

25 residents lose 5.4 million patacas to fake 'Douyin' scams in under 3 weeks

Tony Wong

The Judiciary Police (PJ) yesterday urged the public to be vigilant against scam calls impersonating "Douyin" customer service representatives, saying that since the first case of its kind was reported in Macau on September 18, they have received reports from 25 residents who fell victim, with total losses amounting to 5.4 million patacas as of yesterday afternoon.

According to yesterday evening's PJ statement, each of the 25 victims lost between 1,600 patacas and two million patacas.

The statement said that the Judiciary Police last month observed a sharp increase in fraud cases involving scammers impersonating Douyin* customer service representatives in neighbouring regions, and issued a police alert at that time urging the public to remain vigilant. Since then, over 100 residents who received this type of scam call avoided being defrauded because, instead of falling into the scammers' trap, they called the Judiciary Police to inform them about the unsuccessful scamming attempts, the statement said.

According to the statement,



This poster released by the Judiciary Police (PJ) yesterday shows the modus operandi of fake Douyin customer service scams. The AI-translated English text was arranged by the Post.

the victims received calls from people claiming to be Douyin customer service representatives, who falsely told them that they

had activated a specific service on the platform that was about to expire and would be automatically renewed, after which they would

be required to pay for the service.

The scammers offered to help cancel the service and instructed the victims to maintain communication via a messaging app. The victims were then told to switch on their smartphone's screen-sharing function and provide their bank or credit card details, enabling the scammers to steal money from their accounts.

The statement also said that throughout the process, the scammers maintained continuous pressure to prevent the victims from thinking clearly or hanging up, leaving them no time to assess the situation.

The statement also said that some of the scammers were even able to correctly state the victims' names.

The statement pointed out that in recent years, fraudsters have impersonated customer service representatives from Taobao, Alipay, and various other financial institutions, before starting to impersonate Douyin customer service representatives in recent weeks.

The statement urged anyone who receives a suspicious call from someone claiming to be a customer service representative from any organisation or platform

to hang up first and then verify the caller's identity through official communication channels.

The statement underlined that any call requesting money transfers, screen sharing, or credit card and bank details under the guise of "cancelling a subscription" or "issuing a refund" is definitively a scam call.

The statement also advised members of the public who have doubts about a particular situation to use the Judiciary Police's anti-fraud programme – a function available on their official WeChat account – to check the risk level, or call their anti-fraud enquiry hotline on 8800 7777 or crime-reporting hotline on 993 for assistance. ■

**Both Douyin and TikTok are owned by the Chinese tech company ByteDance and share similar user interfaces and features. However, Douyin is designed specifically for the Chinese mainland market, whereas TikTok operates as a separate international platform serving users in the rest of the world. Notably, Macau is one of the few places in the world where users can access and use both platforms freely. – Gemini*

British adventurer back on UK soil after 28-year round-the-world walk

Joe Jackson

LONDON – A British adventurer on a 50,000-kilometre, 28-year trek home from South America without using any transport has set foot on UK soil after swimming the Channel, his publicists said yesterday.

Karl Bushby, a 57-year-old former paratrooper, set off from Punta Arenas, Chile, in November 1998, vowing to reach his mother's home near Hull in northern England without travelling on planes, trains, boats, vehicles or other transport modes.

Nearly three decades and 29 countries later, Bushby stepped ashore in southeast England on Monday afternoon, after securing permission from UK and French authorities to swim across the busy Channel waterway from France.

He and his team said they opted not to publicise the swim for safety and security reasons.

"Feels good to have UK soil under my feet after all these years," the adventurer said in a brief statement released yesterday.

"It hasn't been easy, and that's part of the point. Proving I'm more

capable than I give myself credit for," he added.

"All of us can accomplish more than we will ever imagine."

Bushby has paused his journey several times.

Moscow refused him a visa for a long time, while the 2008 financial crisis and then the COVID-19 pandemic proved to be other hold-ups.

At those times, he stepped away from the journey, living notably in Mexico, then once the situation cleared, he would resume his journey at the exact spot where he had left off. – AFP



A performer (left) interacts with a tourist in Heping District, Tianjin Municipality, yesterday. During the National Day holiday, a special event of the 2026 Tianjin Theatre Festival unfolded across the city. Streets and alleys, century-old buildings and other cultural landmarks were transformed into open-air stages, presenting visitors with a feast of drama. – Xinhua

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China urges France, Germany to uphold open cooperation, free trade

China hopes that France and Germany will uphold open cooperation and free trade, observe WTO rules, and refrain from encouraging the EU to use protectionist tools at every turn, a spokesperson for the MOC said yesterday. – Story on p. 7

'Gen Z has risen up': Tens of thousands demand better education in France

A quarter of a million demonstrators took to the streets across France yesterday as unions and teachers joined high school students demanding better learning conditions.

– Story on p. 10

Belgian physicist's Nobel prize hails 'ghostly messengers' from space

Belgian physicist Francis Halzen yesterday won the Nobel physics prize for groundbreaking work using Antarctic ice to capture particles originating in the distant cosmos, providing insight into the far reaches of space. – Story on p. 11

IAS chief pledges 'comprehensive overhaul' after sexual abuse case at children's care home

Ida Cheong

Following allegations that a male warden sexually assaulted a nine-year-old boy and illicitly filmed him and four other boys showering, Social Welfare Bureau (IAS) President Wilson Hon Wai told reporters on the sidelines of an opening ceremony yesterday that a comprehensive review of the management and operation of children's care homes will be conducted, including risk assessments, operational management reforms, and amendments to relevant legislation.

The opening ceremony for the "2026 Cross-Disability Art Exhibition" was held at the Mount Fortress Corridor.

Addressing the month-long gap between discovering the incident and reporting it to the police, Hon noted that his bureau was first made aware of the situation in

late August. The children's care home immediately took protective measures by reassigning the staff member in question and taking him off the night shift. However, during the investigation, the staff member suspected of sexual child abuse could not be made aware of the ongoing investigation, Ho stressed.

After investigating, collecting evidence and obtaining consent from the parents, the facility's staff accompanied the parents to file a police report on September 30, Hon said.

The affected children are currently in stable condition, with social workers and counsellors providing continuous follow-up support to the children and their families, according to Hon.

Regarding past security breaches in the centre where children left the facility without authorisation

to wander around outside, Hon noted that his bureau operates nine residential facilities housing about 300 children with over 250 staff members, pointing out that the caregiver-to-child ratio stands at around 1:1.2, which is considered reasonable, though management processes have revealed distinct loopholes.

To address these vulnerabilities, Hon said that drawing on legislative amendment experiences from tutorial centres, the local government will review and revise relevant regulations to strengthen employee background checks and onboarding screenings*.

Meanwhile, comprehensive risk assessments will be conducted based on the minors' ages and care needs, Hon said, adding that facilities will also eliminate security hazards by improving visitor and staff entry/

exit logs, and implementing two-person shifts for high-risk tasks.

Hon noted that standard operating procedures will be updated to abolish single-staff night shifts in the children's dormitories. Additionally, staff will undergo mandatory child protection training, the children in care will receive enhanced self-protection and sex education, and multiple feedback channels connecting the respective facility, schools and parents to ensure timely reporting and handling of issues, Hon noted. ■

*Onboarding screenings is the set of checks performed before a new worker gets access to systems, facilities, or sensitive materials. In healthcare, abbreviated screenings can increase diversion risk by allowing problematic individuals into access pathways too quickly. - Gemini



Social Welfare Bureau (IAS) President Wilson Hon Wai speaks to reporters on the sidelines of the opening ceremony for the "2026 Cross-Disability Art Exhibition" at the Mount Fortress Corridor yesterday. - Photo: Ida Cheong

Police arrest 2 female mainland students for unlawful employment, illegal work

Armindo Neves

The Public Security Police (PSP) have arrested two female students from the Chinese mainland for unlawful employment and illegal work respectively, PSP spokesman Lei Chan Hon said during a regular press conference yesterday.

Lei said that both the employer and employee were surnamed Zhang—the employer being in her 20s and the employee aged 21.

According to Lei, while conducting a routine patrol on Estrada do Istmo (路氹連貫公路) last Friday, PSP officers noticed the 21-year-old Zhang holding a camera and taking photographs of three other women. Suspecting that they were involved in illegal work, the officers intercepted and questioned them.

Upon questioning, Lei said, the employer admitted to having hired the 21-year-old to provide photography services. Investigations revealed that the employer had previously hired her via a mobile app at an hourly rate of 400 yuan (480 patacas), and both had agreed to meet last Friday for the photo shoot.

During the operation, PSP officers seized a camera and three smartphones.

The employer has since



This undated handout photo provided by the Public Security Police (PSP) yesterday shows PSP officers escorting the two students from the Chinese mainland to a police station.

been transferred to the Public Prosecutions Office (MP) to face charges of unlawful employment.

As the photographer violated the Law on Hiring Non-Resident Workers, her case has been referred to the Labour Affairs Bureau (DSAL) for follow-up.

Under Article 73 of Law No. 16/2021, a first-time offence of hiring illegal workers carries a maximum sentence of two years' imprisonment, while repeat offenders face two to eight years behind bars.

Under the Regulation on Prohi-

bition of Illegal Work, the photographer faces a fine ranging from 20,000 to 50,000 patacas, as well as a two-year ban on engaging in any employment activity in Macau.

Both are students enrolled in the Chinese mainland. ■

Man falls victim to sex service scam, losing 24,000 yuan: PJ

Armindo Neves

A middle-aged male non-resident worker (NRW) fell victim to a sex service scam last Tuesday, losing 24,000 yuan (28,880 patacas), Judiciary Police (PJ) spokesman Ho Ka Weng said during a regular press conference yesterday.

According to Ho, the victim was chatting with someone on a social media platform last Tuesday. The person asked him to download a separate messaging app and claimed that it could provide sexual services. Ho added that the individual then sent a link which, when clicked on, led to a webpage displaying multiple photos of women.

The victim was instructed to complete a series of voting tasks before an encounter with his chosen woman could be arranged. Each vote required scanning a QR code and making a payment via an electronic wallet. The scammer claimed that the points earned

through voting could later be redeemed for cash.

The victim ultimately made around 100 payments, but the other party refunded only the first two, according to Ho.

The remaining funds were never returned, and no sexual services were ever provided. Realising that he had been defrauded, the victim reported the case to the Judiciary Police, Ho said. ■



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

- Photo: Armindo Neves

Mercury drops 2°C as dry, sunny weather expected later this week: SMG

Khalel Vallo

According to the seven-day forecast on the Meteorological and Geophysical Bureau's (SMG) website yesterday, temperatures dropped yesterday by about 2.0 degrees C under the influence of the northeast monsoon, with sunny and dry weather expected towards the latter part of the week.

The local observatory recorded a minimum temperature of 21.4 degrees C at its Taipa Grande weather station at 7:30 a.m. yesterday, about 2.0 degrees C lower than the previous day. Minimum temperatures in other areas ranged from 22 degrees C to 23 degrees C, according to the forecast.

The observatory forecasts sunny weather with periods of cloudiness today and tomorrow. Temperatures are expected to gradually rise today, with the maximum forecast to reach 31 degrees C.

The observatory expects the territory to be generally sunny and dry from the latter part of this week through early next week as an upper-air anticyclone influences the region. ■



This infographic downloaded from the Meteorological and Geophysical Bureau's (SMG) website yesterday shows its seven-day forecast.

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Macau Weather

DRY.
CLOUDY APART FROM SUNNY PERIODS.
FORCE 3 TO 4 NORTH TO NORTHEASTERLY WINDS.
RELATIVE HUMIDITY WILL RANGE BETWEEN 45% AND 75%.



22°C~29°C

Source: SMG

‘Brazilian Body Beats’ show celebrates China-Brazil Cultural Year

Sherwin Hng

The 38th Macao International Music Festival (MIMF) presented yesterday a special performance by Brazilian body percussion group Barbatuques*, who use the human body as a musical instrument for a unique blend of collective harmony, solos, improvisation, and interactive performance, according to a statement by the Macao Cultural Affairs Bureau (IC).

The opening ceremony for the performance, titled “Brazilian Body Beats”, was held in the lobby of the Macao Cultural Centre (CCM) yesterday evening, marking a key event under the China-Brazil Cultural Year. The event was organised by the bureau in conjunction with the Office of the Commissioner of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People’s Republic of China in the Macao Special Administrative Region and the Chinese Embassy in Brazil.

Addressing the ceremony, Acting Commissioner Cheng Lei pointed out that the China-Brazil Cultural Year is a major cultural exchange initiative implementing the important consensus reached by

the heads of state of both nations to strengthen mutual understanding.

Cheng underlined Macau’s historical role as a bridge for cultural exchange between East and West, pointing out that more than 200 years ago, the first group of Chinese tea farmers travelled via Macau to Brazil to cultivate tea and pass on their expertise. Leveraging the institutional strengths of “One Country, Two Systems”, he noted that Macau continues to serve as a crucial platform between China and Portuguese-speaking countries (PSCs), adding that the Commissioner’s Office will continue to leverage diplomatic resources to promote bilateral people-to-people exchanges through Macau.

Cultural Affairs Bureau (IC) President Deland Leong Wai Man stressed that China and Brazil share long and vibrant civilisations. She noted that 2026 has been designated the China-Brazil Cultural Year to deepen cultural ties, promote bilateral exchanges, and strengthen connections between the two peoples.

Leong added that inviting Barbatuques to make their debut at the Macao International Music



Acting Commissioner of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the PRC in the MSAR Cheng Lei (centre), Cultural Affairs Bureau (IC) President Deland Leong Wai Man (third from left) and other officiating guests cut the ribbon to mark the opening of the “Brazilian Body Beats” show at the Macao Cultural Centre (CCM) in Nape yesterday evening.

— Photo: Sherwin Hng

Festival highlights Macau’s role as a “precise interlocutor” between China and Portuguese-speaking countries.

The People’s Republic of China and the Federative Republic of Brazil established diplomatic relations on August 15, 1974. Brazil is the biggest Portuguese-speaking country by area (8.5 million km²) and population (214 million). Brazil accounts for around 80 percent of all Portuguese speakers worldwide.

Among upcoming highlights, the Lisboa String Trio and Sofia Vitória will present “Concrete Songs and Other Stories” on October 23 at 8:00 p.m. at the CCM Small Auditorium, blending classical music, jazz improvisation, and world rhythms featuring

Portuguese guitar, double bass, sitar, and vocal performance.

