

Hip Woh, San Teng perform joint surgery on rare type of cancer

Sherwin Hng

Surgeons from the Islands Healthcare Complex – Macao Medical Center of Peking Union Medical College Hospital, known as “Hip Woh” in Cantonese, and the public Conde S. Januário Hospital Centre, known as “San Teng” in Cantonese, have successfully performed a high-risk joint cardiac-thoracic operation to treat a local patient with locally advanced thymic squamous cell carcinoma.* Hip Woh announced in a statement yesterday.

According to DeepSeek, thymic squamous cell carcinoma is a very rare type of cancer.

According to the statement, the patient, a 40-year-old local woman, had sought medical attention after experiencing chest tightness and shortness of breath. Subsequent chest CT scans revealed a massive tumour approximately 15 cm in diameter in her anterior mediastinum**, compressing major cardiovascular vessels and her right lung.

A needle biopsy confirmed the diagnosis of thymic squamous cell carcinoma. Previously, the patient was assessed by multiple medical institutions as unsuitable for “radical” surgery. Although she subsequently underwent cryotherapy (extreme cold therapy) and arterial infusion chemotherapy*** – which initially reduced the tumour size – subsequent regression stalled.

The statement noted that, due to the tumour’s close proximity to major heart vessels and the right pulmonary vasculature, performing surgery presented extreme risks and complex technical challenges.

To maximise patient safety, cardiac-thoracic surgery teams from both hospitals conducted multidisciplinary discussions encompassing tumour evaluation, imaging analysis, chemoradiation protocols, intraoperative anaesthesia, postoperative intensive care, perioperative nutritional support (before, during and after the operation), early rehabilitation, and nursing care to formulate an individualised surgical and emergency contingency plan.

Backed by the expert team at Peking Union Medical College Hospital, the joint team successfully performed an open-chest radical thymic carcinoma resection (surgical removal). The three-hour procedure resulted in intraoperative blood loss of just 100 millilitres. Postoperative pathology confirmed an R0 radical resection, indicating the entire tumour was removed with clear margins free of cancer cells. R0 stands for “no residual tumour”.

The patient is reported to be recovering well following the procedure.

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A chief physician of the Cardiac and Thoracic Surgery Department at Macao Union Medical Center (“Hip Woh”) leads the radical open-chest thymic carcinoma resection as lead surgeon, assisted by a consultant physician in cardiac surgery from the same medical centre and an attending physician in cardiac and thoracic surgery from the public Conde S. Januário Hospital Centre (“San Teng”) as they perform the operation.
– Photo: Macao Union Medical Center



Visitors watch a performance at the Eastern Acropolis in Binhai New Area of Tianjin Municipality on Sunday. The Eastern Acropolis, a cultural and tourism complex in Tianjin’s Beitang ancient town, launched its trial operation on Sunday. The complex, built upon the town’s original infrastructure and themed on Tianjin’s history and culture, offers immersive performances, cultural experiences, specialty stores and leisure options for visitors.
– Xinhua

Carney calls for unity ahead of Alberta independence referendum

MONTREAL – Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney yesterday called for national unity a week before residents of Alberta vote on whether to move towards independence for their province.

“Canada is facing real threats to our economy, to our security, to our way of life. We have to be strong, and we are stronger together,” Carney said in a short video clip posted on YouTube yesterday, the Canadian Thanksgiving holiday.

Alberta, Canada’s fourth-largest province, will hold a nonbinding referendum next Monday on whether to move forward with a formal independence process.

Polls suggest only about a quarter of the province’s roughly five million inhabitants want to leave Canada.

Carney grew up in Alberta and said the video was being filmed in a classroom at his former school, St. Francis Xavier High School in Edmonton.

“I’m back home a lot these days because we are building big things again in Alberta: thousands of new homes, high-speed rail, a new pipeline to the West Coast that will create lasting opportunity and prosperity for hundreds of thousands of people in this province and across the country,” he said.

Carney went on to say that Canada was building “at a speed and scale not seen in generations. Canada is working.

“Truth is, we can’t achieve any of this if we’re divided. You can’t build big things on fault lines.”

– AFP

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Americans Hall and Woodford win economics Nobel for stabilisation models

US citizens Robert Hall and Michael Woodford were awarded the Nobel economics prize yesterday for their work on how monetary and fiscal policy can better stabilise disruptive economic fluctuations. – *Story on p. 10*

French supermarkets suffer refrigerator shutdown after ‘unprecedented’ cyberattack

Major French supermarket chains yesterday said they were hit by a cyberattack that caused their refrigerators to shoot up in temperature in hundreds of stores, forcing spoiled food to be thrown away and raising concerns about food security.

