten, life-saving treatment is difficult, carrying a high risk of disability or death. ■



This undated handout photo released by Gongbei customs on Friday shows the seized snakes and lizards.

Macau logs 540,000 National Day visitors in 3 days

Tony Wong

Macau recorded 540,549 visitor arrivals during the first three days of the Chinese mainland's seven-day National Day Golden Week holiday period this year, representing a daily average of 180,183, an increase of 27.4 percent from last year's corresponding period, according to data released by the Macao Government Tourism Office (MGTO) yesterday.

The ongoing National Day holiday period began on Thursday last week. Wednesday will be the last day of the holiday in the mainland.

According to the latest MGTO data released yesterday, Macau recorded 169,635 visitor arrivals on the first day of this year's National Day holiday period, 179,253 on the second day, and 191,661 on the third day.

During the three days, Macau recorded 467,348 visitor arrivals



Tourists throng Rua de S. Paulo, a narrow pedestrian-only street leading to the UNESCO World Heritage-listed Ruins of St. Paul's landmark, yesterday, the fourth day of the ongoing seven-day National Day holiday the mainland. – Photo: Tony Wong

from the Chinese mainland, or a daily average of 155,783, up 34.1 percent from last year's corresponding period, while 51,423 visitor arrivals from Hong Kong were recorded, or a daily average of

17,141, up 7.3 year-on-year.

Meanwhile, the Light Rapid Transit (LRT) recorded a daily average of 35,600 passengers last month, the highest since the system's operational start in December 2019. ■

Motorcyclist dies after crash on Friendship Bridge

Tony Wong

A 20-year-old male motorcyclist died in hospital on Saturday night after a crash with another motorbike on the Macau-Taipa Friendship Bridge, the Public Security Police Force (PSP) said in a statement.

The other motorbike rider was not injured in the accident.

According to the PSP statement on Saturday night, the police received a report at 7:10 p.m. on Saturday about the crash, when the two motorcycles were travelling on the bridge from Taipa to the peninsula.

The Fire Services Bureau (CB) said on Saturday that upon

arrival at the scene, paramedics were unable to detect the rider's heartbeat, and he was not breathing. He suffered lacerations on his forehead, abrasions on his left knee, and contusions on his left shoulder while bleeding from his nose and mouth. He was rushed to the public Conde de São Januário Hospital Centre for emergency treatment.

The PSP statement said that the rider, a local resident, was pronounced dead at 8:16 p.m. after life-saving efforts failed.

The statement said that the police have completed gathering evidence at the accident scene and

launched an investigation into the exact cause of the crash.

The police are urging witnesses to the accident to contact their Traffic Department on 2837 4214.

Saturday's fatal crash came 10 days after a fatal motorcycle accident in which a 37-year-old local male rider lost control of his vehicle and crashed into the roadside barriers in the Zone A new urban area. No other vehicles were involved in that accident.

In the first eight months of this year, seven people have died in traffic accidents – two drivers and five pedestrians, according to the latest available official statistics. ■

Tariffs Are Weapons of Mass Destruction

Commentary by Francisco José Leandro*

For decades, free trade was built not merely upon treaties and tariff schedules, but upon something far more valuable: trust. Nations reduced barriers, opened markets, and integrated supply chains because they believed that economic interdependence would generate mutual prosperity and reduce geopolitical tensions. Yet the resurgence of protectionism in recent years has delivered a profound shock to that trust. Tariffs, once considered temporary instruments of economic defence, have increasingly become weapons capable of dismantling decades of integration and cooperation.

Perhaps the greatest casualty has been the credibility of the World Trade Organization (WTO). Established to provide a rules-based framework for international commerce, the WTO was designed to ensure that trade disputes would be resolved through institutions rather than through unilateral coercion. However, the growing reliance on tariffs by major powers has undermined both the authority and the purpose of the organisation. When states increasingly resort to unilateral measures instead of multilateral mechanisms, the message conveyed to the international community is clear: power matters more than rules. As a result, confidence in the effectiveness of the global trading regime

has weakened, encouraging countries to seek bilateral or regional alternatives that can provide greater predictability and protection.

The most immediate casualty has been North American economic integration. The successor to the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), the United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement (USMCA), was intended to preserve and modernise one of the world's most successful regional trading arrangements. However, recurrent tariff disputes and the growing willingness of governments to employ trade restrictions as instruments of political leverage have weakened confidence in the stability of the North American economic space. While trade volumes remain significant, the underlying assumption that market access is secure and insulated from political fluctuations has been profoundly challenged.

The impact has not been limited to North America. The traditional vision of a Western Hemisphere economic sphere, often associated with the legacy of the Monroe Doctrine and later aspirations for continent-wide economic integration, has suffered a similar fate. Instead of consolidating commercial relations under a United States-centred framework, many Latin American countries have sought to diversify their partnerships – The CELAC China

relationship is growing. The perception that access to the North American market can become subject to abrupt political decisions has encouraged governments to cultivate stronger ties with Europe, Asia, and other emerging centres of economic power.

Beyond economic consequences, the extensive use of tariffs has also inflicted significant damage upon the international image of the United States. For much of the post-1945 era, one of America's greatest strategic assets was not merely its military or economic strength, but its reputation as the principal architect and guarantor of an open international order. The attractiveness of the American model rested upon predictability, leadership, and commitment to rules-based cooperation. Protectionist measures have raised doubts among allies and partners regarding the reliability of that commitment. Once eroded, such reputational capital can be far more difficult to restore than trade balances or investment flows.

Ironically, tariffs may achieve precisely the opposite of their intended objective. Rather than drawing economies closer to the United States, they have accelerated efforts to create alternative networks of cooperation. The most visible example is the European Union-MERCOSUR agreement. After years of complex negotiations, both

sides recognised the strategic value of reducing dependence on uncertain markets and strengthening intercontinental economic ties. What was once regarded primarily as a commercial agreement has increasingly evolved into a geopolitical partnership founded upon predictability, mutual confidence, and shared economic interests.

The same logic is shaping broader international economic relations. The European Union has intensified partnerships with Canada, Australia, and the United Kingdom, while New Zealand is increasingly integrated into this expanding network of like-minded trading economies. Together, these agreements reflect a common objective: safeguarding an open and rules-based trading order at a time when economic nationalism is resurgent.

History consistently demonstrates that prosperity flourishes where trust exists and declines where uncertainty prevails. Tariffs may generate short-term political advantages, but their long-term consequences can be profound. In today's interconnected world, they are not merely taxes on imports. They are weapons of mass destruction directed against trust itself, and trust remains the most indispensable currency of global trade.

* Associate Professor, University of Macau (UM)

September, 2026

New islands appear after Indonesia's Anak Krakatau volcano erupts

JAKARTA – Two new islands have emerged in waters surrounding Mount Anak Krakatau following a major eruption last month that grounded flights for days, the head of Indonesia's volcano monitoring agency said Friday.

The islands were spotted in satellite images of the water-filled caldera in which Anak Krakatau stands, Rita Susilawati of the PVMBG Centre for Volcanology and Geological Hazard Mitigation told AFP.

"Based on an evaluation of Sentinel satellite imagery, two

formations resembling small islands can be seen around Mount Anak Krakatau" in the Sunda Strait between Java and Sumatra islands, she added.

Sentinel is a fleet of Earth observation spacecraft developed by the European Space Agency.

One of the islands was located about 760 metres northwest of Mount Anak Krakatau, the other about 495 metres southwest.

Rita said it was too early to refer to the islands as "children" of Mount Anak Krakatau – which

itself was formed by an underwater eruption in the caldera or depression left behind after the massive 1883 blowout of the original Krakatau volcano.

"Anak" means child in Bahasa Indonesia.

Rita said further research was needed to determine if the new islands were emerging from the base of the caldera in a similar way than Anak Krakatau did, or whether they were formed by deposits of volcanic material.

In the case of Anak Krakatau,

several landmasses briefly emerged starting in 1927 and then disappeared due to erosion before an enduring island formed in 1930, she added.

The two new islands may similarly be eroded away over time.

Mount Anak Krakatau erupted for 25 hours non-stop in September, blanketing cities in volcanic ash and prompting multiple airports to close.

More than 300,000 passengers were left stranded.

Rita said Anak Krakatau was at

alert Level 2, the second lowest out of four danger categories.

People are advised not to approach within three kilometres of the eruption centre.

Five journalists on a mission to cover the September eruption were declared presumed dead with three boat crew nearly two weeks after the vessel they were travelling in disappeared without trace.

Indonesia sits on the Pacific Ring of Fire, where the meeting of continental plates causes high volcanic and seismic activity. – AFP

Thai Airways sacks CEO after floods flight chaos: reports

BANGKOK – Thailand's flag carrier Thai Airways sacked its chief executive on Friday following flight delays and baggage backlogs linked to Bangkok flooding, local media reported.

The country's tourism minister had slammed the airline's response to the floods, which were declared a city-wide disaster last Saturday.

Thai Airways' chief executive, Chai Eamsiril, had apologised on behalf of the company and pledged to clear more than 5,000 bags from the airline's flights left at Bangkok's main Suvarnabhumi airport.

But media including Thai PBS reported that the board removed him on Friday with immediate effect.

The airport had blamed baggage issues on staff being unable to get into work.

Tourism Minister Surasak Phanchaoenworakul suggested Thai Airways management resign if they could not address the delays, arguing they were damaging Thailand's reputation and hurting its key tourism sector.