Additionally, outreach activities under the “Floating Notes Across the City” series, including “Street Eco-Percussion” and “Piano Around Town”, will take place in various districts across the city from October 10 to November 22 to take cultural resources directly into the community.

For more information, please visit the festival’s webpage at www.icm.gov.mo/fimm or its official Facebook page (Macao International Music Festival). ■

*The band’s name honours Fernando Barba, the musician who founded the group in São Paulo in 1995. In Portuguese, “barba”

means “beard”. This was a fitting nickname, as Fernando was known for his prominent beard. “Batiques” is a Brazilian Portuguese term referring to percussive rhythms, drumming, or beat-making. This perfectly describes the group’s signature style, where they create music entirely using their bodies – clapping, snapping, tapping, and vocalising. Put together, Barbatuques essentially means “Barba’s beats”. The name is a tribute to the founder and encapsulates the group’s unique approach to making music. The group also coined a related verb, “barbatucar”, which means to play or make music using the body as an instrument. – DeepSeek

Local deaf ping-pong players clinch silver in Penang



Members of Macau-China Deaf Table Tennis Women’s Delegation posing for a group photo during a awards ceremony held at Persatuan Ping-Pong Pulau Pinang in Penang, Malaysia. – Photo courtesy of Macau Sports Association of the Deaf

Armindo Neves

The Macau Sports Association of the Deaf (MSAD) announced in a statement yesterday that local deaf ping-pong players clinched a silver medal at the Asia Pacific Deaf Table Tennis Championships 2026.

According to the statement, the contest was organised by the Asia Pacific Deaf Sports Confederation (APDSC). The competition is taking place at Persatuan Ping-Pong Pulau Pinang in Penang, Malaysia, with the opening ceremony held on Sunday.

The women’s team competition adopted a round-robin format, with a total of five teams vying for medals, the statement said.

The athletes representing

Macau in the women’s team event were Tai Sok Ieng, Ng Weng In and Lam Ut Mui.

According to the statement, the team performed “exceptionally well, displaying excellent teamwork and securing victories in several tough matches”: first, a 3–1 win over Kyrgyzstan, then a 3–0 shutout against Kuwait, followed by a 3–1 victory over Hong Kong-China, according to the statement.

The team lost only to a strong Indian side (0–3), ultimately finishing second overall in the round-robin tournament to secure the silver medal, the statement said, adding that India finished first and Hong Kong-China finished third. ■

Online space science quiz ‘Space Dream – Reaching for the Stars’ starts

Khalel Vallo

The Education and Youth Development Bureau (DSEDJ) said in a statement yesterday that it has organised an online space science quiz through November 5 to promote science education and raise young students’ interest in aerospace technology.

The “Space Dream – Reaching for the Stars” (“航天夢—問鼎蒼穹”) competition is open to local junior secondary students and schools for local children in the Guangdong-Macao In-Depth Cooperation Zone in Hengqin, the statement said.

Participants can access the online platform (<https://edum-2026.zccmo.top>) through November 5 and answer questions on aerospace knowledge during designated periods to enter a lucky draw, the statement said, adding that students who participate more frequently will have more opportunities to enter the draw.

The results and prize collection arrangements will be announced in mid-November, the statement noted, adding that details are available in the competition regulations (<https://edum-2026.zccmo.top/about>).

The bureau said the competition is being held amid the historic

opportunity of Hong Kong’s first payload specialist taking part in the Shenzhou-23* manned spaceflight mission, with the initiative aimed at deepening young students’ understanding of the country’s aerospace development.

The local government has also launched a special website themed “Sharing the Space Dream, Joining the Cause of Rejuvenation” (“同圓航天夢 共襄復興業”) and a “Macao Family Letter” (“澳門家書”) at (<https://www2.gcs.gov.mo/aerospacedream/postcard/letter?lang=zhant>), the statement said, underlining that other DSEDJ activities feature a student writing competition titled “A Letter to an Astronaut” (“給航天員的一封信”), the “Space Dream – A New Journey” (“航天夢—新征

程”) painting competition and the “Heading to Space – China’s Manned Spaceflight Journey” (“航向太空—中國載人航天之旅”) touring exhibition. ■

*Shenzhou 23 is a Chinese crewed spaceflight launched on May 24, to conduct research and station maintenance aboard the Tiangong space station. The mission crew consists of commander Zhu Yangzhu, flight operator Zhang Zhiyuan, and payload specialist Lai Ka-ying, who made history as the first taikonaut from Hong Kong. As part of the crew’s operational objectives, Zhang is scheduled to complete a full-year stay in orbit to evaluate long-duration spaceflight effects ahead of the nation’s planned lunar missions. – Gemini



This screenshot downloaded yesterday shows the online Chinese-language platform for the “Space Dream – Reaching for the Stars” (“航天夢—問鼎蒼穹”) quiz.



‘In Search of the Playwright’: A theatre production investigates itself

Review by William Chan

“In Search of the Playwright”, created by local arts organisation PO Art Studio, initially presents itself as an immersive mystery. I attended the final rehearsal on September 24. The audience enters the shell of a theatre that was completely gutted by a fire in the 1980s that killed the entire cast and the theatre’s staff. The actors in the play are the ghosts of the cast members who perished. Divided into “speculators” and “investigators”, we, as “investigators”, follow the performers through the theatre, while other members of the audience who were assigned to be “speculators” sit in the seats.

The investigation, however, is only the production’s frame. Its real subject is the precarious process of putting on a play or any theatrical show: securing money, negotiating with authorities, satisfying patrons, filling seats, and protecting artistic intentions from institutional pressure. The mystery draws us in, but the more revealing drama concerns the people and compromises behind a performance.

Theatre under pressure

A group of audience members, including myself, followed João, the theatre director played by Tsang Wai Dick. João is trying to mount a production while struggling with operating costs, institutional expectations, and pressure from management. A wealthy patron also demands an intimate encounter with the leading actress in exchange for his support.

These conflicts show how artistic work depends on people who may also seek control over it. Tsang gives João an intense, practical frustration. He is not merely suffering from artistic doubt; he is trying to make the accounts work and convince people to care about a show before it opens. The scenes in the Macao Cultural Centre’s dressing room reveal theatre as labour rather than glamour.

The production encourages us to identify the person responsible for the fire. Yet the clues do not produce a conventional solution. Three characters are implicated, and responsibility becomes distributed rather than isolated. The evidence forms a knot instead of revealing a single culprit.

Audiences expecting a murder mystery or a fully developed live-action role-playing experience may be disappointed. The interaction between actors and the audience is limited to small tasks and brief exchanges. The clues function less as evidence than as devices leading us towards the production’s larger ideas.

That limitation is meaningful. We remain constrained by a script. This becomes explicit when the characters realise

Cast members perform during a live production of *In Search of the Playwright* last month. – Photos provided by PO Art Studio



that they are fictional creations, and so are we. To escape their cycle of death, they must find the playwright to rewrite the ending for the cast members.

The sharper critique

The funniest section involves the cast seeking audience members with theatrical experience. Audience members who have worked in theatre become targets of suspicion of being the writer and face playful interrogation. Audience members familiar with the production team create spontaneous inside jokes, making the performance feel socially alive. Yet the experience also depends heavily on the people nearby and their willingness to participate.

The discussions about budgets, bureaucracy, empty houses, and “free tickets that no one wants” are also dense

because they are painfully accurate, especially to the local situation. The theatre’s reconstruction adds a broader critique: cultural spaces may be developed as leisure destinations while the artistic labour within them receives less attention.

“In Search of the Playwright” is uneven as a mystery game, but persuasive as an examination of theatre-making. Its most interesting question is not “Who started the fire?” but “Who has the authority to decide how the story ends?” By placing the audience inside that struggle, PO Art Studio turns the production process itself into the performance’s central drama – and leaves us wondering whether the elusive playwright they chase is really an absent artist, or something far less poetic: the unseen apparatus holding the red pen.

Girl hit by car when crossing on red light: police

Sherwin Hng

A Public Security Police Force (PSP) spokesperson confirmed to the *Post* by phone yesterday that an eight-year-old girl from the Chinese mainland was injured when she crossed the road when the pedestrian light was red and was hit by a private car in Nape yesterday.

According to the PSP spokesperson, police received a report at about 3:18 p.m. regarding a traffic accident involving a private car and a pedestrian on Avenida Dr. Sun Yat-Sen (孫逸仙大馬路) near Sands Macao in Nape.

The girl was found lying on the ground near a pedestrian crossing

and appeared to be in pain. She was accompanied by her mother and rushed by ambulance to the public Conde de São Januário Hospital Centre for treatment.

A Fire Services Bureau (CB) spokesman said the girl suffered a suspected fracture to her right ankle and multiple abrasions. Her condition was stable.

The private car was driven by a local man in his 60s. A breathalyser test showed that he had no alcohol in his system.

As the girl is under 16, no penalties will be brought against her, police added. ■



Fire Services Bureau (CB) officers tend to the injured girl lying on the ground, accompanied by her mother, while one of her shoes lies on the road following the accident on Avenida Dr. Sun Yat-Sen in Nape yesterday. – Pixelated photo courtesy of TDM

Sands China, NBA launches raft of activities for The NBA China Games

Rui Pastorin

The Dallas Mavericks and the Houston Rockets are set to play two pre-season games at The NBA China Games 2026 this Friday and Sunday at The Venetian Arena in Cotai, with a variety of concurrent events presented by Sands China and the National Basketball Association (NBA) ranging from the expanded NBA HOUSE to Saturday's star-studded NBA Fan Day.

The free-admission NBA HOUSE opens from today through Sunday at The Venetian Macao's Cotai Expo Halls A and B from 11:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m. According to a Sands China statement on Monday, this year's NBA HOUSE features nearly 30 global brand partners and exhibitors while highlighting everything from basketball and interactive technology to a newly upgraded "Merchandise Village" and an over 1,500 square metre F&B area. Interactive experiences and exhibition zones including team-themed areas are also showcased.

NBA HOUSE will also feature fan interaction opportunities with headlining NBA legends*, while two viewing parties will also be held at the event. Moreover, there will be performances from South Korean Girl Group "KiiiKiii" and Filipino boyband SB19, while EVAN and MIRROR member Keung To (姜濤) from Hong Kong will make special appearances, the statement said.

Meanwhile, Sands China's Sands Cares programme and NBA Cares are co-organising the "NBA Cares x Sands Cares Community Impact Week 2026" from today through Sunday with



This photo provided by Sands China on Monday promotes The NBA China Games 2026 at The Venetian Macao in Cotai.

five-themed activities: "Youth Day", "Tip-off", "School Day", "Health and Wellness Day", and the "Community Basketball Carnival", taking NBA Legends and current players to visit local communities.

"By bringing a world-class basketball event into the local community, the Impact Week aims to inspire positive youth development, foster social inclusion and promote greater awareness of physical and mental well-being", the statement said.

The NBA Fan Day this Saturday is another highlight, taking place at 3:30 p.m. at the 14,000-seat arena at The Venetian Macao. It will feature performances from artistes across Asia including South Korean K-pop star EVAN (aka HEESEUNG), and Keung To, hosted by rapper-actor MC Jin, according to the statement.

The event will also feature fan engagement activities with both teams, while other highlights include a skills challenge, three-point contest,

shooting stars challenge, and a slam dunk show featuring professional dunkers, the statement said.

Mavericks, Rockets go head-to-head this Friday, Sunday

The Mavericks and The Rockets will face-off on Friday at 7:30 p.m., and on Sunday at 5:30 p.m.

Dallas's roster features 2016 NBA Champion and nine-time NBA All-Star Kyrie Irving, 2025–26 Rookie of the Year Cooper Flag, and 2026 No. 9 pick Morez Johnson Jr., while Houston features two-time NBA champion and 16-time All-Star Kevin Durant, two-time NBA All-Star Alperen Sengun, and 2024–25 All-Defensive First Team selection Amen Thompson, the statement said.

One can find more details, along with registration for selected performances, on www.NBACHinaGames.com. ■

*Read more on <https://macaupostdaily.com/news/29444>.

Gongbei Customs seizes 17 smuggled peony plants, palm family seeds from Macau

Ida Cheong

Zhuhai's Gongbei Customs announced in a statement on Monday that it recently intercepted two separate travellers attempting to take unapproved plants and plant seeds into the Chinese mainland, posing significant biosecurity risks.

In the first case, customs officers discovered 24.7 kg of palm family plant seeds in a traveller's luggage, according to the statement.

In the second case, officers seized 17 peony plants (with soil) weighing 19.1 kg from another inbound passenger, the statement said.

According to relevant laws and regulations, seeds, seedlings, and other plant materials with reproductive capacity, along with soil, are strictly prohibited from being brought or

mailed into the Chinese mainland. The statement added that customs officers have lawfully confiscated the items, and the cases are currently undergoing further processing.

Plant seeds and plants carry a high risk of harbouring diseases and pests, the statement noted, adding that unchecked introduction can spread harmful organisms, severely threatening agricultural and forestry production, food security, and national biosecurity.

Gongbei Customs reminded the public in the statement that, in accordance with relevant laws and regulations, importing live animals and plants across the Chinese mainland border without prior approval is strictly prohibited. Violators will face legal liability. ■



This undated and pixelated handout photo provided by Gongbei Customs on Monday shows the suspected smuggler and her contraband consisting of 17 peony plants (with soil) weighing 19.1 kg seized by customs officers.

IIM to spotlight Macau's fishing roots, community in upcoming exhibition

Rui Pastorin

Tourists and locals alike will have a chance to learn more about Macau's fishing community through photographs in an upcoming exhibition at the Maritime Museum near A-Ma Temple in Barra.

Organised by the International Institute of Macau (IIM), the trilingual exhibition "People and the Sea: The Fishermen's Community in Macao" features photos from the museum.

An IIM statement noted that the exhibition also includes research from Mariana Pereira, a researcher at IIM and the Heritage for Global Challenges Research Centre at the University of York in the UK, and doctoral student Jack Wang Deyi. Both are working at IIM on related projects, the statement said.

Pereira also cooperates with Leverhulme Trust, a large national grant-making organisation in the UK that was established in 1925, for the exhibition.

With Macau's roots as a fishing village, the statement pointed out that the exhibition aims to

"portray a brief history of the fishermen's community, how they practised their profession, fishing in particular, reinforcing the importance of their customs and traditions, which are largely preserved and recognised in items of Macau's intangible cultural heritage", using photos as an "expres-

sive portrayal" of the community.