– *Story on p. 11*

Spanish court rules thousands of overseas voters out of coming election

Spain’s Supreme Court yesterday maintained its suspension of the voting rights of overseas voters who obtained Spanish nationality under a law for the descendants of exiles of the Franco dictatorship, potentially excluding many thousands from next month’s election. – *Story on p. 12*

Risk of pneumonia outbreak in Russia reaching Macau is low: SSM

Armindo Neves

The Health Bureau (SSM) issued a statement yesterday saying that it is paying close attention to fatal cases of pneumonia in Russia's southeastern Siberia near Mongolia, but noted that the overall risk posed to Macau remains low.

According to the statement, the bureau is closely monitoring recent media reports of deaths from pneumonia of unknown cause in Irkutsk Oblast, Siberia, Russia. According to the latest information obtained by the World Health Organisation (WHO) from Russian authorities, the statement said, no cases of plague have been recorded in the region, nor has any evidence been found of other cases of pneumonia of unknown cause linked to the incident or of sustained transmission.

As the pathogen that caused the deaths has not yet been identified, uncertainty surrounding the incident remains. The WHO has stated that it will continue to monitor

developments closely and will assess the public health risk and impact once further information becomes available, the statement noted.

The bureau will continue to monitor the development of the incident closely while maintaining the exchange of information with the WHO and health authorities in neighbouring regions, the statement said. It added that the bureau has already put in place an emergency contingency plan for major infectious diseases, possessing both the mechanisms and capacity for routine surveillance of, and response to, infectious disease threats.

As the overall risk currently posed to Macau by the incident remains low, the bureau will, as a precautionary measure and out of an abundance of caution, step up key measures to safeguard the health of Macau residents, the statement said.

These measures include strengthening prevention and control measures at border checkpoints, carrying out temperature monitoring and

health assessments for travellers at all immigration checkpoints to identify suspected infectious disease cases early, and implementing a voluntary health declaration system. Under this system, individuals who have visited Irkutsk Oblast within 14 days prior to entry must proactively declare this to on-site health quarantine personnel and cooperate with arrangements for medical screening.

The bureau will also proactively remind medical institutions and healthcare professionals to remain vigilant. Any cases presenting with pneumonia of unknown cause in patients who have visited Irkutsk Oblast within 14 days prior to the onset of illness must be reported immediately for testing to proactively identify suspected cases, the statement added.

"Oblast" means "region" in Russian. Irkutsk Oblast, which has a population of 2.37 million, covers 774,846 km², about the size of Turkey, which has 88 million inhabitants. ■

Woman loses 1.47 million patacas in 'fake police' scam, 2 arrests: police

Sherwin Hng

A middle-aged non-resident woman fell victim to a "fake police" scam last year, losing a total of 1.47 million patacas, Judiciary Police (PJ) spokesman Ho Wai Lok said during a special press conference yesterday.

Ho did not reveal the victim's habitual place of residence.

Ho identified the two suspects from the Chinese mainland as a 41-year-old man surnamed Zhao, who claimed to work as a point-of-sale (POS) system promoter, and a 37-year-old unemployed man surnamed Wang.

According to Ho, the victim received phone calls while visiting relatives in Macau from individuals purporting to be local immigration officers and mainland police officials. The fraudsters instructed her to enable a screen-sharing function on her mobile phone and make nine separate transfers to several Hong Kong bank accounts under the pretext of a "funds investigation".

The victim eventually realised

she had been duped and reported the case to the police.

Following an investigation, Judiciary Police tracked one of the target bank accounts, which had received 54,000 patacas of the stolen funds and was also linked to three similar fraud cases in Hong Kong. Officers intercepted Zhao on Saturday when he entered Macau via the Barrier Gate checkpoint. Zhao admitted to receiving 2,000 yuan to open the account in Hong Kong on behalf of a fraud syndicate, Ho said.

Acting on information provided by Zhao, police arrested his accomplice, Wang, at the Outer Harbour Ferry Terminal on Sunday as he was preparing to exit Macau. Officers seized six bank cards, HK\$51,000 in cash, and four smartphones during the operation, Ho added.

The two suspects were transferred to the Public Prosecutions Office (MP) yesterday, facing charges of fraud involving a considerable amount and money laundering. ■



Judiciary Police (PJ) officers escort the two hooded suspects to a PJ van outside the PJ headquarters in Zape yesterday. — Photo: Sherwin Hng

Huawei ICT Competition aims to cultivate local IT & AI talents

Ida Cheong

The launch ceremony for the Huawei ICT Competition 2026/2027 in Macau took place yesterday, with the aim of solidifying participants' professional foundations and cultivating a more competitive pool of local digital technology talent to empower the diversified growth of Macau's Information Technology (IT) and Artificial Intelligence (AI) industry.

ICT stands for Information and Communications Technology.