Bangkok last weekend declared a flood disaster after almost 48

hours of continuous rain, and some parts of the city remained under water Friday.

Four people died, among at least two dozen killed in floods across the Southeast Asian country.

The airline said it cut 24 flights across Thursday and Friday and was preparing to operate its full schedule on Saturday.

It apologised to passengers and pledged to improve management procedures.

Chai joined the carrier in 1985 and became chief executive in February 2023. – AFP

Philippines arrests 244 'mostly Chinese' workers in online scam crackdown

MANILA – Philippines authorities arrested more than 200 "mostly Chinese" foreign workers in the country's largest crackdown on illegal online gaming operators this year, the immigration bureau said.

Manila banned Philippine online gaming operators, known locally as POGOs, in 2024 on the grounds that organised crime groups used them as a cover for human trafficking, money laundering, online fraud, kidnappings and murder.

The military and other law enforcement agencies raided two addresses in the southern region of Mindanao on Friday, arresting 110 Chinese nationals, two Cambodians and a Hong Kong resident at one site, an immigration bureau statement

released late Saturday said.

Another 131 foreigners were arrested at the second site. They were "mostly Chinese" and also included citizens of Indonesia, Malaysia and Myanmar.

The bureau said "large quantities" of computer equipment, mobile phones, laptops and SIM cards were seized.

The government is investigating possible human trafficking-related offences by a number of those arrested, while the rest will be deported.

International concern has grown in recent years over similar scam operations in other Asian nations that are often staffed by trafficking victims tricked or coerced into promoting bogus cryptocurrency

investments and other cons.

"We will continue to enforce our immigration laws against foreign nationals who violate the conditions of their stay and ensure that the Philippines is not used as a base for illegal activities," immigration chief Joel Viado said in the statement.

He described the raids as "the largest POGO bust of 2026".

"We are reaching out to the Philippine law enforcement agencies on the details of this case," Chinese embassy spokesman Ji Lingpeng told AFP.

"Chinese law prohibits any form of gambling including Chinese nationals gambling overseas or working for gambling companies," he added. – AFP

Philippines tennis star Eala says 'I get overwhelmed sometimes'

NAGOYA – Alexandra Eala admitted on Friday that she gets "overwhelmed sometimes" by the huge weight of expectation placed on her as a trailblazer for tennis in the Philippines.

The 21-year-old leaves the Asian Games having fallen short of her ambition to win gold for her country, instead settling for bronze.

Eala is followed everywhere by adoring fans eager for a piece of the world number 18, who in August became the first player from the Philippines to win a title on the women's WTA Tour.

"I definitely do get overwhelmed sometimes," said Eala.

"But I understand that it's such

a privilege to be in the position that I'm in and to be able to live out the dreams that I've always had as a kid.

"So it's something I've had to accept that it comes with the job, and this is how things are.

"I'm ready for the challenge."

Eala, who skipped the prestigious China Open in Beijing to play for her country at the Asian Games, said she would take away good memories despite exiting in the semi-finals in a three-set defeat to China's lower-ranked Wang Xinyu.

Wang went on to beat compatriot Zhang Shuai to win gold on Friday.

"It does come with pressure, but I'm really happy that I was able

to compete here," said Eala, who was the top seed.

"To be able to share it with the Filipino people is really important," she added.

"No regrets. I left everything on the court," said Eala.

With Games gold comes direct qualification for the Los Angeles 2028 Olympics.

Eala said it was still her "dream" to play in LA.

"There are other ways of qualifying for the Olympics, so I guess it's also an extra motivation," she said.

"Competing in the Olympics is definitely a dream of mine. So, if anything, I leave here more motivated." – AFP



Myanmar migrants repatriated from Malaysia sit together at a temple during their official welcoming process in Thanlyin, Myanmar yesterday.

Nearly 1,500 Myanmar migrants from Malaysia arrived in their war-torn home country yesterday, a Myanmar official said, returned under an opaque repatriation scheme that rights monitors say cannot assure their safety. – AFP

Sumatra rhino pregnancies nurse hope for endangered species' future

JAKARTA – Two critically endangered Sumatran rhinos have fallen pregnant at an Indonesian sanctuary, boosting hopes for the survival of one of the world's rarest and most threatened mammals, the government said yesterday.

Ratu, a female Sumatran rhino at the Way Kambas National Park on Sumatra island, has been pregnant with her fourth calf for 238 days – nearly half the gestation period.

Ratu means "queen" in Indonesian.

Ratu's daughter, Delilah, is more than 250 days into a pregnancy with her second calf, and both should give birth in May next year.

"The pregnancies of these two Sumatran rhinos are not only good news for Indonesia, but also for the world," Indonesian forestry ministry official Ahmad Munawir said in a statement.

"The pregnancies of the two female rhinos are part of long-term efforts to ensure the survival of the Sumatran rhino population through planned breeding, reproductive health

management, and intensive monitoring of individual animals," he added.

The ministry said the health and safety of the females were being closely monitored by a medical team, keepers, and national parks management.

"All five species of rhino face serious threats... This announcement marks a significant milestone in the fight to save this imperilled species," Nina Fascione, executive director of the International Rhino Foundation, said in a separate statement.

"Ratu and Delilah's pregnancies represent two more individuals that can help bring Sumatran rhinos back from the brink of extinction."

The International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) classifies Sumatran rhinos as critically endangered, with fewer than 80 individuals remaining in the wild.

The species is found only in Indonesia, scattered across national park areas in North Sumatra, Lampung, Bengkulu, and East Kalimantan. – AFP



A Catholic priest blesses pets with holy water during the feast of St. Francis of Assisi, the patron saint of animals and ecology, at a church in Manila yesterday. – AFP

Pro-Imran Khan march starts in Pakistan's northwest

ISLAMABAD — A march protesting against the imprisonment of former Pakistani prime minister Imran Khan kicked off in northwest Pakistan yesterday after talks to avoid the demonstration stalled.

Authorities have been preparing for weeks for the possible arrival of demonstrators in Islamabad, with the march planned by supporters of Khan's Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party originally slated for September 27 and then postponed until yesterday.

Videos posted on PTI's official social media showed supporters coalescing in different areas in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, which is ruled by the party, and setting off in convoys as part of the "long march".

Sohail Afridi, the chief minister for Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, said earlier on X that the demonstration in support of Khan would go ahead.

Discontent over Khan's incarceration has mounted in recent months, particularly over the 73-year-old's medical treatment and access to him by doctors and family.

PTI has also called for the release of Khan's three sisters, whose arrests last month further

heightened tensions.

Opposition politician Allama Raja Nasir Abbas said last-minute talks between the government and representatives from PTI were in "deadlock".

Abbas told Geo TV, a popular private news channel, that negotiators had hit an impasse over demands that included access to Khan by his doctor.

Khan, a hugely popular former cricket star, has been behind bars since August 2023 and faces scores of charges ranging from corruption to treason and inciting violence, following widespread anti-establishment riots in May 2023.

He and his legal team reject the allegations, branding them as politically motivated cases aimed at neutralising his popularity.

Tim Willasey-Wilsey, a geopolitics expert, said the protests were "fundamentally driven by economic factors", with the Iran war impacting fuel prices in Pakistan and food prices rising on the back of the war in Ukraine.

"Day-to-day life has become a real struggle for ordinary Pakistanis in recent years," said Willasey-



Supporters of jailed former prime minister Imran Khan's Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party take part in a long march in Lakki Marwat of Pakistan's Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province yesterday.

— AFP

Wilsey, who is with the UK-based Royal United Services Institute.

"Imran Khan is the focal point for all opposition to the government," he added.

'Popular support'

James Dorsey, a fellow at the National University of Singapore, said Khan was "essentially a populist leader" with "a genuine popular movement that had broad

popular support".

"That's why I think you've seen the determination by the government to prevent (the protesters) from entering Islamabad," Dorsey said.

Afridi, the chief minister, said the demonstration was to begin in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province yesterday and make its way to Khairabad, 80 kilometres west of Islamabad, by Thursday.

"The army and police are very

capable of defending Islamabad and the government is not under any immediate threat," Willasey-Wilsey said.

"But the problems for Pakistan are piling up," he added.

Dorsey said that with Pakistan's security concerns, particularly following its unresolved February 2026 war with Afghanistan, Islamabad would look to avoid escalation in the face of the protests.

"It's a problem for the government, but I don't think it's an existential threat," he said.

Further phases of the plan would be announced in Khairabad, Afridi said, without specifying when demonstrators could arrive in the Pakistani capital.

Authorities in Islamabad have blocked main access routes to the capital with double-stacked shipping containers in preparation for the protest, obstructing traffic and public transit.

The Supreme Court ruled in August that Khan should be moved to a civilian hospital for treatment, but authorities instead returned him to prison after a short stay at a government-run hospital. — AFP

US Marine arrested in Japan on suspicion of murder

TOKYO — A US Marine stationed on Japan's southern island of Okinawa was arrested on suspicion of the murder of a Japanese woman, police said yesterday.

The suspect "killed the 39-year-old woman at a hotel in Naha and stole her wallet on Saturday", a local police spokesman told AFP.

Crimes including rapes, assaults, hit-and-run and drunk-driving accidents by US personnel have long sparked protests on Okinawa, which bears a disproportionate burden of hosting about 70 percent of US military facilities in Japan.