The exhibition will have its opening ceremony at 6:00 p.m. next Thursday, after which members of the public can visit it according to the museum's opening hours from 10:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. from Wednesdays to Mondays. It is closed on Tuesdays. ■



This poster provided by the International Institute of Macau (IIM) yesterday promotes the "People and the Sea: The Fishermen's Community in Macao" slated to open at the Maritime Museum next Thursday.

Macau Industrial Products Show to feature GBA 'Super Hamburger Festival' 1st time



Industrial Association of Macau President Lei Si Tai (left), Industrial Association of Macau Chairman Fong Son Kin (centre), and MacExpo Exhibition Managing Director Lo Tak Chong address Monday's press conference at the association's headquarters about the 12th Macau Industrial Products Show.

— Photo: MacExpo

Staff Reporter

The annual Macau Industrial Products Show will kick off at the Macau Fisherman's Wharf Convention and Exhibition Centre tomorrow. This year's fair will feature a "Super Hamburger Festival" for the first time.

The organiser – the Industrial Association of Macau – held a press conference on Monday at its headquarters in Nam Van district to announce details of the 12th Macau Industrial Products Show.

The four-day fair will be open from 1:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. tomorrow, from 11:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. on Friday and Saturday, and from 11:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. on Sunday.

The organisation of the fair will be managed by MacExpo Exhibition.

According to the press conference, about 130 companies will join the fair across 172 booths set up in eight themed zones.

The "Super Hamburger Festival" for the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area (GBA), which was launched last year, will be held in Macau for the first time as part of the 12th Macau Industrial Products Show.

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

The GBA Super Hamburger Festival features burger brands from various GBA cities and other regions in the Chinese mainland. The festival was first held in Zhongshan in December last year,

followed by editions in Shenzhen in March and May this year.

Admission to the 12th Macau Industrial Products Show is free. Those driving to the fair can benefit from three hours of free parking. ■

HK retains position as world's freest economy: report

HONG KONG – Hong Kong has once again been ranked as the world's freest economy, according to the Economic Freedom of the World 2026 Annual Report released yesterday by the Fraser Institute.

Among the five areas of assessment, Hong Kong maintained its top position in "freedom to trade internationally" and secured second place in "regulation."

A spokesperson for the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) government noted that the report reaffirmed Hong Kong's strengths as a free-market economy, alongside its open, efficient and fair business environment.

Amid increasing global economic uncertainties and rising trade protectionism, Hong Kong remains firmly committed to maintaining its free port status, zero-tariff policy, and simple and low tax regime, providing a secure, stable, fair, predictable and internationalized business and investment environment for investors and entrepreneurs from

around the world.

The spokesperson said that as China remains committed to high-standard, two-way opening up and continues to achieve breakthroughs in technological innovation, it serves as a major stabilizing force and driving engine for global economic growth. Under the "One Country, Two Systems" framework, Hong Kong enjoys the strong support of the motherland and maintains close connections with the world.

Looking ahead, with the staunch support of the country, the HKSAR government will continue to work with all sectors of the community to further enhance Hong Kong's roles as "four centers and one hub" and accelerate the development of the Northern Metropolis to inject stronger impetus into social and economic growth, open up broader development prospects for local enterprises and the public, and provide greater opportunities for enterprises, investors and talent worldwide, the spokesperson added.

— Xinhua

New professions show China's industrial, livelihood progress

Analysis

BEIJING – A stream of new occupations is emerging at the forefront of China's new technologies, industries and business models, mirroring industrial upgrading and improvements in people's livelihoods.

In the low-altitude economy sector alone, newly added positions such as drone swarm flight planners, low-altitude logistics specialists, and low-altitude intelligent connected system administrators stand out in the eighth batch of new professions recently released by the Ministry of Human Resources and Social Security and other government departments.

Occupations tied to the booming digital economy are also reshaping work in China, including AI engineering technicians, intelligent connected vehicle testers, embodied intelligent robot application technicians, and microgrid administrators, among others.

The release of 11 new occupations and 23 new job types in the eighth batch marks a fresh update to the country's occupational catalog. Such updates serve as a talent "barometer" reflecting the pulse of China's industrial transformation, industry insiders noted.

Take the low-altitude economy for example. The first batch of new occupations, released in 2019, introduced the drone pilots to meet the urgent demand for drone operations. The second batch added drone assembly and maintenance technicians, a role created to close the gap in equipment operation and maintenance for the emerging drone industry.

As the drone industry has grown, new positions in the seventh and eighth batches have taken on

responsibilities that expand from single technical operations to cross-cutting application fields such as logistics delivery, cultural tourism operations, and urban governance.

The continuous release of new occupations reflects China's industrial system moving toward higher-end, smarter and greener development, said Li Qiang, vice president of online job-seeking platform Zhaopin.

"Policy support expands and underpins the talent supply, while the job market absorbs in tandem. New occupations are both a precise mapping of the industrial development trends and a positive guide for the talent market," Li said.

Beyond industrial upgrading, changes in China's new occupations also reflect evolving demands in people's livelihoods, with new jobs in the modern services sector continuing to expand.

Industry insiders noted that as people's quality of life has been improving, producer services have moved toward specialization and the higher end of the value chain, while consumer services have developed toward higher quality, greater diversity, and convenience.

The size of China's service sector is expected to expand beyond 100 trillion yuan in the 15th Five-Year Plan period (2026-2030), according to the National Development and Reform Commission, the country's top economic planner.

Industry insiders say the consumer services sector will be explored to unlock economic growth potential, with broad scope for developing residential services, health services, aged care, and childcare. Therefore, progress in this sector is expected to generate

even more new jobs.

China has been dynamically updating its occupational classification catalog. Since 2019, the country has issued eight batches of 121 new occupations.

In 2020, the second batch introduced health-related new professions including healthcare attendants and rehabilitation assistive technology consultants. Subsequent batches continued this momentum, adding niche occupations and job types such as ski patrol rescuers, family education instructors, age-friendly renovation designers, and incense-making artisans.

China's State Council has issued a plan to implement the employment-first strategy during the 15th Five-Year Plan period, calling for stronger synergy among macroeconomic policies on employment and highlighting efforts to stabilize employment in labor-intensive industries, expand employment in the service sector, and tap employment potential in emerging fields.

"The emergence of new occupations is a direct response to new applications of technologies, fresh market changes, and new consumer demands," said Li Chang'an, a researcher at the Academy of China Open Economy Studies under the University of International Business and Economics.

"Every update of the occupational catalog will inject more talent-driven momentum into the country's industrial development in the future alongside the advancement of the occupational standard system, alignment between talent cultivation and supply, and rules and systems to safeguard the progress of the sector," Li added.

— AFP

THE ROYAL COMMONWEALTH SOCIETY
Hong Kong Branch

The Royal Commonwealth Society, Hong Kong Branch invites you to

A Club Lunch & Book Talk with Stefan Hammond

More Sex, Better Zen, Faster Bullets:
The Encyclopedia of Hong Kong Film (2020)

7 October 2026 (Wednesday)
12pm - 2pm
23/F, The Library, Club Lusitano
Members: \$500 | Guests: \$600

STEFAN HAMMOND
AUTHOR

ANDREW CHAN
MODERATOR

Join us for an insightful exploration of the history of Hong Kong's film industry, tracing its golden age under the Shaw Brothers and Golden Harvest, the global rise of martial arts and crime dramas, and the legendary star power of icons like Sammo Hung and Jackie Chan.

Human Rights Council adopts China-proposed resolution on accessibility for all

GENEVA – The 63rd session of the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) on Monday adopted by consensus the draft resolution titled “Promoting accessibility for the full enjoyment of all human rights by all” proposed by China on behalf of 47 countries.

Jia Guide, China’s permanent representative to the UN Office at Geneva and other international organizations in Switzerland, said during his introductory remarks that building an accessible environment provides important safeguards for people of all groups to participate equally and conveniently in social life and to fully enjoy their human rights.

This draft resolution seeks to promote accessibility and an age-friendly environment in the context of population ageing. It also focuses on the opportunities and challenges arising from emerging technologies, including artificial intelligence, and calls upon all countries to prioritize

innovation, inclusiveness, openness, fairness, safety and security in the development and use of emerging digital technologies, with a view to enhancing the accessibility of information and communications, Jia said.

Representatives of Cuba and Egypt, among others, spoke in support of the resolution, commending China for actively promoting the concept of “accessibility for all” and moving forward the accessibility cause.

They believed that the resolution calls for providing technical assistance for developing countries and promoting international cooperation in relevant fields, in line with the needs of developing countries.

In 2024, the UNHRC adopted, for the first time, a resolution under the same title proposed by China, marking the first thematic resolution on accessibility in UN history.

– Xinhua

China urges France, Germany to uphold open cooperation, free trade

BEIJING – China hopes that France and Germany will uphold open cooperation and free trade, observe World Trade Organization (WTO) rules, and refrain from encouraging the European Union (EU) to use protectionist tools at every turn, a spokesperson for the Ministry of Commerce (MOC) said yesterday.

When asked to comment on media reports that France and

Germany had urged the EU to make greater use of trade defense measures and roll out a number of new protectionist tools, the spokesperson said China has always maintained that interdependence is not a risk, intertwined interests do not pose a threat, and open cooperation represents the right path to development.

Protectionism cannot enhance competitiveness, and decoupling

and cutting off supply chains will only harm others without benefiting oneself, the spokesperson said.

As major economies, France and Germany should not politicize trade and economic issues or overstretch the concept of national security. They should avoid going down the wrong path in the wrong way, which would ultimately backfire on themselves, the spokesperson added.

– Xinhua

China firmly opposes US arms sales to China’s Taiwan region: spokesperson

BEIJING – China remains firmly opposed to U.S. arms sales to China’s Taiwan region, Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Guo Jiakun said yesterday, stressing that the country’s position is clear.

Guo made the remarks in response to media reports that Taiwan recently received two

F-16V fighter jets purchased from the United States and plans to receive another 64 within the year.

Guo said the US side needs to implement the important common understandings reached at the meeting between the two countries’ presidents, abide by the one-China principle and the three

China-US joint communiqués, and act prudently on the Taiwan question.

“The Taiwan question is China’s internal affair, and resolving it is a matter for the Chinese ourselves that brooks no external interference,” he said.

– Xinhua

Brewing new trails, Yunnan coffee carries Chinese aroma across Asia-Pacific

Analysis

KUALA LUMPUR – When Thomas Ooi first tasted Yunnan coffee in Beijing in 2015, its savory, almost beef-jerky-like character struck him as unusual. Back then, few in Malaysia’s coffee scene had their eye on beans from Yunnan, a Chinese province better known for tea.

A decade later, everything has changed. Ooi, founder of Ghostbird Coffee Roastery in Kuala Lumpur, imported his first batch of Yunnan specialty beans in 2025, put them on his cafe menu, and watched them sell out in just two months.

The growing popularity reflects a broader regional shift, as coffee from China’s mountainous southwest gains ground beyond its home market, finding new drinkers across the Asia-Pacific and opening fresh avenues for trade, cultural exchange and appreciation of taste.

EMERGING COFFEE ORIGIN

Yunnan sits on the northern fringe of the global coffee-growing “bean belt,” the equatorial zone between the Tropics of Cancer and Capricorn. For centuries, its rolling highlands were known as China’s tea heartland. Over the past two decades, steady investment, improved farming techniques and booming domestic consumption have nurtured a thriving home-grown coffee industry.

Yunnan’s coffee industry spans six core growing zones: Pu’er, Baoshan, Lincang, Dehong, Xishuangbanna and Nujiang, each boasting unique strengths in nurturing specialty coffee. In the first eight months of 2026, the

province exported 11,000 tonnes of coffee with a total value of 450 million yuan.

“I think Yunnan is very interesting, not just because of the coffee varieties themselves. I think the producers from Yunnan are very innovative,” Ooi said, sharing his plan to visit Yunnan’s coffee farms at the end of this year’s harvest season, which will bring along fellow roaster friends eager to see the plantations firsthand.

Malaysia is among Yunnan’s key Asian export destinations. According to the provincial international trade association, Yunnan coffee was exported to 43 countries and regions in 2025, with European and Asian countries being leading destinations for Yunnan’s coffee shipments. Within Asia, Vietnam and Malaysia stand as the two major markets.

CROSS-BORDER BLENDS

For Hanoi coffee specialist Pham Duy Anh, Yunnan beans are steadily winning over Vietnamese consumers, with an increasing number of specialty cafes and roasters now offering them.

He said their appeal lies in improving quality with each harvest and a range of processing methods that suit Vietnamese drinkers seeking new flavors.

“Diverse processing methods like washed, natural, honey and anaerobic have kept the beans from being boxed into a single flavor profile, giving drinkers notes such as mild wine, raisin, guava, tea and watermelon,” Anh said, depicting it as an advantage in a market that values diversity and personalization



A staff member packages Yunnan coffee beans at a coffee shop in Hanoi, Vietnam, last Friday.

– Xinhua

in the coffee experience.

Trade ties between Yunnan and Vietnam have grown beyond simple commodity exchanges, creating an environment that has helped fuel the growing coffee trade between the two sides. Joint initiatives, including the China-Vietnam coffee festival, industry-led trade alliances, enterprise matchmaking and supply-chain field visits, have built deep industry-to-industry connections.

At the Fourth China International Supply Chain Expo in Beijing in June, a 40-square-meter Yunnan-Vietnam-themed coffee booth drew wide attention by highlighting its edge in frontier-based cross-border coffee supply chains.

Cross-border innovation in coffee culture is also taking shape across the Lancang-Mekong basin, which China shares with Myanmar, Laos, Thailand, Cambodia and Vietnam. Omar Ali, co-founder

and general manager of SinoTaste, created “Mekong Coffee with Six Flavors,” a multi-country blended coffee drawing beans from all six Lancang-Mekong nations, after sampling roughly 50 bean lots and testing dozens of formulas.

“When you make a multi-origin blend, the point is not to make one origin stand out. It is about how these coffees complement each other and create something none could achieve on its own,” Omar Ali said. “It mirrors partnerships: every country and culture carries distinct strengths; brought together, they produce new possibilities.”

TO GO FURTHER AFIELD

While Southeast Asia remains at the heart of Yunnan’s Asia-Pacific coffee trade, the beans are travelling much farther – all the way to New Zealand, where they remain a niche but notable newcomer to the

specialty-coffee scene.

New Zealand’s café culture has relied heavily on beans from established Latin American producers such as Brazil and Colombia. But Yunnan green beans have begun appearing at a handful of local roasteries, Radio New Zealand reported.

MQ Coffee, based in Auckland, New Zealand’s largest city, is among the businesses giving Yunnan coffee a foothold in New Zealand. Its co-owner, Wang Yanqi, said the beans have improved markedly in quality in recent years, just as international interest in China as a source of coffee has begun to grow.