This year's competition, themed "Connecting the Glorious Future", officially opened for registration

yesterday until November 15. The launch ceremony was held at the Macau Productivity and Technology Transfer Center (CPTTM) headquarters in Zape.

Huawei (Macau) General Manager Leong Ka Cheong said that the Macau event will run from October to December across three stages: the Macau regional competition, the Asia-Pacific regional competition, and the global finals. Participating teams in the Higher Education Group will compete in two classic tracks — Network and Computing.

Leong noted that the competition topics closely align with industry trends and cutting-edge technologies, including foundational software (openEuler, openGauss, and Kunpeng applications*), network communications, and cybersecurity.

Leong went on to say that building upon the existing Cloud track, the secondary school group has added a brand-new AI Innovation Track this year, encouraging high school students to solve real-world problems with AI technology and inspiring technological innovation among youth.

According to a CPTTM statement yesterday, in the previous edition, contestants from the University of Macau (UM) swept the championships in both the Network and Computing tracks, successfully advancing to the Asia-Pacific Regional Finals. This achievement fully demonstrated the solid strength and potential of Macau's youth in the ICT field, while strengthening the confidence of the three co-organisers in empowering local youth to step onto the international stage, the statement added.

CPTTM President Victoria Alexa Kuan Chan noted in her speech that from foundational ICT training to driving initiatives such as "AI in Schools" and launching the "Innovative Computing Power Training Pilot Scheme," her centre step-by-step empowers the general public to master the knowledge and skills required in the era of the digital economy and artificial intelligence. ■

*Kunpeng, openEuler, and openGauss form the core pillars of Huawei's computing ecosystem, spanning hardware, operating systems, and database software. — Gemini



Huawei (Macau) General Manager Leong Ka Cheong (centre), Productivity and Technology Transfer Center (CPTTM) Director Victoria Alexa Kuan Chan (left), and The Association for Promotion of Science and Technology of Macau Vice-President Yang Zhixin look on during yesterday's launch ceremony at the CPTTM headquarters in Zape. — Photo: Ida Cheong

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MACAU POST

Macau Weather

MAINLY FINE.
LIGHT WINDS, BECOMING FORCE 2
TO 3 SOUTHEASTERLY WINDS.
RELATIVE HUMIDITY WILL RANGE
BETWEEN 60% AND 95%.



24°C~32°C

Source: SMG

Hip Woh, San Teng perform joint surgery on rare type of cancer

Continued from p.1

According to the statement, since its establishment, the Cardiac and Thoracic Surgery Department at Macao Union Medical Center has formulated individualised treatment plans tailored to each patient's condition. Utilising advanced surgical modalities - including the Da Vinci surgical robot, fluorescence-guided thoracoscopy, and traditional open-chest procedures - the surgical team has successfully treated dozens of local patients with complex and critical thoracic conditions.

In the future, the department will continue to deepen cooperation between Hip Woh ("Harmony") and San Teng ("Peak"), leveraging a multidisciplinary diagnostic and treatment model to share high-quality medical resources and provide stronger healthcare safeguards for local residents. ■

*Advanced thymic squamous cell carcinoma is a rare and aggressive malignant tumour that originates from the epithelial cells of the thymus (located behind the

breastbone) and has grown large enough to invade surrounding vital structures like the heart, major blood vessels, and lungs without spreading to distant organs.

Common symptoms include chest tightness, persistent shortness of breath, a chronic cough, and chest pain caused by the tumour's mass pressing against the heart and airways. — Gemini

**Anterior mediastinum is the anatomical space located in the middle of the chest cavity, specifically bounded by the breastbone (sternum) in front and the front of the heart and major blood vessels behind. It is the primary site where thymic tumours—such as thymic squamous cell carcinomas - develop, as the thymus gland sits right in this compartment. — Gemini

*** Arterial infusion chemotherapy is a targeted treatment where chemotherapy medicine is injected directly into the specific blood vessels feeding a tumour, delivering a strong dose straight to the cancer while sparing the rest of the body from widespread side effects. — Gemini

Global Tourism Economy Forum returns to Macau Thursday

Khalel Vallo

The 12th Global Tourism Economy Forum (GTEF) will be held in Macau from this Thursday through Saturday, bringing together international tourism industry leaders, government officials and experts to discuss the future of the global tourism economy, according to a statement by the Office of the Secretary for Economy and Finance yesterday.

Under the theme “Crisis • Resilience • Evolution – Building a Tourism Economy for a Shared Future”, the forum will explore challenges and opportunities facing the industry amid changes in the global economic landscape, the statement said, adding that topics will include tourism economy resilience, cultural tourism, inbound travel, “tourism +” initiatives, mountain residential tourism, AI and sustainable growth.