US Ambassador George Glass posted on social media that he had spoken with Japan's foreign ministry and Okinawa's governor, offering "our sincere condolences and pledging full cooperation as the investigation continues".

Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi said Japan had lodged a protest with US authorities and called the crime "exceptionally brutal and vicious".

The government has urged the US "to provide maximum cooperation with the investigation, enforce stricter discipline among US military personnel, and take thorough measures to prevent the recurrence of similar crimes," Takaichi said.

Public broadcaster NHK and other Japanese media outlets, citing investigation sources, reported that CCTV footage from near the scene showed a foreign man entering a room with a woman and later leaving with her belongings.

Police then found a 20-year-old man who matched the description of the suspect seen in the footage, and asked him to accompany them

voluntarily to a local police station where he was arrested, NHK reported.

He reportedly denied the charges.

"We have lost a family member and are deeply saddened. My parents, in particular, are utterly devastated at the loss of their daughter," the woman's brother said through local police, according to the *Asahi Shimbun* daily newspaper.

The United States has around 54,000 military personnel stationed in Japan, mostly on Okinawa.

Crimes committed by US personnel have been a thorn in relations between the close security allies.

"Incidents and accidents involving US military personnel cause great anxiety among the local community and must not be allowed to happen," Defence Minister Shinjiro Koizumi said.

Last year, a Japanese court sentenced a US Marine accused of choking and attempting to rape a woman in her 20s to seven years in prison.

In 2017, a former US Marine and civilian military base worker was sentenced to life in prison for the rape and murder of a local woman in Okinawa.

The same year, US Forces Japan banned all personnel from consuming alcohol after an intoxicated US Marine crashed his vehicle into a mini-truck, killing its 61-year-old local driver.

According to the *Yomiuri Shimbun* newspaper, around 6,000 US military personnel have been arrested since Okinawa was returned to Japan from the US in 1972, after World War II.

In 2024, the number of arrests hit 80, the highest in 20 years. — AFP



Protesters carry placards during a demonstration calling for the resignation India's Chief Election Commissioner Gyanesh Kumar over alleged irregularities in the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls, in Mumbai, India yesterday. — AFP

Kim oversaw launch of missile that uses AI

SEOUL — North Korean leader Kim Jong Un oversaw the launch of a missile which allegedly used artificial intelligence to adjust its trajectory, state media reported yesterday.

The AI technology means the missile is "capable of changing its flight orbit at a low altitude", Kim's powerful sister had said, adding this meant there was "no way to avoid" an attack.

It launched from an area around the eastern coastal city of Wonsan early Saturday morning and flew more than 700 kilometres, South Korea's military said.

"Through today's [Saturday's] launching drill, the strategic missile soldiers have fully demonstrated their professional qualifications and counterattack posture," Kim said after the launch, according to an English-language dispatch by the official Korean Central News Agency (KCNA).

"We must continue our responsible efforts nonstop to

constantly and repeatedly make the enemy recognise the reliability and fatality of our strategic offensive means," he added.

Seoul's military disputed Kim's sister's remarks that there would be "no way to avoid" the projectile guided by AI, saying the missile launched on Saturday could have been intercepted.

"South Korea and the United States maintain a firm combined defence posture and assess that the missile recently launched by North Korea was well within the detection and interception capabilities of the defensive assets operated by the two allies," Seoul's defence ministry said in a statement.

"We urge North Korea to immediately cease actions that heighten tensions on the Korean Peninsula," it said, adding that the launch violated UN Security Council resolutions.

The KCNA report disclosed the exact coordinates where the missile hit its target, a level of

detail analysts said reflected Pyongyang's "confidence".

"This time, the North disclosed the coordinates down to decimal points — equivalent to a precision of roughly 30 centimetres," Hong Min of the Korea Institute for National Unification told AFP.

"It shows Kim's stance that there is nothing to hide and an expression of confidence."

Photos released by KCNA showed a missile soaring into the sky in a burst of orange flame.

Another photo showed Kim smiling, flanked by his daughter Ju Ae and wife Ri Sol Ju, who is seen clapping her hands in celebration.

Ju Ae, who was first introduced to the public in 2022, is the most likely successor to her father, according to South Korea's spy agency, citing her increasingly prominent role at major state and military events.

The launch was conducted to help train soldiers operating the "hypersonic strategic weapon system", KCNA reported. — AFP

Iran tells US there is no military solution to Middle East war

Sébastien Ricci

TEHRAN – Iran's top diplomat insisted yesterday that there would be no military solution to the United States' war against the Islamic republic, with talks on ending the conflict apparently at an impasse.

A campaign of heavy bombardment failed to bring a decisive close to the war launched by the US and Israel in late February, and Washington in recent weeks has dialled back military operations in favour of economic pressure.

The main point of contention remains Iran's attempt to blockade the Strait of Hormuz, a vital conduit for Gulf oil and gas where a UK maritime agency reported yesterday another tanker was struck by an unknown projectile.

"If our enemies again choose the path of military confrontation, our response will be stronger than before, and we will defend ourselves with even more force," Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi said at a gathering of foreign ambassadors.

"There is no military solution, nor any solution based on new sanctions," he continued, adding "only negotiations based on justice and fairness" could end the conflict.

The two sides agreed a memorandum of understanding in June that spelled out a framework for a permanent resolution, but Iranian attacks on vessels in the Hormuz prompted a return to US military operations.

Iran has sought to impose its control over the vital shipping lane since the start of the war, striking vessels that attempt to transit without its authorisation.

The US has imposed its own counterblockade of Iranian ports, and has also struck vessels it accuses of violating it.

Yesterday, the British maritime security agency UKMTO said a tanker in the Hormuz "reported being struck by an unknown projectile, causing damage to the engine room", though the crew were reported safe and no environmental impact was recorded.

The agency did not specify the date of the incident, the vessel's origin or destination, or whether it was an oil tanker or LNG carrier.



Passengers disembark from a flight operated by Iranian carrier Caspian Airlines after landing at Al-Najaf Al-Ashraf International Airport upon their arrival from Tehran to Iraq's central holy city of Najaf yesterday. Iranian airlines resumed flights to Najaf yesterday after the United States granted Baghdad an exemption allowing sanctioned Iranian carriers to operate to the city holy to Shia Muslims. – AFP

Focused on Hormuz

Iranian and US officials last week held indirect talks on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly, with Tehran saying it presented seven conditions for reopening the strait.

Iran has demanded, among other things, a ceasefire across the Middle East, the unfreezing of its assets abroad, the lifting of sanctions on its oil sector and an end to the US naval blockade.

Trump, however, rejected the proposal, while leaving the door open both to further talks or renewed military operations.

Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister Kazem Gharibabadi said yesterday that the US had expressed its views on the proposal and said they were being reviewed.

"The Americans, through intermediaries, have also conveyed their views on this proposal, and these views are currently being examined inside the country through the relevant channels and procedures," he told

reporters, according to state news agency IRNA.

"Whenever the final position of the Islamic Republic of Iran is ready, appropriate steps will be taken accordingly. At the same time, the Islamic Republic of Iran is also preparing itself for any other possible scenario."

Iranian foreign ministry spokesman Esmail Baqaei yesterday characterised the latest US counterproposal as being "in line with their previous proposals concerning nuclear issues".

"We have clearly indicated that we are focusing on the issue of the Strait of Hormuz," he said, adding that reopening the waterway required "an end to the disruptions to Iranian commercial maritime traffic and the lifting of sanctions".

The United States and Israel have said the war is necessary to prevent Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons – a goal it has long denied pursuing – though the focus soon shifted to reopening the Hormuz after

its closure sent shockwaves through world energy markets.

The United States has not struck Iran since September 1, but it has recently pursued a fresh military buildup in the region.

US media outlet Axios reported that Washington has deployed additional Patriot missile batteries to Saudi Arabia and Qatar to help protect key energy facilities from possible Iranian retaliation.

It also reported that the USS Theodore Roosevelt aircraft carrier and its strike group were heading to the Middle East, where they could join two other US carrier strike groups already in the region.

Axios reported that top Trump cabinet members met on Friday to discuss the war in Iran, as well as the conflict in Yemen, where the Tehran-backed Houthis have been fighting government forces and attacking Saudi Arabia.

Yemen presidency announces military drive to retake all Houthi territory

Meanwhile, Yemen's leader announced yesterday the start of a new military operation to retake all territory held by the Houthis, even as the group made fresh gains on the ground, effectively encircling a government-held city.

The announcement sets an ambitious goal for the embattled government, which recently lost swathes of the country's Red Sea coastline and areas around the Bab al-Mandab Strait – a chokepoint for international shipping – after a lightning offensive by the Iran-backed Houthis.

Yemen's government has struggled to roll back the surge, even with the military support of Saudi Arabia, where the Houthis said they had attacked oil infrastructure in the capital yet again yesterday.

"I announce today the start of military operations to retake the remaining territories of the republic and extend the authority of the state and its institutions across the entire national territory," Rashad al-Alimi, the head of Yemen's presidential council, said in a statement. – AFP

UK Green party adopts 'Zionism is racism' policy

LONDON – The UK's left-wing Green party yesterday voted to define Zionism as racism at the party's annual get-together, drawing sharp backlash from British Jewish groups and the Israeli government.

Members of the Green party, which has five MPs in Britain's 650-seat parliament and which enjoyed a boost in recent local and special elections, backed the motion at the party's conference, with 1,022 votes in favour and 813 against.