The company features Yunnan beans in its training and tasting sessions, putting them side by side with coffees from other origins to give participants a firsthand taste of Yunnan’s distinctive flavor profiles.

Wang noted that some Yunnan coffees have good sweetness and body, allowing their distinctive coffee character to shine through even with milk added.

The company has organized study tours for New Zealand coffee professionals and enthusiasts to visit growing regions inside Yunnan, where they could gain direct insight into local coffee farming and processing practices.

To turn overseas interest into repeat purchases, Yunnan coffee must become more competitive on quality, price and reliability of supply, Wang said.

The quality of Yunnan coffee has improved significantly over the past decade, Ooi said. “Now we are learning about its taste profiles, but we want to understand them more deeply.”

– Xinhua

Purple reign: Philippines seeks to keep grip on ube throne

Cecil Morella with Atish Patel in Tokyo

PADRE GARCIA, Philippines – The Philippine ube has become a trend-setting sensation from Los Angeles to London to Seoul, with the humble yam's bright purple hue drawing queues outside coffee shops and bakeries and millions of views on social media.

But keeping pace with the international boom has proven tricky for the archipelago nation's overwhelmingly smallholder farmers, with yields declining and some unable to commit to the plant's nine-month growing time.

Fears that biopiracy might take a chunk out of the blossoming market, meanwhile, have prompted the government to announce a ban on the export of the raw form of the yam.

Standing in his ube field south of Manila, farmer-exporter Al Bonifacio told AFP he was in favour of doing whatever it took to protect the crop from any growers overseas trying to cash in on the craze.

"Purple is so royal and is very pleasing to the eye," the 59-year-old said with a smile during a visit to his one-hectare ube farm.

"Our greatest fear is, if we are not able to supply ube to the world, someone (else) will step in."

Sold as powder, extract, paste, or frozen puree, ube is easily mixed into coffee, pastries, ice cream, spreads and even make-up.

At a Tokyo gelato shop, ube importer JP Mercado told AFP the Japanese market was expanding rapidly after the craze first hit neighbouring South Korea.

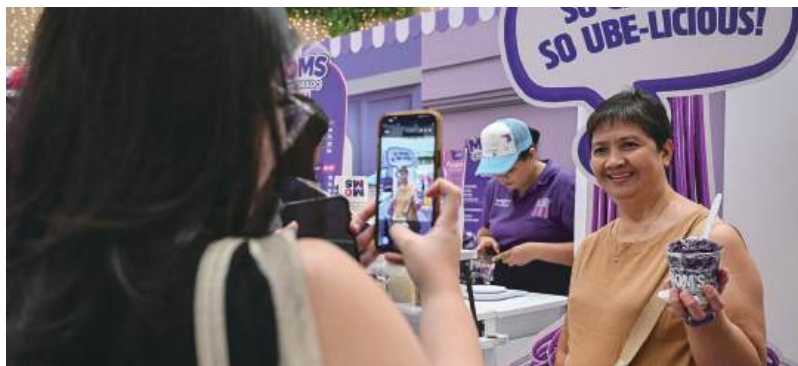
"It's really taken off like wildfire," he said as a batch of powder was slowly stirred into gelato, turning it a bright purple.

"I think social media has been hugely impactful," he said, adding his client list ranged from small cafes to luxury hotels.

Rooted in history

Ube was a staple of Philippine gardens as long as 5,000 years ago, boiled and eaten by families as a substitute to rice when their provisions ran out.

Beloved for its mildly sweet, nutty flavour and velvety texture, it later evolved into a party food, consumed as a jam or stewed with



This photo taken on September 23 shows a woman posing for a photo holding a serving of sweet ube rice porridge (champorado) during a purple yam promotional event at a mall in Quezon City, Metro Manila.

– AFP

sticky rice balls in coconut milk.

Demand exploded locally this decade, most memorably during a purple bread mania that swept the archipelago in the darkest days of the COVID-19 pandemic.

"I'm super-obsessed with ube," university student Kym Trivino told AFP as she sipped an ube-matcha concoction at one of Manila's largest shopping malls.

Baker Diane Bustos said her company now sells seven types of ube cookies.

"It took over matcha. That's really something that we Filipinos should be really proud of," she said, referring to the bright green tea powder popularised by Gwyneth Paltrow and other celebrities.

But as ube mania grows globally, clouds loom at home.

Bonifacio told AFP the country's small farmers widely lacked the facilities for post-harvest storage and processing, while access to marketing and financing lagged.

Planting to harvest takes at least nine months, too long for most Filipino farmers who preferred the shorter growing period for beans, squash or bittergourd to feed their families, the farmer added.

Bonifacio said he had been forced to scour the rest of the country for raw ube to meet his growing export commitments, a process that can double his costs.

"We have the land, but quality planting materials are not always available," Leonilyn Ladao, a local agriculturist, told AFP.

A battle for the future

"Last year's production was just 12,483 tonnes," Jose Zalde Samson, from the country's plant industry

bureau, told AFP of the five-year low.

Industry officials blamed typhoons, which hit key ube farming regions. For the first half of 2026, production was up around 17 percent.

"The government has only started promoting ube in the past two to three years as demand spiked," Samson explained.

"Before the ube craze, it was a niche market," he said, adding it had lagged behind high-value crops like bananas, mangoes and coffee.

With the pressure on, the government is now working on how it can boost supply.

"We are looking at how (the growing season) can be shortened to six months," Samson said.

With neighbours like Thailand and Vietnam now getting into the game, the Philippines is acting to protect its crown.

"We don't want to export it to countries that could use Philippine ube varieties to compete with us," Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel said last month while revealing the ban on raw ube exports.

"We've had data that tubers were being (surreptitiously) exported," Samson said, declining to provide further details.

In Tokyo, ube importer Mercado said he backed the Philippine government's move, which he believed would protect the country's cultural heritage.

"Ube really is, I would say, very interlocked with the Filipino identity," he said.

Bonifacio the farmer agreed.

"(We) are stewards of the ube industry," he said, looking out over his crop.

"We have a stake in this. We have to protect it."

– AFP

Activists demand amnesty for protesters as Thailand marks 1976 massacre

BANGKOK – Activists called for amnesty for people prosecuted under Thailand's strict royal insult law yesterday, during a ceremony marking 50 years since a massacre of demonstrators protesting dictatorship.

A small group shouted "Amnesty 112" from a balcony at Bangkok's Thammasat University, an AFP reporter saw, as around 300 people including politicians and survivors gathered to commemorate the October 6, 1976, killings on the campus.

Under Section 112 of Thailand's criminal code – which was tightened after the 1976 massacre – anyone convicted of insulting, defaming or threatening the king or his family can face a prison sentence of up to 15 years per offence.

Legal observers and rights campaigners say the law is interpreted so broadly that it has become a tool to target dissent.

Nearly 300 people have been charged under the so-called lese majeste law since 2020, including many young people who took part in large-scale protests that year to demand democratic change and reform of the monarchy.

The Thammasat crackdown 50 years ago followed the return from exile of military dictator Thanom Kittikachorn, who had been ousted three years earlier.

Students had gathered to oppose his return. Police and right-

wing groups stormed the campus, shooting, beating and lynching protesters.

The official death toll was 46, although survivors and witnesses believe more than 100 were killed. No state official has been held accountable.

Prime Minister Anutin Charnvirakul was represented at yesterday's ceremony at the university memorial by a junior minister.

"Today we pay tribute and express our condolences for the lives lost," Minister Paradorn Prissanantakul told AFP after laying a wreath.

Asked why the government never held its own service for the victims, he did not answer directly, saying that "the most important lesson from the October incident, on the government side, is to open the floor to everyone who has different opinions, so they can express their voices".

Thammasat survivor Wattana Chaichanasakul had earlier read out the names of those killed, a tradition observed every year.

It is to "remind ourselves that we will never forget our friends because if we do, it means we kill them again", she told the audience.

Current student Thanaporn Singlee, 21, said it was important to mark the anniversary because "Thammasat was a place where people died because of the government".

– AFP

Indonesia says will halt forest destruction for rice paddies

JAKARTA – Indonesia said yesterday it will halt a project to raze several million hectares of forest to clear land for rice production, saying it had reached self-sufficiency levels of the staple grain.

The government launched a programme in 2024 to stop relying on rice imports within five years by clearing three million hectares of land for paddies.

Indonesia is one of the world's most forested countries, and as such a major absorber of planet-warming carbon emissions from mankind's burning of fossil fuel.

It aims to become a net carbon sink by 2030, with forests and other land use absorbing more carbon than they emit.

However, observers have said continuing forest destruction for agriculture and logging, as well as rampant wildfires, could put Indonesia's plans at risk.

President Prabowo Subianto hailed an "important victory" this year after data showed countrywide rice demand had been met with domestic production in one of the world's top consumers of the commodity.

Climate envoy Hashim Djojohadikusumo said yesterday the government's strategic reserve rice stock had reached about 5.3 million tonnes.

"The government sees no further need for expanding rice cultivation areas in the so-called forest areas," said Hashim, who is Prabowo's brother.

He added that the government will focus instead on "intensification measures" using superior seeds, for example, to increase rice yields.

It was not known how much forest had already been replaced by rice paddies before the project was halted.

According to the National Food Agency, a government body that seeks to advance food security, Indonesia produced 34.71 million tonnes of rice in 2025 – exceeding annual demand of 31.19 million tonnes.

Haze from wildfires consuming forests and peatlands in Indonesia has blanketed neighbouring Malaysia and Singapore for weeks.

Hot, dry conditions associated with the El Niño weather phenomenon have fuelled the fires, which are also linked to land clearing.

The Mighty Earth advocacy group welcomed Hashim's announcement.

"This decision renews Indonesia's leadership in showing how to expand agriculture while protecting nature," the NGO's founder, Glenn Hurowitz, said in a statement.

"This decision creates an opportunity for large-scale investments in achieving President Prabowo's goal of restoring 12 million hectares of forest, peat, and other ecosystems," he added.

– AFP

Indonesia collects US\$190 million in fines over forestry violations

JAKARTA – Indonesian authorities have collected US\$190 million in fines from companies working illegally in forestry areas, and seized more than 6.2 million hectares of land, the attorney general announced yesterday.

Indonesia features regularly among the countries with the largest annual forest loss, NGOs have said, with mining, plantations and fires causing the clearance of large tracts of its lush rainforest.

President Prabowo Subianto established a task force last year to enforce forest protection laws and go after companies, including palm

oil and mining firms, found to be in violation of the rules.

The task force can impose and collect fines and reclaim forest land found to have been used illegally.

Yesterday, the task force handed over 13.24 trillion rupiah (US\$740 million) recovered from violating companies, attorney general Sanitiar Burhanuddin told reporters in Jakarta.

The amount included 3.4 trillion rupiah in fines, with the remaining sum coming from taxes and earnings.

Sanitiar said the task force had seized more than 6.2 million hectares of forest area in eight separate operations since last year from non-

compliant companies and individuals.

Another 14,600 hectares were recovered from illegal mining operations.

More than 140,000 hectares from the latest seizure will be given to the forestry ministry to be managed by state-owned palm oil company Agrinas Palma Nusantara, while another 118,000 hectares will be reforested, said Sanitiar.

Prabowo attended a handover ceremony at the attorney general's office, where stacks of money were displayed.

The president said the task force was "saving and securing the state's wealth".

– AFP



Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's Chief Minister Muhammad Sohail Afridi (centre) addresses a protest march organised by the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party in Kohat district of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan, yesterday. Pakistan's Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif urged the party of Imran Khan yesterday to call off a protest march moving through the country's northwest towards Islamabad and re-enter negotiations with the government. – AFP

ICC gives more details about arrest warrants for Taliban ministers

Stéphanie Hamel

THE HAGUE – The International Criminal Court on Monday gave more details about arrest warrants issued last year for two Afghan education ministers accused of committing crimes against humanity through the Taliban government's restrictions on women and girls.

The warrants, for Habibullah Agha, minister of education, and Neda Mohammad Nadeem, minister of higher education, were issued on September 9, 2025 and remained under seal until Monday.

The two officials are accused of gender-based persecution linked to policies that have barred girls aged over 12 from school and excluded women from higher education following the Taliban's return to power in August 2021.

While the ICC warrants were likely to increase international pressure on Taliban authorities, the Afghan government said it does not recognise the body.

"We are bound by the rulings of Islamic Sharia and its courts, not by intelligence entities or so-called courts," chief spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid said in a statement.

"Afghanistan calls on such entities not to make claims beyond their authority and jurisdiction."

The two warrants against the ministers were issued after the ICC, in July 2025, authorised warrants for Afghanistan's Supreme Taliban Leader Haibatullah Akhundzada and Supreme Court President Abdul Hakim Haqqani, parts of which have been made public.

Both Agha and Nadeem have played key roles in implementing the supreme leader's vision for Afghanistan.

"There are reasonable grounds to believe" the suspects committed "the crime against humanity of persecution on gender grounds", the court said.

It said the persecution was directed against women and girls, and the deprivation of their fundamental rights was committed "in connection with" other alleged crimes under the Taliban government's policies, including "imprisonment, torture, rape and

enforced disappearance".

The court said the alleged crimes were committed in Afghanistan from the Taliban's takeover until at least January 20, 2025.

'Worsening' oppression

The ICC's disclosure of the warrants came the same day the UN Human Rights Council urged the Taliban authorities to repeal their "worsening" and "systematic oppression of all women and girls in Afghanistan".

The council's 47 member countries unanimously criticised that discrimination "and the harms that it has entrenched, which are unbearable, unjustifiable and should shock the conscience of humanity".

The ICC's Pre-Trial Chamber II said it decided to unseal all four warrants, with redactions, after concluding that doing so would not unduly affect ongoing investigations and could "prevent the commission of further crimes by the suspects".

Publication could also "promote cooperation by the international community... in relation to the situation in Afghanistan", it said.

Afghans across the country have told AFP journalists of severe mental health problems tied to the education ban, with teenage girls and women mostly staying at home.

Afghan universities are now men-only zones, where smartphones are banned and students can be chastised if their beards are not long enough.

Some women and girls have tried to continue their education by studying online, but their efforts are hampered by internet and electricity problems across Afghanistan.

Women are increasingly absent from public life and need to abide by a strict dress code when they leave home, covering everything but their eyes.

They are banned from most jobs and a host of public places, including parks, and must have a close male relative escort them on long journeys.