Discussions will also consider how the industry can prepare for the United Nations’ designation of 2027 as the “International Year of Sustainable and Resilient Tourism”, the statement noted, adding that the programme will feature keynote speeches, panel discussions, cultural tourism presentations, fireside chats and business-matching sessions, providing opportunities for policy exchanges, experiences and industry collaboration.

Familiarisation tours in Macau and the Guangdong-Macao In-Depth Cooperation Zone in Hengqin will also be arranged to



This poster provided by the Office of the Secretary for Economy and Finance yesterday promotes the upcoming 12th Global Tourism Economy Forum (GTEF), which will be held in Macau this Thursday through Saturday.

showcase opportunities for cooperation in infrastructure connectivity, tourism and MICE (Meetings, Incentives, Conferences, and Exhibitions) resources, the statement said, underlining that Spain will participate as the forum’s “Partner Country”, talking about its experience in destination management,

balanced regional development and sustainable tourism. Hainan Province, the “Featured Province”, will present the development of its Free Trade Port and its progress in opening up to the international market.

Launched in Macau in 2012, the forum has so far attracted more than 15,500

participants from 88 countries and regions, alongside over 780 internationally recognised speakers, the statement said, noting that the local government aims to use the platform to strengthen international connections, promote high-quality tourism development and support the region’s sustainable economic growth. ■

FIBA 3x3 World Tour & GBA finals return to Macau this month

Khalel Vallo

The “FIBA 3x3 World Tour Macau 2026” and the “3x3 Greater Bay Area Tour 2026 Finals Macao” will be held this Saturday through next Wednesday, bringing international and regional basketball teams to the city, the Sports Bureau (ID) announced during a press conference at its headquarters in Zape yesterday.

FIBA stands for International Basketball Federation, which is based in Mies, Switzerland, near Geneva.

The FIBA 3x3 World Tour Macau 2026 will take place this weekend at the UNESCO World Heritage-listed Ruins of St. Paul’s, featuring 16 teams competing for the championship and a total prize purse of up to US\$185,000 (1.48 million patacas).

The line-up includes teams Ub (Serbia), Amsterdam RABOBANK (the Netherlands), Shanghai, and Macau’s Cotai WOLFUNITED.

The qualification stage will begin at 11:00 a.m. on Saturday, followed by group matches at 2:30 p.m. On Sunday, the quarter-finals will start at 3:00 p.m., with the semi-finals and final scheduled for 6:00 p.m.



StarMac Entertainment Production Limited CEO Rio Lou Kit Long addresses yesterday’s “FIBA 3x3 World Tour Macau 2026” and the “3x3 Greater Bay Area Tour 2026 Finals Macao” press conference at the Sports Bureau (ID) headquarters in Zape. – Photo: Khalel Vallo

Meanwhile, the 3x3 Greater Bay Area Tour 2026 Finals Macao will follow next Monday to Wednesday, bringing together the top three teams from each leg or qualifier held in Foshan, Zhaoqing, Shenzhen, Hengqin and Macau, alongside additional men’s and women’s teams entering through open registration. According to a statement by the bureau, the competition will present prizes and awards worth more than 700,000 patacas.

Women’s matches will be held next Monday and Tuesday, while the men’s competition will run next Tuesday and Wednesday, the statement said, noting that group matches will take place simultaneously at the Ruins of St. Paul’s and Tap Seac Multisport Pavilion, with the knockout rounds and finals held at the former venue.

At yesterday’s press conference, StarMac Entertainment Production Limited CEO Rio Lou Kit Long said that the events would connect professional international competition, Greater Bay Area (GBA) sporting exchanges and youth development.

He also highlighted plans to work with nearly 20 local restaurants, cultural and creative businesses, and other local brands around the Ruins of St. Paul’s, presenting basketball-themed activities and event-related promotions to encourage spectators to explore the surrounding business district.

Meanwhile, Sports Bureau Head of the Macau Grand Prix and Major Sporting Events Department Vong Ka Kun said that the competitions would promote international and GBA cultural and sporting exchanges while supporting the development of sports tourism.

The events are organised by the bureau and StarMac Entertainment Production Limited, with the Macau-China Basketball Association and Chaiioi Sports Company Limited as co-organisers. The organisers said the programme would combine elite competition with community engagement and opportunities to promote local culture. ■

Exhibition aims to set up platform for exchange of lacquer art



Lush Valley Creative Space (LVCS) President Lei Fong Ieng (fourth from left) poses with representatives and guests for a group photo during yesterday’s opening ceremony at Heartland Artists Gallery on Travessa dos Poços.

– Photo: Armindo Neves

Armindo Neves

The Lush Valley Creative Space (LVCS) held an opening ceremony yesterday for an exhibition at the Heartland Artists Gallery, aiming to build a platform for the exchange of lacquer art between Guangdong and Macau.