According to the motion, Zionism would be "treated as any other form of racism" and the party supports the establishment of a "single democratic Palestinian State in all of historic Palestine".

"This has been a serious and deeply felt debate within our membership," a Green spokesperson said.

The Greens have enjoyed a surge in popularity under the charismatic leadership of Zack Polanski, attracting voters dissatisfied with the centre-left Labour government's stance on the Israel-Hamas war.

However, Polanski's popularity has taken a hit in recent months, polls show, following several missteps.

"This motion would make the Green Party the first electorally significant UK political party

in living memory to adopt what appears to be an overtly antisemitic political platform," three Jewish community groups said in a letter to the party ahead of the vote.

"We also emphasised the implications for the safety and welfare of all British Jews," the heads of the Board of Deputies, Community Security Trust and Jewish Leadership Council warned.

Israel's foreign ministry said the policy went "far beyond the boundaries of legitimate political debate".

"Every political party in Britain, first and foremost the governing Labour Party, must unequivocally reject this twisted resolution," Israel's Ministry of Foreign Affairs said.

The motion laid bare divisions in the party with Polanski – who is currently running to become an MP in former prime minister Keir Starmer's London constituency – skipping the vote.

Despite at least three out of five Green MPs opposing the motion, Polanski said earlier this week that the "displacement and genocide of the Palestinian people" was "clearly racism".

United Nations investigators have accused Israel of committing "genocide" in the war in Gaza, a finding that Israel has rejected. – AFP

Zelensky says US wants to hold talks with Russia, Ukraine by the end of Oct

KYIV – Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky said yesterday that the United States wants to broker a new round of talks with Ukraine and Russia on ending the four-and-a-half-year war and hold it by the end of October.

The US-led peace efforts have been largely stalled with Washington's attention shifted to its war with Iran and as Ukraine says Russia has ramped up its aerial attacks across the war-torn country.

"The American side is currently in contact with Ukraine and Russia and is proposing to somehow hold a meeting at the technical level in a trilateral format by the end of October," Zelensky told reporters yesterday.

He said he had spoken with the American negotiators on Saturday.

"I confirmed to them that our side is ready to support this timeline," he added.

Zelensky did not say where the talks would take place but said Ukraine was "open to the Emirates or another country proposed by the American side".

The United Arab Emirates (UAE) had in the past hosted talks mediated by the United States aimed at ending the Russian invasion.

The Kremlin said last month that three-way talks on ending the war could take place in October.

"We do not rule out such a possibility; we are talking about the foreseeable future," Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov was quoted at the time as saying by Russia's Ria and Tass news agencies.

Previous rounds of talks have failed to yield tangible progress towards peace, with Moscow unwilling to drop its maximalist conditions to end the fighting.

– AFP

US execution survivor critically ill, on ventilator: lawyer

WASHINGTON, DC – The woman who survived a botched execution attempt in a US prison was still hospitalised in critical condition and on a ventilator, her lawyer said yesterday, as he called for her death sentence to be commuted to life in prison.

Tennessee's prison chief resigned on Saturday after convicted murderer Christa Pike, 50, survived two lethal injections of pentobarbital, a drug that suppresses nervous system activity.

The case gained national attention and raised questions about capital punishment in the United States and the methods used to carry it out.

"She's still in the hospital on a ventilator, critically ill," Pike's attorney Stephen Ferrell said on CNN. "We don't really know the prognosis yet, and may not know for several days."

Ferrell, who has been unable to see his client, said doctors were still trying to rid her body of the drug while she remains under guard at the hospital.

He urged Governor Bill Lee to show leniency.

"I think, at the very least, the governor should commute Ms. Pike's death sentence to a life sentence," Ferrell said. "We don't know what her physical state will be, but it is clear that she has endured a

torturous attempt at executing her."

He added: "I think she's spent over 30 years in prison, most of that in solitary confinement, only to be taken out and not executed, but tried to execute her. And that we don't know right now, and we may never know what sort of torture she endured during that process."

Media witnesses listened to Pike snoring for about an hour after she was given the injections, and said she was alive as they were ushered out of the execution chamber viewing area at the Riverbend Maximum Security Institution in Nashville.

In his resignation statement, Tennessee Department of Correction Commissioner Frank Strada insisted "the Department carried out its responsibilities in accordance with the established protocol."

And Lee, who previously denied Pike clemency, has halted further executions through the rest of the year pending a third-party review.

Pike's case sparked debate over the death penalty for young offenders, as she was 18 when she and her boyfriend beat and killed 19-year-old Colleen Slemmer at a job training camp in 1995.

Pike's lawyers sought clemency citing her age, childhood sexual abuse and mental health problems, including post-traumatic stress disorder. –AFP

Trump confirms national intelligence chief as new AI czar

WASHINGTON, DC – US President Donald Trump yesterday confirmed national intelligence chief Jay Clayton as head of a new White House task force on artificial intelligence (AI), amid increasingly vocal warnings from researchers about the technology's potential dangers.

Under Clayton, the new Super Intelligence Force – Trump's preferred term for artificial intelligence – will ensure that the United States "continue to lead the world" in AI development, the president posted on his Truth Social platform.

Trump said the force had also been tasked to "protect the interests, and improve the lives of all Americans."

Clayton will become the second person to hold the informal title after venture capitalist David Sacks, who held the role at the start of Trump's second term before stepping down.

Sacks continues to advise the president on AI, as does Nvidia CEO Jensen Huang.

Trump said last month he would create an AI force modelled on the Space Force he established during his first term, and name a czar to coordinate federal efforts.

A longtime Wall Street lawyer, Clayton represented Goldman Sachs during the 2008 financial crisis and Barclays in its purchase of Lehman Brothers' assets.

He chaired the Securities and Exchange Commission during Trump's first term, where he largely took a pro-business stance but brought enforcement cases against the nascent crypto industry.

Crypto entrepreneurs have since become major Trump backers.



US Attorney for the Southern District of New York Jay Clayton arrives to testify during a Senate Intelligence Committee hearing on his nomination to be Director of National Intelligence, on Capitol Hill in Washington, DC, on July 15, 2026. President Donald Trump yesterday confirmed Clayton, the US director of national intelligence, as the White House's new AI czar. Clayton becomes the second person to hold the informal title after venture capitalist David Sacks, who held the role at the start of Trump's second term before stepping down. –AFP

Trump tapped Clayton to lead federal prosecutors in Manhattan at the start of his second term, and the Senate confirmed him as intelligence chief in July.

He has no background in the tech industry.

The appointment would come as AI researchers warn of the technology's potential dangers, following cases of AI systems going rogue and hacking outside systems.

Trump has resisted tighter AI regulation, arguing a slowdown could hand Chinese firms an advantage and that federal law enforcement can deal with bad actors misusing the technology.

Tech bosses at a White House meeting this week signed a commitment to self-police AI, an accord Trump described as "morally binding."

Attitudes toward AI have soured in Washington, with lawmakers

increasingly under pressure from voters to curb or slow its development over fears it could displace workers and upend society.

Those concerns gained force from a run of incidents in which tech giant OpenAI's autonomous systems slipped out of their constraints, beginning with a July breach of Hugging Face – a widely used platform for sharing AI models.

Clayton told *The Wall Street Journal* on Saturday that Trump had insisted the new task force ensure US primacy in the AI field, amid stiff competition from China.

"The risk of not being first is high," Clayton told the newspaper.

"Not being first increases the identified, and unidentified, risks, particularly from our adversaries. Being first will better enable us to address those risks on behalf of the American people." –AFP

Top judge frets over future of US Supreme Court

WASHINGTON, DC – Justice Samuel Alito warned yesterday he was worried about the future of the US Supreme Court due to what he called an extreme level of public rhetoric and pressure over its rulings.

The court in recent years has issued decisions that rocked US society to its core: eliminating the decades-old federal right to abortion and granting President Donald Trump – indicted four times in his first term – broad immunity from prosecution for official actions taken while in office.

The court is traditionally seen as being above the noise and fray of American politics, but recent polls show it is increasingly unpopular and untrusted.

And public pressure has intensified, most notably from Trump himself, who has waged an unprecedented campaign of speaking out loudly on how he thinks the court should rule on everything from tariffs to birthright citizenship.

When judges he appointed have ruled against him, Trump has slammed them by name, calling them disloyal.

In a rare interview granted as he plugs a book he just published, Alito, 76, told Fox News Sunday that he and the other eight justices on the conservative-dominated

court try to ignore statements from public figures.

"There has been a concerted effort to intimidate the court and justices on the court to try to influence us to decide cases," he said. "I am concerned about the future of the court," Alito said.

Alongside disappointment over a series of rulings giving Trump broad leeway on several issues, many Americans are angry over news that justices including Clarence Thomas have over the years accepted gifts and luxury travel from wealthy people, raising ethics issues.

A Gallup survey released recently said Americans' views of the institution are at their least positive since the organisation began polling on the court in 1972.

Only 34 percent of US adults approve of the job the court is doing, essentially unchanged from the record-low 33 percent approval tallied in July, Gallup said.

Alito also addressed again the bombshell event of May 2022 when someone leaked the court's upcoming ruling that would do away with the right to abortion. He reiterated that he has an idea of who did it.