The higher education ban has led to staff shortages in hospitals, multiple healthcare workers have told AFP, as women are no longer allowed to qualify as doctors. – AFP

'We don't need US bases': Japanese protest after Marine held for murder

TOKYO – Around 100 Japanese protesters enraged by a woman's alleged murder at the hands of a US Marine rallied outside the US embassy in Tokyo yesterday to protest "American soldiers' violence".

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

Police said Sunday they had arrested a 20-year-old US Marine stationed on Okinawa on suspicion of killing a 39-year-old woman at a hotel in the city of Naha and stealing her wallet.

The case has sparked public outrage, with Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi dubbing the killing a "heinous crime".

Protest organiser Sorane Sakihama, a 24-year-old Okinawa native, told the crowd at yesterday's rally: "With a far higher proportion of bases in Okinawa than in any other part of Japan, locals are exposed to the highest risk of harm at the hands of US soldiers in the country."

"The thought that we must raise our children in such circumstances feels utterly unjust," she said.

"It fills me with nothing but anger and sadness."

Protesters held placards reading "no more American soldiers' violence" and "Okinawa is not your amusement park!", and chanted: "We don't need US bases in Okinawa."

Under a 1960 agreement, Japan lacks primary jurisdiction over crimes committed by US military personnel while on duty.

Even if crimes are committed while off-duty, as long as a suspect remains on base, they will not be handed over to Japan until they are indicted.

In the latest case, Kyodo News reported that a police officer detained the suspect as he walked alone on a street in Naha's entertainment district.

'Keeping a close eye'

Protester Naoko Fujihata, 67, long frustrated by what she sees as Tokyo's reluctance to come out strongly against crimes committed by US military personnel, said she wanted the foreign troops to leave.

Fujihata told AFP she would be "keeping a close eye" on Okinawa's new governor, Genta Koja, whose predecessor had pushed for a major US base to be moved off the island.

Koja, 42, has accepted a government plan to keep the US Marine Corps' Futenma air base on Okinawa's main island, but to move it to a less populated area.

Kyodo and other local media reported that Koja plans to discuss reducing the burden of US bases in Okinawa with Takaichi when they meet today.

Since the Marine's arrest, Takaichi has urged US authorities to ensure "full cooperation with the investigation" and "strict discipline among US military personnel".

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

Last year, a Japanese court sentenced a US Marine to seven years in prison for choking and attempting to rape a woman.

In 2017, a US military base worker was sentenced to life in prison for the rape and murder of a woman in Okinawa. – AFP

India opposition leaders briefly detained in election protest

NEW DELHI – India's opposition leader Rahul Gandhi was briefly detained by police yesterday during a march protesting against the Election Commission, demanding its chief resign and alleging wrongdoing during a revision of voter rolls.

An AFP reporter saw Gandhi, a leader of the Congress Party, standing on a police barricade and waving an Indian flag. Officers detained him briefly, along with other lawmakers, and then released them soon after.

Opposition parties began their march from parliament towards the Election Commission of India (ECI), but were stopped by heavy police deployments. Some politicians sat

down on the street to wait.

Protests began on Friday, demanding that commission chief Gyanesh Kumar step down.

Opposition politicians have accused the commission of acting at the behest of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party.

The ECI has rejected allegations of wrongdoing, saying the revision process is aimed at ensuring the accuracy and integrity of electoral rolls.

Kumar has not commented publicly. "Gyanesh, it's done, bro," placards read, as well as signs alleging electoral manipulation.

Opposition leaders pressed their demands for greater transparency in

the revision of voter lists, alleging that changes to the rolls could disenfranchise eligible voters.

The protest was part of a wider campaign against the Election Commission's Special Intensive Revision of electoral rolls.

The issue of voter deletion was reignited by a report in September by *The Indian Express* newspaper, which said two of the ECI's three members had formally objected at least 14 times to key decisions linked to the voter roll revision.

The news report claimed the names of 130 million citizens had been deleted since the exercise began in 2025. – AFP

N Korea says Seoul landmine accusation deserves 'punishment'

SEOUL – A South Korean investigation that concluded North Korea was to blame for landmine blasts inside the Demilitarised Zone last month was a violation of sovereignty, Pyongyang said yesterday, warning of "sure punishment".

The statement from the North's foreign ministry came hours after Seoul said it was considering measures to force an apology over the blasts, which injured three South Korean soldiers.

A joint South Korea-UN investigation whose findings were released Monday concluded that the landmines had been placed inside the Demilitarised Zone (DMZ) by North Korean forces about a year ago, something Pyongyang has denied.

Seoul called on the nuclear-armed North to remove any other mines planted on the southern side of the Military Demarcation Line that runs through the DMZ, the heavily fortified frontier that has divided the Korean Peninsula since

the 1953 armistice.

The North Korean foreign ministry yesterday called the investigation results a "grave provocation never to be overlooked and a wanton violation of our sovereignty that deserves sure punishment".

The statement carried by state media went on to label the landmine accusations a "premeditated farce" that created a "new danger of war".

"If a jackboot or a spark of fire from (South Korea) goes even a millimetre beyond the border to violate our territory, the border guard forces of (North Korea) will take an immediate and powerful counteraction," it said.

Seoul's military said earlier it was weighing unspecified actions aimed at forcing an apology from Pyongyang.

"We are not ruling out any options or prejudging anything when it comes to additional measures," defence ministry spokeswoman Chung Bin-na told reporters yesterday.

Landmine incidents in the DMZ have previously heightened tensions between the two Koreas, which remain technically at war.

In 2015, two South Korean soldiers were seriously wounded in a landmine blast on the southern side of the DMZ, with one losing both legs.

Seoul concluded at the time that North Korean troops had crossed the Military Demarcation Line to plant the mines, an accusation Pyongyang denied.

Since 2024, Pyongyang's military has laid mines and built anti-tank barriers along the frontier as part of efforts to permanently seal it off.

During the operation, North Korea also blew up the northern sections of inter-Korean roads no longer in use.

In its yesterday statement, the North Korean foreign ministry argued that the latest blast was being used by Seoul "to brand our fortification of the southern border... as a 'military invasion' and delay" it. – AFP

'Gen Z has risen up': Tens of thousands demand better education in France

PARIS — A quarter of a million demonstrators took to the streets across France yesterday as unions and teachers joined high school students demanding better learning conditions in protests that later descended into sporadic clashes with security forces.

Students have blocked the entrances to hundreds of high schools for 15- to 17-year-olds since late September, complaining of missing teachers, overloaded timetables, dilapidated classrooms and buildings that cannot cope with rising temperatures.

Rights groups, unions and the students have accused authorities of using disproportionate force. A teenager lost a hand on Monday after police fired a stun grenade, while another student reportedly lost several teeth last week after being struck by a police launcher round.

At Paris's Place de la République, protesters gathered beneath banners demanding better-funded schools.

Two men in climbing gear scaled the nearby monument, where they unfurled a plastic banner reading "Neglected schools, sacrificed youth".

"Gen Z has risen up and wants to be heard," 19-year-old Lilia told AFP at a massive march in central Paris, adding she hoped President Emmanuel Macron would listen.

The unrest comes ahead of a 2027 election to choose Macron's successor, with far-right candidate Marine Le Pen riding high in the polls despite a graft conviction.

An AFP reporter described the Paris march as largely peaceful, but tensions flared near its endpoint in the east of the capital as police fired tear gas and some demonstrators threw rocks at a line of officers carrying riot shields.



A protester gestures in front of police officers during a demonstration of high-school students, in Paris yesterday, as part of a nationwide protest movement over learning conditions. — AFP

Police officials said that "300 hostile individuals" were attempting to confront officers.

Another AFP reporter saw a young man bleeding from a head wound being treated by volunteer medics.

The interior ministry said 256,000 people had joined demonstrations across the country.

'At war'

Prime Minister Sébastien Lecornu condemned violence linked to the protests, telling lawmakers there was "no room for tolerance of violence".

"Burning down a high school does not improve the state of high school buildings," he told parliament, rejecting accusations the government had ordered "police repression" against protesters.

While many protests have been peaceful,

some demonstrators have started fires, destroyed bus shelters or clashed with riot police.

Police have responded with batons, tear gas and riot-control rounds.

The government says 215 students and 715 police officers have been injured since the start of the movement.

A 15-year-old lost a hand to a sting-ball grenade fired by riot officers in the northern town of Lens on Monday.

In Metz, prosecutors requested a police inquiry after video footage circulated appearing to show a plainclothes officer inappropriately touching a detained female pupil younger than 15.

The government has sought to address the students' grievances, while accusing the hard-left France Unbowed (LFI) party of encouraging the movement.

Veteran LFI presidential candidate Jean-Luc Mélenchon has strongly supported the protests, while calling for non-violent methods.

Thousands of arrests

Thomas, a 17-year-old student from the Paris suburb of Val-de-Marne, said some of the classrooms at his school were short of desks and chairs while the bathrooms lacked doors, toilet paper and soap.

"We just want better conditions for studying," he told AFP.

Adults turned out in droves yesterday to support the young demonstrators.

In Rennes, teacher Romain Dubourg said colleagues had discussed what they viewed as police brutality and decided to stand alongside pupils.

In Lyon, parents organised to support the youngsters, while teacher Rindala Younes said she wanted to help students "convey their message peacefully".

"The high school students' demands are legitimate," she said.

Amnesty International on Monday said the French authorities should "put an end to the disproportionate police repression seen in recent days during student protests".

Interior Minister Laurent Nunez said police had opened 10 internal investigations into allegations of misconduct.

Since the start of the movement, 24 schools have been burned or ransacked, according to the education ministry.

More than 5,000 people, 87 percent of them minors, have been arrested. The prime minister's office said 85 teaching staff have also been injured. — AFP

Trump blames France unrest on 'mass migration,' Islam



Protesters stand in front of bins and pieces of furniture set on fire during a demonstration of high-school students, in Paris yesterday, as part of a nationwide protest movement over learning conditions. Since late September, pupils have barred the entrances to hundreds of schools, complaining of teacher absences, overloaded timetables, dilapidated classrooms and buildings ill-adapted to rising temperatures, among other grievances. — AFP

WASHINGTON, DC — US President Donald Trump yesterday blamed mass student protests in France on "mass migration" and Islam, pushing his global right-wing narrative ahead of tough midterm elections at home.

"What's happening in France is nothing less than out of control mass migration. This isn't about schools, this is about Islam wanting to take over a once great Country!" Trump said in a post on Truth Social.

French students have blocked the entrances to hundreds of high schools

across the country since late September to demand better conditions, in protests that have descended into sporadic clashes with security forces.

A quarter of a million demonstrators took to the streets across France yesterday.

Trump and his administration have long blamed European social issues on migration, calling on Europe to shut its borders and echoing far-right parties by warning of what they call civilisational decline.

Leading voices in Trump's Make America Great Again (MAGA)

movement have been using the French protests to ram home points about immigration ahead of the US midterm elections next month.

MAGA commentators have repeatedly posted videos of the French unrest, with Trump ally Glenn Beck saying on Monday that the "riots in France are a clear warning to the rest of the West."

Republicans are doubling down on migration and anti-transgender rhetoric amid fears that Trump's unpopularity and his Iran war risk losing them control of Congress. — AFP

French policeman charged after firing tear gas grenade at high school student: prosecutor

PARIS — A French policeman was charged yesterday with violence for last week firing a tear gas grenade at close range at a 14-year-old student during high school protests that have shaken the country, a prosecutor said.

The boy, named as Eden, lost most of his teeth and was wounded in the face in the incident on Monday in Saint-Ouen-l'Aumône, northwest of Paris.

The policeman had not been remanded in custody but was placed under judicial control and banned from working until further notice, the local prosecutor said.

In videos of the incident widely shared on social media, three helmeted police officers are seen facing the high school student. One of them struck the teenager, who kicked him back, before the grenade round fired at his face knocked him to the ground.

Detained for questioning on Monday, the officer said he used the weapon in response to the schoolboy's "resistance", according to the Pontoise prosecutor, Guirec Le Bras.

But he said "the conditions for self-defence have not been met" due to "the lack of proportionality" in firing the grenade.

The offence in question can be punishable by up to 15 years in prison, he said.

The teenager lost several teeth and suffered a fractured jaw that required surgery, the prosecutor's office said.

"His jaw is sealed shut, he can no longer speak and he eats through a straw," his mother told media on Monday, adding all his upper teeth were broken and "his lower teeth torn out".

Police have used tear gas and other means to try to control what the authorities have described as "urban violence" during the protests.

Unions, rights groups and many of the children have accused the police of using disproportionate force. — AFP

Neutrinos: space particles that change our view of universe

Benedict Salvetat Rey, Pia Ohlin and Roland Lloyd Parry

PARIS – Miniscule but packed with energy, neutrinos charge to Earth from outer space, bringing valuable data on the cosmos, according to research that won this year's Nobel physics prize.

Here are facts about the subatomic particles observed by prizewinner Francis Halzen of Belgium, as told to AFP by members of his team and other scientists.

What are neutrinos?

With no electrical charge and virtually no mass, neutrinos scarcely interact with other matter and pass unseen through the galaxy and anything they touch – even from one end of Earth to another.

"Every second, without you noticing, 65 billion neutrinos from the Sun flow through your little finger nail," said the Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences, in a statement presenting the prize.

"We use them like cosmic messengers," said Damien Dornic, a scientist at France's CNRS research institute.

They serve "to examine the core of astrophysical phenomena such as the hearts of stars, or even bigger ones such as the formation of black holes, the collisions of galaxies", he added.

Antarctic ice observatory

When a neutrino touches the nucleus of an atom, an electric charge is produced, giving off a blue light that can be observed in water or ice.

Halzen and his team installed the IceCube Neutrino Observatory – nearly 5,500 optical sensors hundreds of metres under the Antarctic ice – a dark place free of interference – to observe the light from neutrinos passing through the Earth.

"What IceCube has done is to open a new window to observe the Universe," said Juan Antonio

Aguilar, a professor at Brussels Free University and member of the IceCube collaboration.

"Like the first time a telescope was invented, but this time using these other elementary particles."

The site took seven years to build and has been collecting data since 2011.

"It's a completely different way of observing the Universe," said Paschal Coyle, a researcher at the Marseille Particle Physics Centre.

"You don't need to point a telescope at a specific place. We look in all directions, all the time."

The observatory has detected neutrinos with an energy charge about a thousand times that of the Large Hadron Collider, the world's biggest particle-accelerator.

When the sensors spot an interesting neutrino, a message is sent to other telescopes and sensors around the world, telling them to look in the same direction for further insight.

Where do they come from?