According to an LVCS statement released during the ceremony, the exhibition - located on Travessa dos Poços (大井巷) and titled “15 Years of Splendour, Lacquer Mirrors Macao” - also celebrates LVCS’s 15th anniversary and the 27th anniversary of the establishment of the Macao Special Administrative Region (MSAR).

Speaking to the *Post* on the sidelines of the event, the exhibition’s curator and President of LVCS, Lei Fong Ieng, said she first encountered lacquer painting - an art form with a history of seven to eight thousand years - while attending an advanced training course in lacquer painting on the mainland during the pandemic.

She noted that lacquer painting combines characteristics of both mosaic and oil painting, adding that its production process is highly intricate, with a single work taking up to half a year to complete. However, the sense of satisfaction upon completion is immense, and

the works can be preserved for a very long time, she said. Coinciding with the 15th anniversary of LVCS, she invited a master lacquer painter from the Chinese mainland to Macau for an exchange, hoping first to introduce more people to lacquer painting and then gradually promote it within the local community, she said.

Lei added that lacquer painting is both ancient and contemporary, and that it complements Macau’s rustic, historic elements. She plans to create and teach works themed around Macau in the future.

According to the statement, the exhibition runs until December 13 and is open to the public free of charge across two venues - Heartland Artists Gallery and Lush Valley Creative Space on Calçada da Igreja de S. Lázaro (瘋堂斜巷). It is open daily from 12:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m., except Mondays and public holidays.

Lacquer art, according to DeepSeek, is the art of decorating objects with lacquer-a natural, resinous substance (usually sap from the lacquer tree, *Toxicodendron vernicifluum*) applied in thin layers to wood, bamboo, metal, or other materials to create a hard, glossy, durable, and often waterproof surface. ■



Mil-Homens presents beauty of sunset and moonrise in 21 photos

Rui Pastorin

On Friday, Lisbon-born veteran photographer António Duarte Mil-Homens celebrated his 77th birthday, and coinciding with that was the launch of his latest photo showcase “Sunset, Moonrise...”

Featuring 21 photos that were all recently taken in Portugal, those keen on seeing the lensman’s works can find them displayed on the first floor of the Glass House in Praça do Tap Siac (塔石廣場), a venue that compliments the pictures with a view of Macau’s own sunsets and moonrises.

Through his lens, the essentially self-taught Mil-Homens, whose career spans over 52 years, captured the silhouettes of trees illuminated by a setting sun, the sky as it develops colours like a tinge of red and orange during dusk, and a landscape lit up by the Moon and distant, yet bright stars, just to name a few.

In all, organiser Casa de Portugal em Macau (“CPM – Portugal’s House in Macau”) said it hopes that the exhibition will encourage contemplation on “the fleeting beauty of sunset and moonrise”, as noted in a statement at the venue.

The statement quoted CPM President of the Board Maria Amélia António as pointing out that the exhibition proves special for the photographer for his strong bond with the association, having joined its initiatives over the years and taught a variety of photography courses and workshops, as well as “contributed significantly to the enrichment of Macau’s cultural life”.

An award-winning photographer, Mil-Homens’ extensive career started when he picked up his first camera in April 25, 1974, going full-time in 1984. The work he has done since shows a varied career, ranging

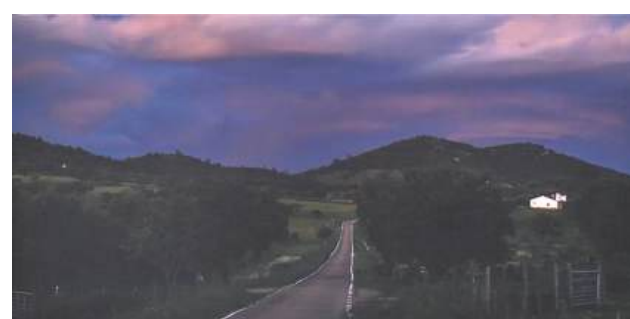
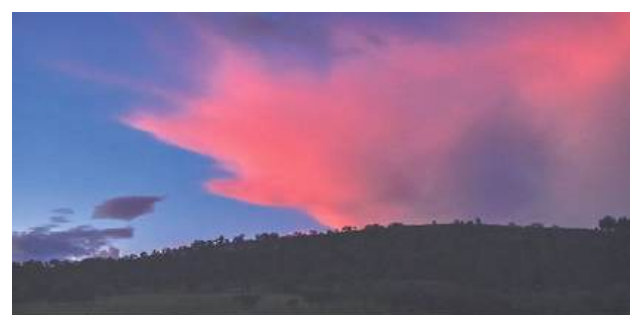
from photojournalism and news reporting to scientific photography. The statement added that among the fields he has covered are teaching and research, advertising, events and spectacles, sports, food, and corporate photography.