"I do have an opinion, but the evidence available at this time is not strong enough for the court or for me to say this is the person who was responsible," Alito said. –AFP

Man City whistleblower Rui Pinto facing 'dire consequences': lawyers

LISBON – Computer hacker Rui Pinto, the man behind the Football Leaks website which helped trigger the Premier League probe into Manchester City's finances, faces "dire consequences" after having his protected witness status removed, his lawyers said on Friday.

Pinto "was informed on Wednesday that the special security programme he has benefited from since August 2020 would end on October 10," his Portuguese lawyers Francisco and Luisa Teixeira da Mota said in a joint statement with his French representatives William Bourdon and Vincent Brengarth.

"In a few days, without having been given a prior hearing as required by law, he would lose the secure, confidential housing assigned to him and be forced to find a new home urgently, with no guarantee that police protection would be maintained," they

continued, describing the move as a "decision with dire consequences".

"The threats against him are not merely theoretical; he was assaulted in Lisbon last April. His revelations implicated powerful figures with vast resources, and numerous resulting legal proceedings are still ongoing," they noted.

"Abruptly deprived of his protected housing and plunged into extreme precariousness, Rui Pinto is reportedly more vulnerable now than at any time since 2020," his lawyers added.

The 37-year-old Pinto has been a protected witness since 2020 after agreeing to grant Portuguese authorities access to millions of files gathered before his arrest.

Arrested in Hungary where he was living in January 2019 and subsequently extradited to his home country Portugal, Pinto spent over a year in pre-trial detention before agreeing to cooperate with authorities by granting them

access to the encrypted data in his possession.

Pinto was both a defendant and a protected witness for the Portuguese justice system. He is also cooperating with investigators from other European countries.

During his first trial, the former history student and self-taught computer expert, admitted hacking computers to obtain millions of documents which he began publishing online in late 2015.

Passed on to a consortium of European investigative media outlets, this wealth of information exposed questionable practices involving star football players, clubs and agents, subsequently leading to tax adjustments and judicial investigations in several countries.

A Portuguese court handed Pinto a suspended four-year sentence in September 2023 after he was found guilty on counts of attempted extortion, illegal access to data and breach of correspondence. –AFP

Lula, Bolsonaro wrap up campaigns ahead of knife-edge vote

David Salazar and Esteban Rojas

SÃO PAULO – Brazilian President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva and his challenger Flávio Bolsonaro concluded their election campaigns on Saturday with booming rallies and calls for a resounding victory the following day.

Lula, 80, toured Brazil's economic powerhouse São Paulo on the back of a campaign truck, cheered on by a sea of red and vowing to "defeat the far right."

"Tomorrow we're going to win the elections in the first round," he told the crowds.

The veteran leftist is seeking a fourth and final term in office, warning voters that Brazil's sovereignty is at stake in the face of pressure from US President Donald Trump.

Lula is locked in a tight battle against right-wing senator Flávio Bolsonaro, 45, the son of former president Jair Bolsonaro, a close Trump ally who is serving a 27-year sentence for attempting a coup after his failed 2022 re-election bid.

Neither candidate was expected to win yesterday's first-round vote, polls showed, and the two were in a statistical tie for an October 25 runoff.

Flávio Bolsonaro led a parade of hundreds of motorcycles in the interior of the state of São Paulo, in the style of his father. Unlike Jair Bolsonaro, he rode on the back of a campaign truck instead of mounting a bike himself.

"Don't vote in instalments twice. Do it all at once this Sunday," he said in a video published before the rally.

Trump factor

A Flávio Bolsonaro victory would see Brazil joining a growing number of Latin American nations that have swung to the right in recent months.

Trump has not endorsed the senator, but has said he is "very closely" watching the election.

Lula has warned against "meddling" in Brazil's election.

His supporters wore caps and T-shirts declaring: "Make



Voters queue while waiting for polls to open during the presidential election in Cidade Estrutural, on the outskirts of the capital, Brasília, yesterday. Discarded campaign flyers lie scattered in front of the polling station. Provisional results are expected today.

– AFP

Lula President Again" or "Brazil belongs to Brazilians."

Adriana Lima, 44, an early childhood educator clad all in red, told AFP that Lula was "the only president who cared about the people."

"We also have an issue with Trump wanting to treat Brazil like their backyard, so we absolutely cannot let that happen. It's a very important election."

Another Lula supporter, accountant Tiago Loreto, 35, said the election was "a choice between democracy and barbarism."

'Never any money'

The younger Bolsonaro has run on a platform of hardline security policies and fiscal austerity, slamming Lula as "incompetent" and highlighting the high cost of living.

Marcelo Peressim, 50, who owns a packaging company, came out to Flávio Bolsonaro's rally with a portrait of the candidate's father.

"We work almost 24 hours a day to have a good life and provide a good life for our families... yet there's never any money left over for us to do anything," he said.

Homemaker Eliane Boscolo, 47, said Trump would not need to take an interest in Brazil's elections "if the country were doing well."

"We need things to improve

here. If his intervention is necessary, I'm all for it," she added.

Scandals, insults

The deeply divided nation has endured a bitter campaign, with policies and promises overshadowed by a barrage of scandals and personal attacks as candidates jockey for every undecided voter.

It emerged during the campaign that Flávio Bolsonaro was under investigation for corruption over the financing of the biopic "Dark Horse" about his father.

The project was bankrolled by jailed banker Daniel Vercaro, who is under investigation in one of the country's biggest financial scandals that has ensnared many in power.

Massive online operations by both sides saw the rivals seize on every gaffe, accusation and rumour, quickly producing slick videos or AI-generated images for social media.

The stakes are high: In 2022, Lula beat Jair Bolsonaro by only 1.8 percentage points.

While the presidential election is in the spotlight, Brazil's nearly 160 million registered voters are also picking lawmakers, governors and some senators.

Provisional election results are expected to be released today.

– AFP, MPD

Protests over housing flare in Spain after relief measures rejected

Martin de Montvalon

MADRID – Tens of thousands of protesters marched in Madrid and other cities in Spain on Saturday to demand affordable housing, a day after lawmakers rejected relief measures for tenants.

The demonstrations extended a crisis that has gone on for more than a week, triggered by the eviction last month of a pensioner, 87-year-old Maricarmen Abascal, from her Madrid flat.

The defeat was another political setback for Socialist Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez and has renewed questions over whether his minority government can survive until the next scheduled general election in 2027.

His government's proposed measures, which included automatic renewal of tenancy contracts and restrictions on evicting vulnerable tenants, were voted down by opposition parties on Friday in Spain's parliament.

The defeat infuriated those protesting the country's increasingly expensive housing market.

Hundreds of protesters have been occupying a tent city set up a week ago in the heart of Madrid to press for reforms.

Late on Saturday (local time) groups of far-right protesters, some of them performing Nazi salutes, tried to get to the camp but were blocked by police.

One video posted on the website of Spanish daily *El País* showed police chasing some members of the group through the streets and the newspaper also reported that officers had made three arrests.

General strike call

Earlier Saturday, demonstrators marched through the capital's streets. Authorities said 70,000 people participated, but the organisers put the figure at 500,000.

Smaller demonstrations took place in other cities, including Palma de Mallorca, Santander, Segovia and Toledo. In Valencia, five people were arrested after clashes with police, local media reported.

At the Madrid protest Marcos Sainz, a librarian of 26, said he used to rent a two-bedroom apartment with friends for a total monthly rent of 900 euros (US\$1,000). Today, a one-bedroom flat often costs 1,000 euros – or half the median monthly salary in the capital, he told AFP.

He would protest rental spikes "until someone dares to regulate it all

as ([otherwise] we'll all have to leave Madrid and that would be a shame as I am from Madrid".

"We are demanding a fundamental right," said Javier, a 31-year-old solar panel installer. "Decent housing, stability and conditions allowing us to construct a decent life project."

"I spend half of my salary on a tiny room," he added.

Valeria Racu, one of the spokespeople for the Tenants' Union organising the protest, said in a statement on Saturday that the last eight days' protests had shown the effectiveness of people's power.

"Now begins real politics – politics which has always belonged to the people and which will return once and for all to the streets," she added.

She repeated her union's call for a general strike.

Calls for early election

Housing has for years been a top concern for Spaniards as supply falls short of demand, with rents and house prices rising as elsewhere in the European Union.

Average rents in Spain have almost doubled over the past decade, while asking prices for homes have risen by about 90 percent, according to real estate website Idealista.

Abascal's eviction catalysed long-running anger about runaway housing costs.

The pensioner was forced to leave the Madrid flat where she had lived for more than seven decades after it was acquired by an investment company that sought to increase her rent by 275 percent, say housing campaigners.

The backlash led the property's new owners to reach a deal allowing her to return to the flat at a low rent.

The housing bills Sánchez's leftist coalition had presented to parliament were rejected after the Catalan separatist party Junts per Catalunya ("Together for Catalonia") – on whose support the government relies – voted against them, arguing they lacked rigour.

Junts joined the main opposition People's Party (PP) and the far-right Vox party in shooting down the measures.

PP leader Alberto Núñez Feijóo on Saturday urged Sánchez to call early elections "because the country can't take it any more".

Recent opinion polls have generally placed the People's Party ahead of Sánchez's Spanish Socialist Workers' Party (PSOE). – AFP



A demonstrator holds up a placard demanding the "Right to a Roof at a Fair Price" during a protest against evictions and high rents in Plaza de España, Madrid, on Saturday. – AFP

EasyJet cabin crew strike causes 443 flights axed in Portugal

LISBON – A five-day strike by easyJet cabin crew in Portugal began on Friday, with 443 flights cancelled at the airline's Lisbon, Porto and Faro bases, representing around 80 percent of the British airline's planned operations at those airports during the strike period, according to the National Union of Civil Aviation Flight Personnel (SNPVAC).