So-called high-energy neutrinos are thought to pass through the universe in straight lines from violent cosmic events such as exploding stars and the areas around black holes.

"We're starting to see what kinds of sources could emit these high energy neutrinos," said Erin O'Sullivan, astrophysicist at Uppsala University in Sweden and spokesperson for the IceCube collaboration.

"Our best guess right now is these active galactic nuclei, which are the really supermassive black holes with material around it."

Unravelling the mystery of the neutrinos' origin "could even solve other mysteries, such as the origin of so-called ultra-high-energy cosmic rays or even Dark Matter," said Philipp Eller of Munich Technical University, an IceCube analysis coordinator.

– AFP

Belgian physicist's Nobel prize hails 'ghostly messengers' from space

Johannes Ledel

STOCKHOLM, Sweden – Belgian physicist Francis Halzen yesterday won the Nobel physics prize for groundbreaking work using Antarctic ice to capture particles originating in the distant cosmos, providing insight into the far reaches of space.

"This year's prize is about ghostly messengers from space," Ellen Moons, secretary general of the Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences, told a news conference.

Halzen was honoured "for decisive contributions to the IceCube Neutrino Observatory and the discovery of high-energy neutrinos of astrophysical origin", the jury said.

The Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences said Halzen's work had been fundamental for the observatory, which consists of a cubic kilometre of ice that is equipped with light sensors, and had "paved the way for a new kind of astronomy".

Using the observatory, researchers can capture neutrinos – rare subatomic particles – "from extremely energy-rich processes in the distant universe".

Halzen, 82, was born in Tienen, Belgium and is a professor at the University of Wisconsin–Madison in the United States, where he is a citizen.

"It was a great surprise, and I obviously didn't expect it," he told the news conference by telephone shortly after the prize was announced.

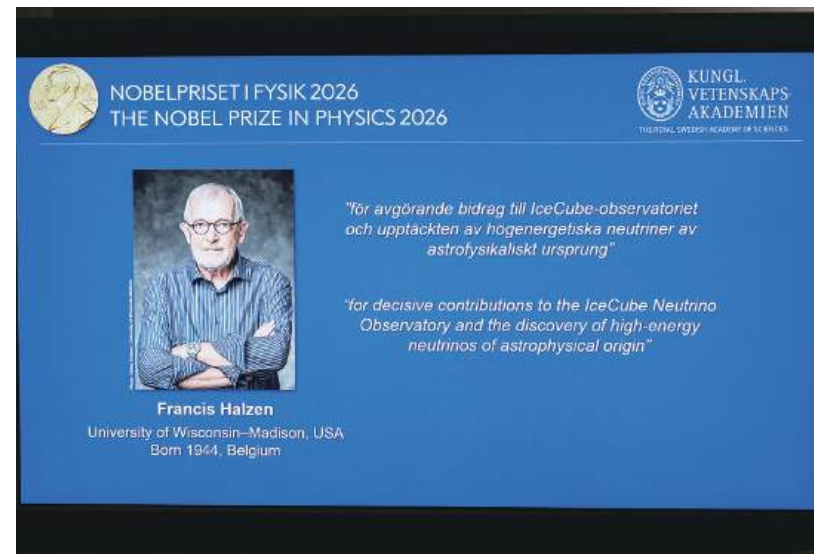
'The instigator'

"Unlike other particles, neutrinos reach us without changing direction or losing energy. This means they can provide information that is not available in any other way," the academy said in a statement.

"Cosmic neutrinos with extremely high energies are very rare, so an enormous volume of ice is needed to observe an adequate number of collisions," the jury explained.

Halzen first presented his idea for the observatory in 1988 and it quickly gained the support of other researchers.

Preliminary testing was conducted just a few years later but



A photograph of Francis Halzen is displayed on a screen as he is named the recipient of the 2026 Nobel Prize in Physics during a press conference at the Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences in Stockholm, Sweden, yesterday. – AFP

the observatory was not completed until 2011 and soon discovered the first "high-energy neutrinos."

"For me, the main pleasure of it, besides winning the Nobel Prize, is that I hope this reflects on the really courageous people who joined me in the beginning of this project," Halzen said.

Halzen is the first physics laureate since 1992 who did not have to share the honour with other researchers.

But Erin O'Sullivan, a neutrino astrophysicist at Sweden's Uppsala University and spokeswoman for the IceCube collaboration, said it was "well deserved that he is the sole winner of this prize".

"He really was the instigator of this whole project and has seen it through since the very early days," O'Sullivan told AFP.

In an interview with the Nobel Foundation, Halzen expressed how thankful he was that the project had received support even early on.

"This project, everybody thought, is a cute idea that won't work," Halzen said.

Belgium's Prime Minister Bart De Wever extended his "heartfelt congratulations" to Halzen, noting that he was the 11th Belgian to win a Nobel, and the second in physics.

"An impressive recognition of a life dedicated to unravelling the greatest secrets of the cosmos through its most minuscule manifestations," De Wever said in a post on X.

Alien speculation

Asked whether these neutrinos could contain messages from potential distant civilisations, Halzen admitted that "it has been speculated that... this would be an ideal way to communicate with aliens."

"But I don't think I will go there. I think we have enough realistic problems to deal with right now," he said.

The award is the second Nobel of the season, after the medicine prize was awarded on Monday to US psychiatrist and neurologist Karl Deisseroth and German scientists Peter Hegemann and Georg Nagel.

The researchers were honoured for their pioneering work in the field of optogenetics, which involves controlling nerve signals with light.

Last year, the Nobel Prize in Physics went to Briton John Clarke, Frenchman Michel Devoret and American John Martinis for putting quantum mechanics into action and enabling the development of all kinds of digital technology from cellphones to a new generation of computers.

The physics prize will be followed by the chemistry one today.

The literature laureate will be revealed tomorrow. Perhaps the most keenly anticipated award – the peace prize – is due on Friday.

The economics prize wraps up the Nobel season on October 12.

– AFP

Portugal launches US\$42.4 million package to offset surging fuel prices

LISBON – Portuguese President António José Seguro on Monday signed a government decree introducing 38 million euros (US\$42.56 million) in financial support to help road transport operators, taxis, firefighters and social sector organizations cope with rising fuel costs.

The measures reinstate support that was already in place from April to June and extend a 10-euro-cent-per-liter subsidy on professional diesel through the end of the year.

Of the total, 30 million euros are earmarked for freight transport

and roadside assistance vehicles, with payments ranging from 118.20 euros to 457.80 euros per vehicle, depending on gross weight.

Public road passenger transport will receive 5.0 million euros, equivalent to 420 euros per bus.

The remaining 3.0 million euros cover taxis, firefighters and social sector entities.

The measures are intended to reduce the impact of higher fuel costs on sectors that are most exposed to the surge in global energy prices triggered by the Middle East conflict. – Xinhua

Mexico sends troops after US says shots fired across border

MEXICO CITY – Mexico has deployed 500 soldiers to its border with Texas after the United States reported US personnel coming under gunfire, President Claudia Sheinbaum said on Monday.

The troops were posted in Tamaulipas state in an area where the rival Northeast and Gulf drug cartels are fighting for control. The United States classified both as foreign terrorist organisations in February 2025.

In her routine morning press

conference, Sheinbaum said the United States reported that it took "shots from the Mexican border." But she added that the Trump administration provided no evidence.

Mexico offered a troop deployment anyway along the Rio Grande, she said.

US Ambassador Ronald Johnson wrote on X that US Coast Guard personnel "were fired upon."

He said the newly deployed Mexican troops will communicate directly with US forces.

"Together, we intend to patrol both sides of our shared border, protect our communities, and make it more difficult for criminal and terrorist organizations to operate," Johnson wrote.

Since returning to power in 2025, President Donald Trump has pressured Mexico to crack down on drug trafficking and illegal migration moving across the shared border.

Trump has offered US military support but Sheinbaum has said no several times. – AFP

What could shape Brazil's tight presidential runoff

Commentary by Xinhua writers
Lu Junyu, Chen Haoquan and Wu Hao

RIO DE JANEIRO – Brazil's presidential election is heading to a runoff on October 25 after a tight first-round vote on Sunday, with Flávio Bolsonaro of the Liberal Party (PL) and incumbent President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva of the Workers' Party (PT) separated by only about 2 percentage points.

The first-round results underscored the continued polarization of Brazilian politics, with the two candidates together securing over 90 percent of valid votes. Over the next three weeks, attention will focus on why the race remains so close, how US-Brazil ties could affect the campaign, and where the two candidates could find additional support.

WHY THE CLOSE RACE?

The first-round vote was highly concentrated around the two leading candidates. Flávio Bolsonaro led the first round with about 47 percent of valid votes, followed by Lula with about 45 percent, while all other candidates received less than 5 percent each.

Brazilian media said the gap of less than 2 percentage points between the two was the narrowest presidential first-round margin since

Brazil's return to democracy.

Both candidates also have relatively firm political bases but face considerable public rejection; therefore, the runoff begins with two relatively consolidated political camps, leaving less room to win over committed supporters of the other side, local media reported, citing political analysts.

Under Brazil's electoral rules, voters can decline to support any candidate by casting blank or null ballots, a choice that can also serve as an expression of political discontent.

Low voter enthusiasm has added another layer of uncertainty to the election.

According to official results, with more than 99 percent of ballots counted, turnout in the first round was weighed down by an abstention rate of 21.08 percent, while blank and null ballots together accounted for about 5.0 percent of votes cast.

A pre-election survey by Brazilian pollster Datafolha found that 47 percent of respondents were less interested in this election than in the previous one. Another poll, by consultancy Quaest, showed that 23 percent were "completely uninterested" in the race, while a further 10 percent said they might abstain or cast a blank or null ballot.

With the two political camps already highly consolidated,



A pedestrian browses front-page newspaper coverage of Brazil's presidential election results at a newsstand in Rio de Janeiro on Monday, one day after the election.

– AFP

supporters of the eliminated candidates and voters aligned with neither side could become more important in the runoff.

For Flávio Bolsonaro, consolidating support from voters who backed other right-wing and center-right candidates will be important. Lula, meanwhile, has sought to appeal to voters outside his traditional base with measures addressing livelihood concerns, including tighter regulation of online betting and help for indebted households.

Turnout will also matter for both sides. With less than 2.0 percentage points separating the two candidates, mobilizing potential supporters who stayed home could dominate the runoff campaign.

HOW COULD US TIES AFFECT THE RACE?

Beyond the complex domestic political landscape, the United States has continued to affect this year's election. US-Brazil relations have become increasingly strained over the past year, with disputes

ranging from tariffs and judicial proceedings to visa restrictions.

The US administration has imposed tariffs on Brazilian goods and criticized the conviction of former president Jair Bolsonaro, who was found guilty of attempting a coup after losing his re-election bid, while Lula's government has accused Washington of exerting political pressure on Brazil.

Those tensions have increasingly intersected with the presidential race. US President Donald Trump, who has maintained close ties with Jair Bolsonaro, said shortly before the election that he was watching the Brazilian vote "very closely."

Flávio Bolsonaro, son of Jair Bolsonaro, has advocated closer ties with Washington, while Lula's campaign has accused the Trump administration of seeking to interfere in Brazil's presidential election.

But the US factor may prove counterproductive in electoral terms. Pressure from Washington could give Lula more room to emphasize national sovereignty and resistance to foreign pressure.

Daily newspaper *Folha de S. Paulo* noted that when the United States imposed steep tariffs on Brazilian goods in 2025, Lula's approval ratings rose as his government adopted a stronger sovereignty-focused response. – AFP

Exiled Catalan separatist leader Puigdemont cleared to return to Spain

Daniel Silva

MADRID – A Spanish judge yesterday lifted an arrest warrant for exiled former Catalan separatist leader Carles Puigdemont, paving the way for his return to Spain ahead of a general election in November.

Supreme Court judge Pablo Llarena made the move after Spain's Constitutional Court backed extending a 2024 amnesty law to include the crime of embezzlement.

The law was aimed at easing tensions in the wealthy northeastern region following its failed 2017 independence bid, Spain's worst political crisis in decades.

Around 400 people involved in the independence push have benefited from the amnesty, but Puigdemont, who headed Catalonia's regional government when it held a banned independence referendum and attempted to secede from Spain, had been excluded.

Puigdemont was accused of using public funds to organise the referendum, which the courts had said amounted to embezzlement.

He fled to Belgium in 2017 to avoid detention after the referendum and remained the subject of an arrest warrant.

Spain's Supreme Court initially ruled that the amnesty law did not apply to those, including Puigdemont, investigated for embezzlement.

Socialist Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez welcomed the lifting of the warrant, saying it would allow Catalonia to "look to the future".

"We should celebrate that this also helps Catalan society, as it has been demanding throughout this time," he added at a Madrid news conference.

Puigdemont briefly returned to Barcelona in August 2024 after almost seven years in exile, appearing before thousands of supporters and vowing to continue the fight for Catalan independence.

He then disappeared before the regional parliament's vote to install Socialist Salvador Illa as Catalonia's leader, evading a police operation to arrest him before returning to Belgium.

'Must be punished'

Both his parents died in Spain while he was in exile, and he was unable to attend their funerals.

The amnesty law was passed to secure the backing of Catalan separatist parties, whose support allowed Sánchez to remain in power after a 2023 election produced no clear majority.

Spain's right fiercely opposed the amnesty, with the mainstream conservative People's Party (PP) and far-right Vox party arguing it undermined the rule of law.

The two parties frequently accused Sánchez of trading political

support for the votes of Catalan separatists and staged large protests against the amnesty law.

While PP leader Alberto Núñez Feijóo said he "respected" the Supreme Court's decision, he again criticised the amnesty law, calling it a "deception".

"Selling favours in exchange for power must be punished at the ballot box. Spain finally deserves a government that puts truth, the law and equality for all Spaniards first," he wrote on X.

Puigdemont's centre-right Junts per Catalunya ("Together for Catalonia") party later withdrew support for the government, accusing Sánchez of failing to fulfil commitments, including the amnesty for its leader.

Junts on Friday voted against housing relief measures proposed by Sánchez's minority government amid nationwide protests. The party's seven seats were key for passage of the decrees.

The defeat of the measures led Sánchez on Monday to call a snap vote for November 29. The next general election was due by August 2027.

Since Puigdemont fled, Junts has seen its support decline as the Catalan independence movement has lost momentum and a new far-right separatist party, Aliança Catalana (AC), has emerged as a rival.

– AFP

Wife of jailed ex-Venezuelan leader Maduro has 'very delicate' heart issue: son

CARACAS – Venezuelan former first lady Cilia Flores has a "very delicate" heart condition, her son-in-law told AFP on Monday, calling for her release from the US prison where she was jailed alongside her husband Nicolás Maduro.