Portugal’s anti-colonialist and pro-democracy Carnation Revolution erupted on April 25, 1974 in Lisbon.

Meanwhile, he has held 27 solo exhibitions and joined 37 group photography and art shows, while his photos have also been published in dozens of books. Moreover, he has organised and taught 52 photography courses since 1989, along with various workshops.

Outside of photography, Mil-Homens has published three books and has held two painting exhibitions.

Members of the public can view the works daily from 10:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m. until November 8. Admission is free.



Photos of António Duarte Mil-Homens’ latest exhibition taken at the Glass House on Praça do Tap Siac yesterday by Rui Pastorin



Govt to allocate 80 pct of 2025 surplus to public servants' pension fund



This undated photo taken from the website of the Pension Fund (FP) yesterday shows the entrance to its office, on the ground floor of the government office building near Golden Lotus Square in Zape. The fund is housed on the ground to third floors of the building.

Tony Wong

The government announced yesterday that it will allocate 80 percent of its 2025 financial surplus to the Pension Fund (FP) next year in order to expand the scale of its assets used for earning investment returns, with the aim of consolidating the long-term financial foundation for the government's pension and survivor benefit scheme for public servants -operated and managed by the fund.

According to a new law enacted in August this year, the government can allocate a certain percentage of its financial surplus generated in the previous year to the Pension Fund, provided that the statutorily required amount of the government's basic reserves is met, with the aim of ensuring the financial sustainability of its pension and survivor benefit scheme for public servants. The government can decide whether to make an allocation to the fund each year on a case-by-case basis, depending on its financial surplus generated in the previous year.

The government's fiscal reserves consist of basic reserves and extraordinary reserves.

After consulting the Financial Services Bureau (DSF), the chief executive will determine the allocation percentage - listed in an executive order published in the Official Gazette (BO), according to the new law.

The 80 percent allocation was announced in an executive order gazetted yesterday - signed by Chief Executive Sam Hou Fai on Thursday last week.

According to yesterday's order, the government will allocate 80 percent of its 2025 financial surplus to the 2027 budgeted revenues for the Pension Fund.

The Government Information Bureau (GCS) issued a statement yesterday to elaborate on the government's decision to make the 80 percent allocation.

The statement noted that the government is statutorily required to assume the payment of retirement pensions and survivor benefits to public servants who subscribe to the scheme. However, the accumulated deficit of the Pension Fund is expected to reach 8.986 billion patacas over the next five

years, and in the next 10 years, the deficit is expected to increase even further. Therefore, it is extremely necessary to carry out forward-looking planning and allocation of financial resources for the scheme, the statement underlined.

According to the statement, the government recorded a financial surplus of 19.89 billion patacas last year. Consequently, the relatively abundant and robust budget execution surplus provides favourable conditions to make advance arrangements regarding the future need for a large volume of financial resources for the fund's pension and survivor benefit scheme, the statement said.

Therefore, in accordance with the new law enacted in August, the government decided to make an 80 percent allocation to the Pension Fund - equivalent to 15.91 billion patacas - aiming to meet the fund's legal payment obligations, the statement said.

The statement underlined that the allocation will allow the fund to expand its assets and investment scale, extending the investment cycle. Through long-term investment and capital accumulation via compound interest, potential revenues and financial resilience can be increased, creating a more consolidated long-term financial foundation for its pension and survivor benefit scheme, the statement said.

The statement underlined that the 80 percent allocation will not affect the government's expenditure on various measures aimed at public welfare and social benefits, nor will it affect the statutory allocation to the basic reserves.

The statement underlined that if the potential deficit situation for the Pension Fund is not resolved in a timely manner, future expenditure and injections into social benefits for residents could even be affected due to the fulfilment of statutory payment responsibilities for the fund.

The Pension Fund will cautiously evaluate its investment strategies, with the support of professional investment advisers, to seek reasonable returns under the principle of stable investment, the statement said. ■

Govt urges catering businesses to adopt new waste oil disposal measures

Ida Cheong

Aiming to promote the proper handling of waste cooking oil and enhance restaurant operators' awareness of protecting the public drainage network, the Public Works Bureau (DSOP) and the Environmental Protection Bureau (DSPA) announced in a joint statement yesterday that they recently introduced newly implemented temporary waste cooking oil collection measures for the catering businesses in the areas of Rua de Camilo Pessanha (庇山耶街) and Travessa dos Becos (吉慶里).

The bureaux urged the catering sector to fulfil their responsibility in maintaining grease traps and properly disposing of waste cooking oil to ensure smooth public drainage. Officials from the bureaux distributed promotional leaflets to business owners and staff members of local catering businesses, recommending the installation of grease interceptors while explaining key precautions regarding installation and maintenance, according to the statement.