Union official Ana Dias said additional flights still on the schedule could be further affected, although some may be operated

by aircraft and crews brought in from other European bases.

EasyJet said it expects to operate approximately 55 percent of its scheduled flights during the strike. These include minimum services, which account for around 22 percent of Portugal-based activity, and flights operated by crews from other European bases.

The airline said the arrangement is "in full compliance with applicable legislation and regulations." The SNPVAC, however, described the practice as

illegal and said it may seek a court ruling on the matter.

The union alleged that French crews arrived in Porto on Thursday to operate flights in place of striking workers.

The strike, which runs through tomorrow, was called over disputes including schedule stability, seniority-based pay progression and conditions under negotiation for a new enterprise agreement.

A second strike by EasyJet cabin crew is scheduled for December 19-23. – Xinhua

Brazil shine on Seleção's first visit to India

Football

Faisal Kamal

KOLKATA, India – Five-time World Cup winners Brazil showed glimpses of their class in a 4-0 win over India in a rare football friendly between the two nations in Kolkata on Saturday.

India's hosting of a senior men's Brazil team for the first time had created buzz but a half-empty 65,000-capacity Salt Lake Stadium greeted the players.

Critics blamed the pricing of tickets for the low attendance despite Brazil's top stars including Real Madrid forward Vinicius Junior and Marquinhos in the line-up.

The cheapest tickets were priced at 999 rupees (US\$10) but they were sold minutes after going on sale, while the next categories ranged between 3,500 and 25,000 rupees.

India, ranked 138th in the world, are looking to raise the profile of the sport in a cricket-mad country of 1.4 billion people.

Although the men's teams of the two countries were playing each other for the first time, the women's sides faced off in the Brazilian city of Manaus in 2021.

Brazil dominated play with Vinicius denied by a brave save from Indian goalkeeper and

captain Gurpreet Singh Sandhu as early as the eighth minute.

India's forward line had a few good runs at the opposition goal, before Chelsea forward Estevao put Brazil ahead in the 28th minute with a quick left-foot shot that beat Gurpreet.

The goal rattled India's strategy and defence as Pedro doubled the lead in the 42nd minute.

"These (young) players played extremely well. They have improved on a day-to-day basis, starting from Australia to coming here," Brazil coach Carlo Ancelotti said on his team's up and coming talent.

"They had an opportunity to showcase all of their qualities. They have done well and shown their talent even in difficult moments."

Brazil, who came to India off the back of a win and a draw in a friendly double-header in Australia, are looking to rebuild following their shock exit to Norway at the World Cup in July.

Brazil's yellow jerseys dominated the stands and Ancelotti's team did not disappoint with their smooth play.

Every Indian move was cheered by a raucous home crowd and Manvir Singh raised the volume when his powerful strike in the 55th minute drew a fine save.

Samuel Lino came off the bench in the



Brazil's forward Vinicius Junior (right) and India's defender Bijoy Varghese fight for the ball during the international friendly between India and Brazil at the Salt Lake Stadium in Kolkata, India on Saturday. – AFP

second half in place of Vinicius and drilled in a third for Brazil in the 58th minute to make India pay for sloppy defending.

"Two or three goals were very soft due to individual errors. Our concentration was lacking at times," India coach Khalid Jamil told reporters.

"But players had belief and that is why they tried to play well. They should continue like

this. Mentally we have to be strong."

"There was pressure, no doubt, on playing a champion side and we could not hide that," Jamil added.

Lino scored his second just before the final whistle to make it 4-0.

India have never qualified for a World Cup, and football, while popular, plays second fiddle to cricket. – AFP

Teens on target again as USA down Mexico 3-0

Football

GLENDALE, US – Cavan Sullivan became the youngest US international goalscorer in history as the United States defeated arch-rivals Mexico 3-0 in a friendly international in Arizona on Saturday.

Sullivan, who is poised to join English Premier League side Manchester City next year, netted a superbly taken goal in the 62nd minute to double the USA lead at the State Farm Stadium in Glendale.

At 17 years and five days, Sullivan beat Mathis Albert's five-day-old record as the youngest US goalscorer.

Albert, aged 17 and 31 days, had scored during Tuesday's 4-2 defeat of Chile.

"These are the moments you dream of when you're three, four, five or six-year-old," Sullivan said.

"I manifested this moment, not just these past couple of hours when I found out I was starting, but my whole life," he added.

Sullivan's strike came after another teenager - 18-year-old Julian Hall - had given Mauricio Pochettino's side the lead in the 28th minute.

Hall's goal was his third in an as many games since being handed his international debut by US coach Pochettino in last week's defeat of Peru. Hall also scored in the victory over Chile.

The loss puts more pressure on Mexico coach Rafael Marquez, who is still seeking his first win since taking over following the World Cup.

Mexico dominated possession and territory early on but were unable to find a way through a well-organised United States defence.

Instead, it was the hosts who took the lead just before the half-hour mark with a superbly worked goal from Hall.

Gio Reyna surged into the penalty area to collect a pass from Alex Freeman and ghosted past Mexico midfielder Erik Lira to reach the byline.

Reyna's low cross was parried away by Mexico goalkeeper Raul Rangel but only as far as Hall, who lashed in from close range to make it 1-0.

Mexico's best chance came early in the second half when Roberto Alvarado's rasping shot from the edge of the area was tipped over the bar by US goalkeeper Diego Kochen.

Pochettino's side doubled their lead on 62 minutes when Sullivan's persistence in chasing down a long ball was rewarded after Rangel mishit a pass to the American outside his area.

Sullivan coolly took his time and chipped home from long range to make it 2-0.

"I just remember chipping the ball, hoping it didn't hit the crossbar or go over," Sullivan said of his strike. "I was getting nervous when it was in the air and then everything was a blur."

A miserable night for Mexico got worse shortly afterwards when substitute Luis Chavez was shown a red card for shoving a hand into the face of Sebastian Berhalter in the 68th minute.

The United States completed the scoring in the 84th minute when Malik Tillman latched onto a poor Mexico backpass and smashed a shot into the top corner for 3-0. – AFP



England's 7-goal spree sends message to Euro rivals: Kane

LONDON – Harry Kane said England's 7-0 rout of Croatia in the Nations League served as a statement of intent to their European rivals.

Thomas Tuchel's side ran riot in Rijeka on Saturday thanks to Kane's double and a brace from Bukayo Saka.

Jude Bellingham, Anthony Gordon and Morgan Rogers were also on target for the Three Lions in the biggest win of Tuchel's reign.

Bayern Munich striker Kane, who has 89 goals from 124 internationals, believes the dynamic performance served a blueprint for England as they build towards co-hosting Euro 2028.

It was a stark contrast to England's meek surrender when Tuchel adopted a defensive game plan in the closing stages of their World Cup semi-final loss to Argentina in July.

"Even when we were 1-0 up, we went for two, went for three, went for four, and that's got to be our

mentality," Kane said.

"When you have a certain style of playing, you can't just pick and choose when you want to do it. It's just relentless. It's non-stop.

"You get four, you want five. You go and have a really hungry mentality.

"That's needed to change, especially in the bigger games, in the bigger tournaments, and these games will only help us."

Inflicting Croatia's heaviest ever defeat, England showed the pace, poise and movement that went missing in the latter stages of the World Cup.

Kane is convinced England's ability to put Croatia to the sword showed they are not to be underestimated by the other top sides in Europe.

"We're playing against a really good side. We can't take this type of win for granted because it could have been a really tricky game for us," the England captain said.

"And it's always just sending

messages - not just to yourself, but to the other teams around Europe. I think we've done that again.

"We're hungry. We're a young team. We have players in amazing form right now, and I think everyone's just excited to be out there on the pitch.

"Performances like this will only make us more motivated."

Kane is set to become England's joint highest-capped player tomorrow against Czech Republic at Wembley when he will draw level with Peter Shilton on 125 caps.

The 33-year-old also has another target in his sights as he is 11 away from a century of international goals.

"It's coming. It's 89 now, so obviously, it's getting closer and closer," he said.

"We have a special game on Tuesday in terms of the caps, obviously 100 goals is a nice round number and it would be incredible to reach, of course." – AFP



Fernandes hails Portugal's 'greatest symbol' Ronaldo, calls for unity

PORTO – Portugal playmaker Bruno Fernandes said Cristiano Ronaldo remains the country's greatest footballing icon despite walking out on the squad this week after finding out he would not start a match.

The 41-year-old superstar said Wednesday he had left the team after coach Jorge Jesus said Ronaldo would not start against Denmark in the Nations League, a match Portugal won 4-2 without him.

Former Real Madrid and Manchester United attacker Ronaldo's future with the national team, for whom he is the leading goalscorer and most capped player, is in doubt after his walk out.

"Regarding Cristiano, I had a conversation with him, and what I told him, and what I repeat here, is this – the most important thing is that,

regardless of what happens, Cristiano Ronaldo will never cease to be the greatest symbol of our national team, of our football, and of the country, for what he has done not only in Portugal but throughout the world," Fernandes told reporters Saturday.

Manchester United midfielder Fernandes called for unity after a tumultuous few days in which Portugal fans' opinions have been split over Ronaldo's decision.