Flores, 69, was arrested alongside Maduro by US forces during a raid on Caracas on January 3 and taken to the United States to face trial on drug trafficking charges.

She is being held in the same federal prison in Brooklyn, New York, as ousted socialist president Maduro, 63.

Last month, her lawyer requested she be placed under house arrest, saying that she suffers from heart problems for which her prison conditions do not provide adequate care.

The US government opposed the request, arguing she posed "an extreme risk of flight and danger to the public."

Maduro's son, Nicolás Maduro Guerra, told AFP that Flores is suffering from a "prolapsed" heart, a condition that, in rare, severe cases, can cause heart failure.

He said that she required surgery and needed to be released from jail in order to properly recuperate afterwards.

Flores' lawyer Mark Donnelly suggested she be placed under

house arrest with 24-hour armed surveillance, an electronic monitoring bracelet and that her passport be confiscated.

Flores, a former president of the National Assembly and attorney general, was seen as a key figure in Venezuela's previous government.

Both she and Maduro are accused of helping traffic cocaine into the United States, which they deny.

The pair are scheduled to go on trial on June 1, 2027.

Maduro has asked for the charges against him to be dismissed, invoking his immunity as head of state.

In 2015, two of Flores' nephews were arrested by US officials in Haiti on charges of attempting to traffic cocaine to the United States.

Franqui Francisco Flores de Freitas and Efraín Antonio Campos Flores were each sentenced to 18 years in prison in 2017 but were released in 2022 as part of a prisoner swap deal with the administration of former USD president Joe Biden.

After Maduro's ouster, his former deputy Delcy Rodríguez took over as interim president, with the backing of US President Donald Trump.

Rodríguez has appeared ready to comply with Trump's agenda in Venezuela, including his bid to control vast chunks of the country's huge oil reserves.

– AFP

End of an era as Messi prepares to hang up Argentina boots

Football

Leila Macor

BUENOS AIRES – Lionel Messi will pull on Argentina's sky blue-and-white jersey for the last time yesterday [today Macau time] and enjoy an emotional farewell in front of his adoring fans in a stadium with a name to match his legacy: Monumental.

Some 85,000 spectators will be present to watch the 39-year-old idol perform his wizardry in a friendly against Benin that brings down the curtain on his 21-year international career.

Millions more will follow the action in South America's largest stadium, Buenos Aires' Estadio Monumental, on TV.

The most-capped player in Argentine history is hanging up his boots two-and-a-half months after losing the World Cup final to Spain.

"I gave it my all; I have nothing left to give, and besides, there are great young players coming up who deserve their chance," Messi wrote when announcing his international retirement in August.

On Monday, he took part in his last training session with the team at the complex that bears his name in the Buenos Aires suburb of Ezeiza.

Fans gathered to watch there too.

"I believe Messi gave everything, absolutely everything, so it doesn't bother me at all that he's leaving. He has more than earned it, let him enjoy himself, let him rest," Cecilia Adriano, 52, told AFP.

Before the match, the University of Buenos Aires will award Messi an honorary doctorate.

Messi remains under contract with Inter



This aerial view shows a giant shirt marking Lionel Messi's farewell from the Argentina national football team displayed at the National Flag Memorial in Rosario, Argentina, on Monday, on the eve of the international friendly against Benin.

– AFP

Miami until 2028, although following the death of his father, Jorge, two months ago, he revealed he may hang up his boots for good sooner than anticipated.

Filling the void

No effort has been spared for the sendoff of a player considered one of the game's greatest ever.

Several of the teammates with whom he won the 2022 World Cup in Qatar, and who will form the backbone of the post-Messi team, will play in the game, including defender Cristian Romero, midfielders Alexis Mac Allister and Enzo Fernandez and forwards

Julian Alvarez and Lautaro Martinez.

After the game the captain's armband will pass to Romero.

Coach Lionel Scaloni has vowed to try to fill the "void" left by his talismanic captain and the signs from the next generation, some of whom weren't even alive when Messi debuted with the team in 2005, are promising.

In their first games since the World Cup final last week, minus Messi, Argentina thrashed Bolivia 4-0 in a friendly in Cordoba last Wednesday before running rings around Burkina Faso on Saturday at Monumental stadium.

Franco Mastantuono and Gianluca

Prestianni, two of Argentina's brightest new hopes, both scored their first international goals in the 7-0 romp against Burkina Faso.

The results have begun the process of lifting the gloom of the defeat in the World Cup final when Argentina and a visibly tired Messi were outplayed by Spain in New Jersey.

Several of Messi's teammates resorted to thuggish tactics which were punished with bans and fines.

Rightful heir to Maradona

Messi is not only Argentina's most capped player but also its leading scorer with 125 goals in 207 games, as well as a record 68 assists.

"La Pulga" (The Flea) won the eternal gratitude of Argentines - and sealed his place as the rightful heir to Diego Maradona - in 2022 when he ended their 36-year World Cup drought in Qatar.

During his time with the Albiceleste, Argentina were also crowned 2005 world youth champions, 2008 Olympic champions and they won the Copa America in 2021 and 2024. They also won the 2022 Finalissima, a match between the champions of South America and Europe.

But there were tears along the way too, notably after Argentina's defeat by Germany in the 2014 World Cup final in Brazil, their 1-0 loss to Spain in this year's final and their shock defeat on penalties to Chile in the 2016 Copa America final.

One detail remains unclear, however: who will inherit Messi's coveted number 10 jersey?

"Until Leo's game, we won't give the number 10 to anyone," said Scaloni. "After that, we'll see."

– AFP

FIFA chief Infantino hit by Norwegian double complaint

FIFA

For the Game. For the World.

PARIS – Embattled FIFA president Gianni Infantino has been accused of a potential abuse of power and conflict of interest after the Norwegian Football Federation (NFF) filed formal complaints to two FIFA committees.

They revolve around three matters: Infantino's aborted plan to open up the World Cup to private investors, the lifting of the suspension of US star Folarin Balogun at the 2026 World Cup following an intervention by Donald Trump, and FIFA's awarding of a so-called Peace Prize to the US president.

The first filing made yesterday "asks the Ethics Committee to examine the conduct of FIFA President Gianni Infantino and any other individuals identified through the investigation for potential breaches of FIFA's Code of Ethics".

The second filing is aimed at FIFA's Governance, Audit and Compliance Committee (GACC) and "asks whether FIFA's governance, financial oversight, internal controls and decision-making processes (have) worked as intended".

Lise Klaveness, the NFF's straight-talking president and longtime critic of Infantino, told *The Times* newspaper that Trump was the common thread in all three issues.

Trump's son-in-law Jared Kushner's brother Josh's venture capital firm was to be the chief investor in the ill-fated FIFA Forward Enterprise (FFE) plan.

Infantino's plan, launched just after this year's hugely successful World Cup co-hosted by Canada, Mexico and the United States in July would have allowed private investors to acquire stakes in a company created under the FFE initiative.

The backlash that followed led to Infantino making a humiliating climbdown within days.

"FIFA Forward Enterprise is a governance issue but it's connected to the two other cases because (of) conflict of interest and abuse of position, potentially," Klaveness told *The Times*.

"There is a line between all these three cases and it's the same political regime."

Klaveness, a former international footballer, said Infantino had some serious questions to answer over a lack of transparency.

Balogun's red card in the last-32 win over Bosnia and Herzegovina during the World Cup resulted in an automatic suspension for the match with Belgium.

But FIFA stepped in and suspended his ban, leading to widespread condemnation, especially when it emerged that Trump had intervened by phoning Infantino.

The FIFA Peace Prize award that Infantino presented to Trump in December has been widely ridiculed.

"These are three very different factual cases, but they all have something in common that we want examined," said Klaveness.

"Is it an abuse of power, an abuse of position? Is it a breach of political neutrality?"

"Is it in accordance with the rules of governance, as the FIFA Council should be the strategic body, and the president shouldn't really have any unilateral power?"

'Misinformation campaign'

Klaveness, 45, had in August called upon Infantino to resign and forego his bid to be elected to a fourth and final term as president.

The 56-year-old Swiss has insisted he will seek re-election in Rabat next March and as yet no other candidate has declared.

Infantino, who was first elected in 2016, must secure a majority of the 211 votes from the organisation's members in order to be re-elected.

The deadline to declare to run is November 18.

Klaveness has said she will not be a candidate - despite some observers, including Infantino's predecessor Sepp Blatter, believing she would be a good fit as FIFA chief.

Aleksander Ceferin, president of European football's governing body UEFA, has said he is not interested.

UEFA have been unsparing in their verbal assaults on Infantino and FIFA, dismissing the FFE plan as "a shady and opaque backroom deal".

The likeliest rival is thought to be Canadian Victor Montagliani, president of CONCACAF, whose body along with UEFA and the Asian Football Confederation (AFC) have formed an anti-Infantino alliance.

However, while a swathe of UEFA's members have publicly withdrawn their support for the 56-year-old Swiss, some of the AFC's associations, such as 2034 World Cup hosts Saudi Arabia and 2022 hosts Qatar, have pledged their loyalty to him.

African football's governing body CAF and South America's CONMEBOL are also supportive.

UEFA has also gone to a court in Florida in an attempt to access documents related to Infantino's failed plan with the aim of gathering evidence for a potential criminal complaint in Switzerland, where UEFA and FIFA are based.

The latter responded by accusing UEFA of a "misinformation campaign" and saying it was attempting to "influence" the election.

– AFP

Crisis-hit Italian FA placed under national Olympic committee control

Football

ROME – The crisis-hit Italian Football Federation (FIGC) was placed under the guardianship of Italy's Olympic Committee (CONI) yesterday, but with the newly-elected Giovanni Malago remaining at its helm.

Under the terms of a compromise reached with CONI president Luciano Buonfiglio and approved by the Olympic body's executive committee, Malago remains acting head of Italian football but with an interim title of FIGC Extraordinary Commissioner.

And the FIGC must hold new elections by January 31, 2027, CONI said in a brief statement.

Malago took over after Gabriele Gravina resigned last June following Italy's loss to Bosnia-Herzegovina in the European play-off final for the 2026 World Cup.

But his election, secured with 68.6 percent of the vote, was challenged by a lawyer who found that he did not hold a valid FIGC membership card at the time of his candidacy.

Both the FIGC and CONI launched proceedings but reached different conclusions, with the Olympic body initially deeming that Malago's election should be invalidated.

Yesterday's compromise allows the rebuilding of Italian football to continue after the four-time winners' failure to qualify for the last three World Cups.

Malago, 67, has been a key figure in Italian sports for more than 20 years and is a former CONI president who spearheaded this year's Milan-Cortina Winter Olympics.

– AFP

Djokovic wins China Open after de Minaur retires

Tennis

BEIJING – Novak Djokovic won the China Open yesterday after his opponent Alex de Minaur retired from the final, extending an astonishing unbeaten streak in Beijing and winning the 102nd title of his career.

The 39-year-old Serbian won the first set in the tie-break 7-6 (7/3) and was down a game in the second set when the Australian ended the match early.

"I always want to visualise myself with the trophy, particularly here in Beijing," Djokovic said during the trophy ceremony.

"But I was also quite aware that reality is a little bit different these days," he said, adding that it had been a challenging year with "physical and health issues".

"I was just trying to find the good feeling on the court," he said.

The first set was a physical battle that lasted more than one hour, and both men needed medical timeouts before the second.

De Minaur, the world number nine, won the first game of the second set before retiring.



Serbia's Novak Djokovic (right) signs a fan's shirt after winning the men's singles final at the China Open tennis tournament in Beijing yesterday. – AFP

It was not immediately clear why de Minaur left the match, but he walked back onto the court after his medical timeout with a white wrap around his left thigh.

With the win, Djokovic extended a perfect record to 34 wins in as many matches for his seventh title in the Chinese capital – his first since 2015.

"I don't feel great," de Minaur told the crowd afterwards.

"I want to say sorry to the amazing fans that came to watch... I didn't want to finish like this," the 27-year-old added.

De Minaur advanced to the final after his opponent Hubert Hurkacz retired injured from their semi-final on Monday, while Djokovic moved through when Daniil Medvedev was disqualified for hitting a fan with a ball. – AFP

Wang Manyu holds off tricky Batra as Lebrun, Lin survive scares at WTT China Smash

Table Tennis

BEIJING – Top seed Wang Manyu of China held off India's unorthodox Manika Batra in the women's singles round of 32, while men's top seed Felix Lebrun of France and Chinese Taipei's Lin Yun-Ju fought hard to reach last 16 at the 2026 WTT China Smash here yesterday.

Wang, who had opened her campaign with a 3-0 win over Amy Wang of the United States on Sunday, defeated the long-pimple specialist 11-5, 9-11, 11-6, 11-5 in 31 minutes. The newly crowned women's singles champion at the Aichi-Nagoya Asian Games, however, was far from satisfied with her performance.

"Although the result today was a win, I think there were still some problems during the process that I need to summarize or adjust in time," Wang told reporters in the mixed zone. "I didn't handle some opportunity balls particularly well, and there were some unforced errors. "I think on one hand, my focus and intensity on court were a little lacking; on the other hand, because she has a special playing style, I was a little slow in making adjustments."

Batra, ranked 58th in the world, had upset Wang at the 2024 Saudi Smash. Her long-pimple rubber again caused problems in the second game, with Wang falling 0-4 behind before fighting back to 9-9, only to lose the next two points and the game 11-9.

"When I was down 0-4 early in the second game, I didn't do a good job of minimizing my mistakes. Otherwise, I think I would have been very much on top in today's match," Wang reflected.

"But I think this is also part of the match. Whether I play well or not, I have to fight to win the match," the 27-year-old added.

Wang regained control in the third game, building a 3-0 lead and

pulling away after 4-4 to take it 11-6. In the fourth, she broke a 5-5 tie with five consecutive points before closing out the match.

Wang will next face teammate Shi Xunhao in the round of 16 after Shi overcame a first-game deficit to beat Poland's Natalia Bajor 13-11, 11-7, 11-9.

Fifth seed Wang Yidi joined her compatriot in the last 16 with a 15-13, 11-9, 2-11, 11-7 win over Cheng I-Ching of Chinese Taipei, setting up an all-Chinese clash with Chen Yi, who swept France's Yuan Jianan 11-8, 11-7, 11-3.