The statement noted that the bureaux also introduced the operation of two newly established temporary waste cooking oil collection facilities on Rua das Estalagens (草堆街) and



This undated handout photo provided by the Public Works Bureau (DSOP) and the Environmental Protection Bureau (DSPA) yesterday shows their officials promoting the newly implemented temporary waste cooking oil collection measures to the catering businesses in the areas of Rua de Camilo Pessanha and Travessa dos Becos.

Rua de Camilo Pessanha (庇山耶街), encouraging nearby catering businesses to actively utilise these services.

Meanwhile, local recyclers in Macau are currently engaged in collecting waste cooking oil to convert it into green fuel oil, the statement said, adding that the bureaux advised catering businesses to hand over their waste cooking oil to qualified

recyclers to achieve resource recycling. Further details are available on the dedicated page of the Environmental Protection Bureau's website (https://www.dsopa.gov.mo/recycle_list.aspx).

Both bureaux underscored that the catering industry should properly process waste cooking oil and perform regular maintenance and inspections of grease traps to ensure proper filtration. ■

Startup contest '929 Challenge 2026' receives record 511 registrations

Rui Pastorin

A total of 511 approved registrations were received for the startup competition 929 Challenge 2026, with participants from Brazil this year making up the highest number of applicants at over 100 startups, according to a statement by the organisers on Sunday.

929 denotes nine Greater Bay Area (GBA) cities, two special administrative regions (SARs), and nine Portuguese-speaking countries (PSCs).

The statement highlighted that the high number of startups joining from Brazil follows two visits to the country by the organisers to promote the contest this year, as well as the role of private, non-profit autonomous social institution

Sebrae, an acronym for Serviço Brasileiro de Apoio às Micro e Pequenas Empresas ("Brazilian Micro and Small Business Support Service").

The statement quoted 929 co-founder and Association for Entrepreneurship and Innovation Macau - China and Portuguese Speaking Countries (AEIMCP) President Marco Duarte Rizzolio as saying: "Brazil's strong response shows that founders see Macau as a real gateway to China".

The statement noted that the other applicants come from Macau and elsewhere in the GBA, as well as other parts of the Chinese mainland and the PSCs. Healthcare, fintech, energy and deep tech are the leading sectors.

The statement also highlighted

a growing interest in both the contest and the markets, noting that more PSC teams are looking at China, while there is also an increase in Chinese teams looking at PSC markets.

Moreover, ahead of the 929 Summit and finals respectively slated for December 3 and 4, the event's live online "Bootcamp" for participating teams started yesterday and runs through October 24, this year featuring 11 speakers. The statement added that PSC markets, preparing to meet investors and pitching masterclasses, are among the topics to be explored during the bootcamp.

The statement added that live sessions will be followed by one-on-one mentoring, with mentors coming from a network of over 100 investors, founders, academics, and executives, providing each team with feedback.

The boot camp will be followed by pitch submissions, with a judging committee to choose the contest's 16 finalists to pitch in Macau.

According to Gemini, a pitch submission is a brief proposal sent to an editor, producer, publisher, or investor to convince them to greenlight a story, article, creative project, or business idea. ■



This infographic provided on Sunday by the organisers of the 929 Challenge 2026 shows the figures regarding this year's team registration details.

Macau-Guangzhou flights to start Dec 10

Tony Wong

China Southern Airlines will launch a daily flight between Macau and Guangzhou on December 10, according to local media reports yesterday.

The round-trip flights will operate every day.

Departures are scheduled for 7:20 a.m. from Guangzhou and 6:40 p.m. from Macau, on a 65-minute flight operated by an Airbus A320.

Currently, there are three round-trip flights per day between Hong Kong and Guangzhou. The flights are operated by Hong Kong-based Cathay Pacific.

The Hong Kong-Guangzhou flights aim to provide an alternative



Undated file photo of a China Southern Airlines aircraft. — Photo courtesy of TDM

option for travellers to take connecting flights via Hong Kong to various destinations all over the world.

Similarly, according to local media reports yesterday, the upcoming Macau-Guangzhou flights aim to make it more convenient for travellers from Macau to take

connecting flights via Guangzhou to destinations worldwide.

China Southern Airlines, the country's largest airline, is headquartered in Guangzhou. In addition to Guangzhou Baiyun International Airport, Beijing Daxing International Airport is also a major hub for the airline. ■

Redeveloped Huanggang Port linking HK, Shenzhen to open today

SHENZHEN — A launch ceremony was held on Sunday in Shenzhen, announcing yesterday's operational start of the redeveloped Huanggang Port*, an important 24-hour passenger land border checkpoint between Hong Kong and Shenzhen.

With significantly enhanced customs clearance efficiency, the redeveloped immigration and customs checkpoint is expected to boost regional connectivity and facilitate cross-border travel for the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area (GBA).