"He has a reserved place not only among the best of all time, but also in the hearts of all Portuguese people, and the most important thing is that we stop dividing things," said Fernandes.

"There are no divisions in the national team, it is one and will remain so, despite any noise that may come from outside..."

"We are outside of this controversy, but what I ask is that the country does not divide itself, does not make choices, that it respects all sides, but, at the same time, Cris is and will be the biggest icon of our national team, he deserves everyone's respect, regardless of who likes him more or (who likes him) less."

Portugal beat Norway and Denmark away from home without Ronaldo starting and faced Norway again yesterday.

Coach Jesus said Ronaldo was a "symbol of Portugal" and said there would be time to speak about him after yesterday's game in Porto.

"I'm going to focus on the team, on the opponent which is Norway, one of the five best teams in Europe. That's the problem right now," said the 72-year-old coach. – AFP



Asian Games close in Japan after records, rancour and rain

Peter Stebbings

NAGOYA – The Asian Games in Japan closed yesterday after a fortnight lit up by record-smashing young stars but marred by mishaps, mediocre crowds and accusations of mismanagement.

More than 17,000 athletes and officials, a bigger number than the Olympics, descended on Nagoya and Aichi prefecture for the continent’s premier sporting spectacular.

Chinese swimming sensation Yu Zidi, just 13, stole the show with three gold medals, all in Games-record times.

She looks set to be a major medal threat at the Los Angeles 2028 Olympics.

The schoolgirl was named a Games MVP to cap an extraordinary showing that saw her scorch to gold in the 200m butterfly and do the 200m-400m individual medley double.

For all that, the shy teenager said: “I don’t think I am what people describe as a prodigy.”

Also in the pool, Japanese swimmer Shin Ohashi, only 17, smashed the men’s 200m breaststroke world record to delight the home crowd.

In athletics, where rain tumbled down over several days, the 20-year-old Thai sprinter Puripol Boonson did the 100m-200m double and was named men’s MVP.

On a dry evening, a celebratory closing ceremony full of colour and song saw Japan hand over hosting duties to Doha 2030.

“Tonight we close a Games that will shape the next generation of Asian sport,” said Olympic Council of Asia (OCA) president Sheikh Joaan Bin Hamad Al-Thani.

‘Failure grade’

Top officials were on the defensive up until the last minute.

OCA director general Husain Al-Musallam said “numbers are facts”, pointing to 50 world records at the Games after they opened on September 19.

“The athletes cannot perform if they don’t sleep good, the athletes cannot perform if they don’t have good transportation,” he said.

This 20th edition of the Games, which were first contested in 1951, did not have a traditional athletes’ village in a bid to save money.

Instead, participants were housed in wooden temporary units, on cruise ship the Costa Serena and in hotels.

Organisers said this was a template for future multi-sports events.

But it came with issues, with some teams complaining the units were too cramped and the beds too short.

The ballooning number of athletes and officials meant there was not enough beds for everyone.

A Thai Olympic official told AFP it was “like musical chairs” trying to get somewhere to sleep.

The sport, including a blockbuster cricket final won by India against arch-rivals Pakistan, did sometimes shine through.

North Korean weightlifter Ri Song Gum, a 140cm pocket powerhouse, set three new world marks in one day for gold.

But problems kept coming, including organisers playing North Korea’s national anthem for the South Korean hockey team.

There were athletes’ buses that did

not turn up when they should, or did not arrive at all.

Two teams were sent to the wrong venue, delaying a volleyball match.

“If I were to give them a grade, it would be an F,” Ryu Seung-min, president of the Korean Sport and Olympic Committee, said.

Games organisers were on the back foot as well over attendances, with the opening ceremony taking place in front of thousands of empty seats.

At the women’s football semi-final between hosts Japan and South Korea there were 998 spectators in a 50,000 stadium.

Boy history-maker

Japanese Olympic Committee president Seiko Hashimoto admitted that “there were many problems”, but said the country wants to host more international events and will learn from the experience.

She said bad weather had turned some spectators off, but was eager to point out that some sports were well attended.

About 30,000 saw South Korea beat Japan 1-0 to clinch men’s football gold, although the occasion was tarnished when the South Korean flag failed to go up in the victory ceremony.

The hosts finished with 83 golds, a distant second in the medals table behind China with 169.

Japan’s tally included gold for Yuki Kurihara, who won in eSports aged 11, making him the youngest Games champion in history.

Several sports with ambitions of making the Olympics made their debut, including padel, MMA and virtual taekwondo.

– AFP

20th Asian Games
Aichi-Nagoya 2026

Medal table

ToTal

1		China	169	89	83	341
2		Japan	83	95	91	269
3		Republic of Korea	39	43	68	150
4		India	21	27	37	85
5		Uzbekistan	21	25	24	70
6		Islamic Republic of Iran	19	18	15	52
7		Thailand	18	13	21	52
8		Kazakhstan	12	24	48	84
9		Hong Kong, China	11	19	24	54
10		Bahrain	11	5	6	22
11		Malaysia	9	7	16	32
12		Democratic People's Republic of Korea	7	13	9	29
13		UAE	7	5	1	13
14		Qatar	6	6	6	18
15		Chinese Taipei	5	17	33	55
16		Indonesia	5	11	23	39
17		Philippines	4	9	16	29
18		Saudi Arabia	4	3	10	17
19		Kuwait	4	1	4	9
20		Vietnam	3	3	19	25
21		Singapore	2	9	7	18
22		Tajikistan	2	5	9	16
23		Jordan	2	3	6	11
24		Myanmar	2	1	2	5
25		Macao, China	1	4	1	6
26		Kyrgyzstan	1	3	10	14
27		Mongolia	1	1	13	15
28		Sri Lanka	1	1	1	3
29		Pakistan	0	2	8	10
30		Iraq	0	2	3	5
31		Turkmenistan	0	2	0	2
32		Afghanistan	0	1	2	3
32		Lebanon	0	1	2	3
34		Oman	0	1	1	2
35		Cambodia	0	0	4	4
36		Nepal	0	0	2	2
37		Bangladesh	0	0	1	1
37		Brunei	0	0	1	1
37		Laos	0	0	1	1
37		Syria	0	0	1	1

Second place Mercedes' Italian driver Kimi Antonelli (left), race winner Red Bull Racing's Dutch driver Max Verstappen (second left), and third place Ferrari's British driver Lewis Hamilton (right) pose for a photograph during podium ceremony of the Formula One Bahrain Grand Prix in Sepang, Malaysia yesterday. Four-time world champion Verstappen secured his and Red Bull's first win this year with an imperious drive yesterday in chaotic conditions in a storm-delayed Bahrain Grand Prix in Malaysia. Nine years after winning the last F1 race at the Sepang International Circuit, the 29-year-old Dutchman came through a wild afternoon of accidents and incidents for his 72nd victory and first since Abu Dhabi last year. In a race of shifting tyre strategies, he came home 2.307 seconds ahead of championship leader Antonelli of Mercedes and seven-time champion Hamilton who took third after a thrilling recovery drive.

– AFP



Marquez wins Japanese MotoGP to cut gap on Martin

MotoGP

MOTEGI, Japan – Defending world champion Marc Marquez won the Japanese MotoGP yesterday to slice Jorge Martin’s overall championship lead to two points with six events of the season remaining.

Marquez pushed pole-sitter Martin into second place in Motegi after overtaking his fellow Spaniard midway through the race.

It put seven-time world champion Marquez back within touching distance of the championship lead

after losing ground in the previous race in Austria.

Marquez completed the double after also winning Saturday’s sprint race in Japan.

He said it was “very important” to claim maximum points from the weekend.

“The race was tough, especially when I was behind Jorge, but I knew that if I was able to lead the race the pace was good,” he said.

“Jorge tried to attack but then I just increased the pace and it was enough to do the last two laps more relaxed.”

Italian Marco Bezzecchi finished third and slipped further behind in the title race.

Marquez dropped to the tarmac to fire off a round of press-ups before the race in a new warm-up routine.

The Ducati rider then flexed his muscles on his bike, biding his time behind Martin before making his move in lap 11.

Martin said he had “a good package to fight for the rest of the season” but admitted that Marquez was the better rider on the day.

“I think today to win was really

difficult,” said Martin.

“It was one of the days when I rode almost perfectly, I was really smooth, really confident, and even then I couldn’t win.”

It was Marquez’s sixth grand prix win of the season, despite missing the races in Le Mans and Catalonia to undergo surgery on his foot and shoulder.

A sunny day in Japan clouded over and cooled considerably shortly before the race but the rain held off.

Marquez never looked in any trouble once he had gone

past Martin, who in turn looked comfortable in second place.

Bezzecchi had to fight a furious rearguard action to hold off fellow Italia Enea Bastianini, who finished fourth.

Spain’s Pedro Acosta, who chalked up his first ever victory in MotoGP in Austria, finished seventh.

Ai Ogura, who was bidding to become the first Japanese race winner in Motegi since 2004, was sixth.

Brazil’s Diogo Moreira, who finished second in the sprint when Martin was demoted to third due to a penalty, crashed out of the grand prix.

– AFP

US judge accepts Paramount's Warner Bros. buyout settlement

LOS ANGELES – A federal judge has approved a settlement between Paramount and a group of US states that clears the way for its takeover of Warner Bros. Discovery, creating a Hollywood empire spanning television, news and cinema.