In other women's singles action, third seed Miwa Harimoto of Japan beat qualifier Su Tsz Tung of Hong Kong, China 11-5, 13-15, 11-6, 11-5, while Fan Shuhan and Wang Xiaotong were the host's casualties yesterday, losing to Japan's Hina Hayata and teammate He Zhuojia respectively.

In the men's singles, 19-year-old Wen Ruibo beat Germany's Benedikt Duda 11-6, 11-8, 11-7, while Huang Youzheng fell to Lin Yun-Ju 6-11, 11-6, 11-6, 8-11, 13-15 after holding two match points. Chinese qualifiers Yuan Licen and Xu Yingbin were also eliminated.

World No. 2 Lebrun, a penholder, defeated compatriot Flavien Coton 9-11, 14-12, 11-9, 11-4. In the pair's third meeting this season, Coton, ranked 23rd, took the opening game and held two game points in the second, but Lebrun saved both to level the match. The 20-year-old then edged a close third game before cruising through the fourth.

In mixed doubles, Huang Youzheng and Chen Yi reached the quarterfinals by beating teammates Yuan Licen and Wang Yidi 11-8, 11-6, 11-7. They will face Japan's Sora Matsushima and Miwa Harimoto. In women's doubles, Chen Yi/Li Yihui and Gao Yuxin/Xiang Junlin advanced, while in men's doubles Zhou Qihao/Chen Junsong won and Xue Fei/Kanak Jha lost. – Xinhua



Spain's Carlos Alcaraz holds the trophy as he celebrates beating Czech Republic's Jiri Lehecka in the singles final during the Japan Open tennis tournament at the Ariake Tennis Forest Park in Tokyo yesterday. – AFP

Argentina announce official bid to host 2035 Rugby World Cup



PARIS – Three-time semi-finalists Argentina have announced a bid to host the men's 2035 Rugby World Cup alongside several other South American countries.

The 2027 tournament will be held in Australia with the United States due to host the next edition in 2031 for the first time.

Argentina are the only country to have reached a World Cup semi-final to have never hosted the tournament.

While previously expressing an interest in hosting the World Cup, this is the first time that Argentina

have become official candidates.

Alongside Uruguay, Chile and Brazil, Argentina on Monday presented to World Rugby the technical information needed to submit a bid.

"The presentation of this candidacy represents a very important step for Argentine rugby and the whole region," said Felix Paez Molina, the president of the Argentine rugby union.

"We have the opportunity to show the world our passion for this sport, our ability to organise big events, and everything that our

countries can offer."

World Rugby will decide on the successful candidate in November 2027.

Argentina have taken part in every World Cup since the inaugural edition in 1987.

For next year's tournament, Uruguay have qualified for the sixth and Chile for the second time, but Brazil have never made it to the World Cup.

Spain have already announced their candidacy for 2035, while 2019 hosts Japan have expressed their intent to do so. – AFP

India, Qatar, S Africa among nations who want to host 2036 Olympics



PARIS – India, Qatar and South Africa were confirmed yesterday among the seven countries interested in hosting the 2036 Summer Olympics.

Germany, Hungary, Turkey and South Korea make up the rest of the current list issued by the International Olympic Committee (IOC).

Other countries have until October 31 to declare an interest.

In March 2027, the IOC Executive Board will draw up a shortlist of the interested parties, who will then enter dialogue with the Olympic body.

The IOC said that the 2036 hosts would be assessed on factors such as funding, and political and public support.

"Wherever the Games take place, one thing must never change: athletes have to be at the heart of everything we do," IOC

President Kirsty Coventry said in a statement.

"That is why, for every future host, delivering the best possible experience for the athletes must always be the starting point," the Zimbabwean former swimmer added.

India has stated its intention to host an Olympics for the first time, centred on Ahmedabad, the key city in Prime Minister Narendra Modi's home state of Gujarat.

Ahmedabad will host the 2030 multi-sport Commonwealth Games, seen as a major rehearsal for an Olympics. The city is also home to the world's largest cricket stadium.

South Africa hosted the 2010 football World Cup and the 1995 Rugby World Cup but has never played host to an Olympics.

Qatar hosted the 2022 football World Cup, although the awarding

of that tournament was later mired in allegations of corruption within football's world governing body FIFA.

An Olympics in the Gulf would have to be moved to later than its traditional July-August slot due to the heat.

The German National Olympic Committee voted last month to select Munich as its candidate city for a Games that will take place a centenary after the infamous 1936 Berlin Olympics which were overseen by the Nazi regime.

The Turkish Olympic authorities hope to go one better than in the bidding for the 2020 Summer Olympics when Istanbul came second to Tokyo.

The 2028 Summer Olympics will take place in Los Angeles, while Brisbane has been awarded the 2032 edition. – AFP

Chanel: unpicking one year of ‘Blazymania’

Daphné Rousseau

PARIS –A year since he unveiled his first collection at Chanel, Franco-Belgian designer Matthieu Blazy has proved himself to be a shrewd and hugely profitable recruit by the family-owned French fashion label.

Some of Blazy’s designs have proved so popular they have sparked a neologism – “Blazymania” – which has come to mean the frenzied buying in stores off items that often cost thousands of US dollars.

When his first collection – Spring-Summer 2026 – arrived in stores in March this year, videos of buyers streaming into Chanel shops went viral on social media.

And while the luxury sector as a whole is going through a tough spell, sales at the company increased 16 percent in the first half of this year compared with 2025, according to confidential sales data reported in August from financial news agency Bloomberg.

“When he arrived, I was unsettled, a little shocked, and frankly sceptical. But there’s no denying that he offers more designs, more novelty,” Rita, a Lebanese businesswoman who declined to give her surname, told AFP while browsing in a Chanel shop in Paris.

“It’s no longer about buying the same bag or the same slingbacks every year in a different colour, but about buying new objects,” she added, holding a “31” bag in which she hoped to fit her laptop.

Alix Morabito, director of buying at luxury Paris department store Galeries Lafayette, has also gauged the extent of “Blazymania”: every new delivery is eagerly awaited and it can sometimes be difficult for shoppers to get hold of pieces because the waiting lists are so long.

“There’s a new balance to find between desirability, scarcity and generosity,” she told AFP.

Blazy’s Spring-Summer 2027 collection was unveiled on Monday in Paris.

‘Joy’

Eric Briones, director of the Paris School of Luxury, told AFP that only the fourth designer in Chanel’s history had “brought joy” to the brand.

“Before, it wasn’t exactly all smiles. Now there is joy everywhere, even in sales at a pop-up store in Shanghai” despite weak sales in China, he explained.

Appointed in 2025 to succeed Virginie Viard, Karl Lagerfeld’s discreet successor, Blazy landed one of the biggest jobs in fashion aged just 40.

Said to have impressed with his in-depth presentations during the recruitment process, he embodies “a new generation with sincere humility”, Chanel fashion president Bruno Pavlovsky said of him at the time.

That was seen as good a fit for Chanel’s discreet family owners, Alain and Gérard Wertheimer.

Blazy began his career at Maison

Margiela in 2011, before moving to Celine and then Calvin Klein in New York, where he worked under Belgian designer Raf Simons until they were both sacked in 2018.

Named as Bottega Veneta’s creative director in 2021, he helped reinvent the Italian leather goods brand, earning him the nickname the “magician of Milan”.

New items

So what is Chanel’s magic formula now?

“He has broken down the brand’s codes, projecting them into a new era,” Pierre Groppo, fashion and lifestyle editor-in-chief at *Vanity Fair*, told AFP.

The emblems of the house founded by Coco Chanel in 1910 remain visual cornerstones: tweed, often woven in highly modern iridescent and metallic tones; the camellia; pearls; the double C; black and white; and the silhouette of the 1920s dress falling below the knee.

At the same time, everyday accessories and clothing have been introduced, along with denim, humour and pop references.

Groppo highlighted the enthusiasm among a new male audience for Chanel ready-to-wear, including “loafers, trainers, blazers and bags”.

The house has also taken on male ambassadors this year, including actor Pedro Pascal, but still has no officially designated men’s line.

Just “pieces that suit everyone”, Blazy says.

– AFP



A model presents a creation for Chanel Women’s Spring/Summer 2027 collection fashion show as part of the Paris Fashion Week, in Paris on Monday.

– AFP



(From left to right) South Korean Director Kim Jong-kwan and actors Kim Min-ha, Joo Jong-hyuk, Han Sun-hwa, Chang Ryul, and Shim Eun-kyung pose for a group photo during a press conference for the opening film “The Table: Day and Night” of the 31st Busan International Film Festival (BIFF) at the Busan Cinema Center in Busan yesterday.

– AFP

British author Jeffrey Archer dies aged 86

LONDON – British author Jeffrey Archer, who penned a series of best-selling novels, served as a Conservative MP and was convicted of perjury, died suddenly at 86, his publisher HarperCollins said.

Archer died “suddenly and peacefully at his home between writing sessions” on Monday, HarperCollins said.

His editor, Kate Elton, called him a “master storyteller and an editor’s dream”.

The writer had been due to appear at Cheltenham Literary Festival this week to discuss “Adam and Eve”, what he described as his final novel after 50 years of storytelling.

It was due to be published yesterday.

The Sun tabloid reported that he had been signing books for fans at an event in London on Sunday.

Archer had revealed in 2014 that he had been diagnosed with prostate cancer.

The author led a life as colourful as the characters in his novels, which sold over 300 million copies, according to his website.

Talented and ambitious, he was a high flyer who could never quite escape the whiff of scandal despite a talent for bouncing back from humiliating setbacks.

Politics and sex were the ingredients which ensured his success as a novelist.

But in real life the combination led to the downfall of the man who once hoped to become mayor of London.

He was tried for perjury and perverting the course of justice after a friend admitted he had supplied a false alibi during a libel case the peer brought against the *Daily Star* tabloid in 1987.

Archer had sued the newspaper over a claim he had slept with a prostitute, winning £500,000 in damages.

Ambitious from his earliest years, Archer used his charm and fund-raising abilities to climb almost to the top of the Conservative Party.

Member of parliament at 29

He joined the Tories while a student at Britain’s prestigious Oxford University and in 1969 won a resounding by-election

victory to become a member of parliament at the age of 29.

His parliamentary career came to an abrupt end in 1974 when he was brought to the brink of bankruptcy by the collapse of a Canadian industrial cleaning company in which he had invested.

However, with typical resilience he used his experiences as material for his first book “Not A Penny More, Not A Penny Less”, published in 1975, the first of a series of blockbusters set in the worlds of high finance and politics.

Panned by the critics, they nevertheless earned him a fortune and Archer nursed hopes of a political revival while using his contacts and persuasiveness to raise millions of pounds for the Tories.

In 1985, his labours were recognised by then prime minister Margaret Thatcher, who named him Conservative deputy chairman, describing him as a model Tory high achiever.

Scandals

But a year after his appointment, he was forced to resign by what he described as a “lack of judgment” after sending £2,000 to a prostitute, Monica Coghlan.

He maintained he only paid the money to help her escape hounding from reporters by going abroad and sued the *Daily Star* for suggesting otherwise.

In 1992 he was recommended by Thatcher’s successor John Major for a peerage, entitling him to sit in the House of Lords, the upper chamber of parliament.

In 1999, he launched a campaign to become the Tory party’s candidate to become the first elected mayor of London.



British author and politician Jeffrey Archer leaves St Paul’s Cathedral at the end of British former prime minister Margaret Thatchers ceremonial funeral in London on April 17, 2013. Archer died on Monday.

– AFP

But months later the claim emerged that he had asked a friend, Ted Francis to provide him with a false alibi against the *Daily Star*. This forced him to abandon his bid and he was expelled from the party.

In 2001 he went on trial and was found guilty of perjury and perverting the course of justice. He was sentenced to four years in prison, but was granted parole in 2003.

Archer’s long-suffering wife Mary, a scientist, stood behind her husband in his many mishaps.

Famously praised for her “fragrance” by the judge in the 1987 libel trial, she once said: “We’ve explored the further reaches of ‘for better and for worse’ than most couples.”

Archer retired from the House of Lords in 2024. His wife is Chancellor of the University of Buckingham.

– AFP

World Weather			
CHINA	ASIA-PACIFIC	WORLD	LUSOPHONE
Beijing 12°C~28°C	Manila 23°C~32°C	New York 13°C~22°C	Lisbon 15°C~25°C
Shanghai 14°C~26°C	Bangkok 24°C~34°C	London 6°C~16°C	Rio de Janeiro 20°C~26°C
Hong Kong 23°C~28°C	Tokyo 14°C~23°C	Frankfurt 14°C~24°C	Luanda 21°C~25°C
Taipei 20°C~26°C	Singapore 25°C~34°C	Vancouver 11°C~18°C	Maputo 16°C~27°C
Guangzhou 18°C~29°C	Kuala Lumpur 23°C~33°C	Paris 11°C~19°C	Dili 21°C~32°C
Nanjing 11°C~27°C	Jakarta 25°C~35°C	Moscow 3°C~15°C	São Tomé 24°C~31°C
Guilin 13°C~28°C	Seoul 10°C~23°C	Las Vegas 22°C~36°C	Praia 23°C~30°C
Xi'an 12°C~26°C	Sydney 13°C~19°C	Monte Carlo 17°C~21°C	Bissau 23°C~31°C



Don't you dare laugh!

A dachshund wearing a red beret takes part in the Paris Sausage Walk on the Champs-Elysees Avenue in Paris on Sunday.

— AFP

Not practical!

A worshipper prays outside Saint-Etienne de Metz Cathedral, in Metz, northeastern France during a mass celebrated by Pope Leo XIV, on last week on the last day of his visit to France.

— AFP



How high can you go?

Members of the Castellers de Vilafranca team form a 'castell' (human tower) during the 30th Castells Competition in Tarragona, Spain on Sunday. The 'Castells' (castles) human towers, traditionally built during festivals in Catalonia, bring together teams attempting to construct and dismantle the tallest human tower.

— AFP

Standard lamps

People attend the 14th annual edition of "Le Diner en Blanc New York" at Pier 84 in Hudson River Park on Manhattan's West Side on Thursday. The legendary all-white secret pop-up, the location of which is revealed hours before the event, draws guests who dress in head-to-toe white attire for an under the stars dining experience.

— AFP



Butterflies are on you!

A model presents a creation for Zimmermann Women's Spring/Summer 2027 collection fashion show as part of the Paris Fashion Week, in Paris on Monday.

— AFP

Giant Kermit

A child interacts with a puppet during the 10th "Golden Magnolia" Shanghai International Puppet Art Week in Shanghai, on Monday. The art week, themed "See the World, See You and Me, Enjoy the Future," opened here on Monday.

— Xinhua