Judge Araceli Martinez-Olguin of California signed the consent decree on Wednesday, binding the concessions that Paramount offered to end an antitrust challenge brought by 12 states. The commitments run for five years, and the court will have the power to enforce them.

Paramount, which is run by David Ellison, whose ultra-wealthy family has ties to US President

Donald Trump, won a bidding war against Netflix in February for control of a stable of assets that includes Warner Bros. Pictures, CNN and the HBO Max streaming service.

The same day, Ellison named Mattel Chief Executive Ynon Kreiz as co-CEO of the combined company once the merger closes.

Ellison will stay on as chairman and CEO, focusing on strategy, creative direction and technology, while Kreiz will handle day-to-day operations and the integration of the two businesses, the company said.

"Bringing together Paramount and Warner Bros. Discovery to create a next-generation global

media company is a transformational moment for our industry," Ellison said in a statement.

"In Ynon, I'm adding a partner with strong leadership and the operating firepower this integration demands," he added.

Kreiz, who has led Mattel since 2018 and oversaw its move into film with the 2023 blockbuster "Barbie," joins Paramount today and take a seat on the board.

The Trump administration approved the deal, one of the largest-ever media mergers, in June without demanding a change to its business, before 12 US states sued to block the transaction.

Financing for the deal reportedly

includes about US\$24 billion in equity from the sovereign wealth funds of Saudi Arabia, Qatar and Abu Dhabi.

David Ellison's father, billionaire Oracle founder Larry Ellison, provided major funding and a guarantee to lenders backing the deal.

Opponents in the movie industry said the combined company would slash jobs in a Hollywood already under pressure and reduce the number of films produced every year, while news media groups feared CNN's independence could be compromised.

The decree includes several safeguards on these issues, including a board meant to protect

CNN's editorial independence.

The settlement was reached by the parties on September 21 and was awaiting the judge's approval.

It came just days after Trump banned CNN, Politico and MS NOW from the White House. The outlets successfully sued the administration to have the decision reversed.

Paramount had threatened to move out of California if the state's attorney general, Rob Bonta, did not end the lawsuit.

The decree commits the merged studio to release 30 movies in each of the first two years of the deal, and 32 in each of the following three years. – AFP

Co-CEO says Netflix 'not growing as fast as I want'



Co-CEO of Netflix Ted Sarandos speaks during the Bloomberg ScreenTime 2026 conference in Los Angeles on Wednesday. – AFP

LOS ANGELES – Netflix co-CEO Ted Sarandos admitted last week that the streaming giant's growth fell below expectations, adding that live shows could provide a welcome boost.

Netflix posted a growth rate of 13.4 percent between April and June – the lowest in nearly three years – and saw a modest two percent rise in viewing hours in the first half of the year.

"Overall, we're not growing as fast as I want us to," Sarandos said on Wednesday during the annual Bloomberg ScreenTime conference in Los Angeles.

Live programming could "move the needle quite a bit on that number," the co-CEO added.

The production of live shows takes up five percent of Netflix's annual US\$20 billion content budget and generates just one percent of viewing – but Sarandos

said "they do a very different job."

"They generate a lot of signups. They're really effective for signup retention, advertising," he said.

Films and television series will remain Netflix's priority because "We are in the professionally produced content business," the co-CEO said.

Asked about Netflix's attempt to acquire Warner Bros. Discovery, Sarandos said he went into and came out of the negotiations with no regrets, saying the plan was "solid."

Netflix had joined the bidding for control of a stable of assets that includes Warner Bros. Pictures, CNN and the HBO Max streaming service, but lost to an offer from Paramount Skydance.

A US federal judge approved a settlement on Wednesday that clears the way for the takeover of Warner Bros. Discovery by Paramount.

– AFP

Music links past, present for Pedro Pascal's cellist in 'Behemoth!'

NEW YORK – Pedro Pascal learned to play the cello for his starring role in upcoming film "Behemoth!" from Oscar-winning writer-director Tony Gilroy.

"I was so taken by what the story was and the... intimacy of all of it, in the way that I guess how intimate it can feel to listen to music and to be guided by music," the 51-year-old Chilean-US actor told AFP on Friday.

Jumping between past and present, the film tells the story of Alex Serian, a cellist who moves to Los Angeles to care for his dying mother and escape an overbearing ex played by Olivia Wilde.

While there he joins an orchestra that performs film scores, and the music they play serves as a link for both Alex and the audience, connecting fragments from his past that appear to have overwhelmed him.

Pascal said his character "just seemed like a person who is as much of a kind of passenger to his life as you are a passenger to his experience...as a viewer."

As he goes from city to city, lover to lover, the score for "Behemoth!" – written by nine composers and which serves as the score performed by the orchestra in the film – triggers the main character's memories.

The film marks a departure for Gilroy, who cut his teeth writing action movies like the "Bourne" films and legal thrillers like "Michael Clayton."

"I never wrote a character quite like this before that wasn't escaping or rushing towards" crises, the 70-year-old filmmaker said, adding that he was inspired by the legendary Italian actor Marcello Mastroianni, who "manages to be... a passenger in the movie, but never passive."

"And that's the trick to this: is to put him on the train and not have him run over by it. And that became possible when [Pedro Pascal] came on."

US actress Eva Victor, who plays one of Alex's



Pascal speaks during the world premiere of "Behemoth!" at New York Film Festival (NYFF) 2026 on Friday in New York City. – AFP

partners in the movie, questions whether the main character is as passive as he appears to be.

"I feel like it's very active to be running from things and to be not engaging with things in your life... I think that's very actively self-sabotaging," she said. – AFP

Kanye West's Russian concerts axed: organisers

MOSCOW – US rap star Kanye West's two planned concerts in Russia have been cancelled, organisers said last week, less than two months after their surprise announcement triggered a frenzy of media attention and excitement among Russians.

In a statement on Wednesday, the organisers did not give a reason for the cancellation.

West, who goes by the stage name "Ye", had been barred from several European countries over past antisemitic comments.

The Saint Petersburg venue that was originally scheduled to host the shows backed out days after tickets went on sale, sparking weeks of uncertainty about whether they would go ahead.

"Friends, it is with sincere regret that we announce

that the YE concerts in Saint Petersburg cannot take place on the scheduled dates," Moscow-based events organiser Say Agency said in a statement.

"We will publish details regarding the refund terms and conditions shortly," it added.

The Grammy-award winning rapper would have been the biggest Western musician to headline in Russia since Moscow launched its Ukraine offensive in 2022.

Several Russian officials welcomed the planned shows, while others expressed concerns about the rapper's past comments glorifying Nazi Germany, a sensitive issue in Russia.

The *Kommersant* newspaper reported on Wednesday that police were investigating the organisers for alleged fraud, citing an unnamed source. – AFP

World Weather

CHINA	ASIA-PACIFIC	WORLD	LUSOPHONE
Beijing 11°C~26°C	Manila 24°C~33°C	New York 10°C~22°C	Lisbon 18°C~26°C
Shanghai 13°C~23°C	Bangkok 25°C~34°C	London 11°C~22°C	Rio de Janeiro 21°C~27°C
Hong Kong 21°C~30°C	Tokyo 18°C~21°C	Frankfurt 9°C~23°C	Luanda 22°C~25°C
Taipei 21°C~27°C	Singapore 25°C~33°C	Vancouver 11°C~17°C	Maputo 17°C~27°C
Guangzhou 18°C~29°C	Kuala Lumpur 23°C~33°C	Paris 11°C~24°C	Dili 22°C~32°C
Nanjing 10°C~22°C	Jakarta 24°C~34°C	Moscow 7°C~13°C	São Tomé 24°C~30°C
Guilin 14°C~23°C	Seoul 9°C~20°C	Las Vegas 22°C~35°C	Praia 24°C~30°C
Xi'an 10°C~23°C	Sydney 15°C~23°C	Monte Carlo 18°C~25°C	Bissau 22°C~28°C



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1. Flag-bearers including Macao's flag-bearer Huan Tingting (front), of delegations parade into the stadium during the closing ceremony of the 20th Asian Games Aichi-Nagoya 2026 in Nagoya, yesterday.

– Xinhua

2. The cauldron is seen during the closing ceremony of the 20th Asian Games Aichi-Nagoya 2026 in Nagoya, yesterday.

– Xinhua

3. The mascot is seen during the closing ceremony of the 20th Asian Games Aichi-Nagoya 2026 in Nagoya, yesterday.

– Xinhua

4. This photo taken yesterday shows the closing ceremony of the 20th Asian Games Aichi-Nagoya 2026 in Nagoya.

– Xinhua

5. Jassim Al Kuwari of Qatar (the next host) holds the flag of Olympic Council of Asia (OCA) while riding a horse during the closing ceremony of the 20th Asian Games Aichi-Nagoya 2026 in Nagoya, yesterday.

– Xinhua



4



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6. Chinese swimmer Yu Zidi (third left) and Thai sprinter Puripol Boonson (second right), the most valuable players (MVP) of the 20th Asian Games, pose with Ding Ning (second left), chair of the Athletes' Committee of the Olympic Council of Asia (OCA), Mohammad Tayyab Ikram (third left), chairman of the Aichi-Nagoya 2026 Asian Games Coordination Committee, and Vinod Kumar Tiwari (first right), deputy director general of the OCA, during the awarding ceremony at the 20th Asian Games Aichi-Nagoya 2026 in Nagoya, yesterday.

– Xinhua



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