The port will implement the colocation arrangement and the novel "collaborative inspection and joint clearance" mode, offering round-the-clock clearance services for cross-border passengers and vehicles. It is expected to reduce the overall clearance time from around 30 minutes to approximately five minutes.

As the nation's largest single border checkpoint building and the world's largest land checkpoint complex, the facility covers a total floor area of 689,700 square meters and features four underground and five above-ground floors.

The original Huanggang Port, which opened in 1989, was the country's first large-scale land checkpoint with 24-hour clearance. It has served hundreds of millions of travelers, with daily

passenger traffic peaking at over 60,000 and daily vehicle traffic reaching around 10,000.

Reconstruction on the original site began in 2019 to meet the surging demand for cross-border passage.

— Xinhua, MPD
*The central authorities and the country's official publications routinely use the word "port" (or "port of entry") as a direct synonym and official translation for border checkpoints, border crossings, and immigration and customs clearance facilities. This terminology is rooted in linguistic and administrative conventions used across the Chinese mainland. In Chinese, any designated location handling border entry/exit for passengers, vehicles, or cargo is designated as a 口岸 (kou'an). Literally, 口 (kou) means "opening" or "mouth," and 岸 (an) means "shore" or "bank."

Historically referring to maritime seaports, the modern official Chinese administration uses "kou'an" generically for all designated international and inter-boundary entry/exit facilities.

In official English translations (such as by the General Administration of Customs and local municipal authorities), kou'an is translated standardly as "Port" or "Port of Entry." The term "Port" is applied universally regardless of geography or transportation mode. — Gemini/MPD

Wang Yi meets Russian presidential aide

BEIJING — China's top diplomat Wang Yi met with Russian presidential aide and chairman of the Maritime Board Nikolai Patrushev in Beijing yesterday.

Conveying President Xi Jinping's cordial greetings to President Putin, Wang, a member of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Committee and director of the Office of the Foreign Affairs Commission of the CPC Central Committee, said the close communication between the two heads of state led bilateral relations to a higher quality and a higher level.

Under the guidance of the two heads of state, the strategic mutual

trust between China and Russia has become more solid, cooperation in various fields has become more resilient, and multilateral coordination has been tightened, said Wang.

Wang noted that China and Russia both shoulder important responsibilities in international maritime affairs and have broad prospects for cooperation, adding that China stands ready to work with Russia to enhance the alignment of maritime strategies between the two countries.

Wang expressed congratulations on the State Duma election in Russia last month, noting that the results fully demonstrated the common will of the Russian people.

Patrushev conveyed President Putin's sincere greetings to President Xi, adding that maintaining close exchanges between the two heads of state is the best guarantee for the development of bilateral relations.

Russia is willing to enhance cooperation with China in areas such as multilateral maritime governance, draw on China's useful experience in shipbuilding, logistics, maritime trade and other fields, and join hands with China to promote the building of a maritime community with a shared future, adding a new dimension to the comprehensive strategic coordination between Russia and China, said Patrushev. — Xinhua

Global delegates eye new wine industry landscape at China's top wine base

Analysis

YINCHUAN — Top international representatives at the 47th World Congress of Vine and Wine in Ningxia, the country's top wine-producing area, advocated for deeper global collaboration to reshape the vine and wine sector.

This is the first time the congress, opened yesterday in Yinchuan, capital of Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region, has been hosted in Asia since its launch in 1924. Ningxia, home to 261 wine enterprises, including 130 wineries, produces 140 million bottles of wine annually.

The event, held alongside the 24th

General Assembly of the International Organization of Vine and Wine (OIV), has drawn more than 800 participants, including delegates from 51 OIV member states, foreign diplomats and representatives, leading experts and scholars, and heads of business associations and leading enterprises. China joined the OIV in 2025.

Yvette van der Merwe, OIV's president, hailed China's important role and its growing contribution to the international vine and wine industry, highlighting Ningxia's significant development as a wine-producing region.

The experience of Ningxia, such

as viticulture in specific environments, investment in technology and knowledge, and a vision to create a well-known wine culture and tourism brand, offers important opportunities for international exchange and mutual learning, she said.

With the goal of building a new landscape for the wine industry, the president called for deepening cooperation with relevant authorities, institutions, experts and the wine industry in Ningxia and across China.

That cooperation will include Ningxia-based experts joining OIV's international network and expert groups, exchanges on grape growing, winemaking, climate adaptation and emerging technologies, plus ongoing alignment with international standards and best practices, she said.

The congress marks a new chapter in the cooperation between China and the global vine and wine industry, said John Barker, director-general of the OIV.

Across OIV member states, the industry is deeply affected by climate change, economic pressures, changing social behavior and consumption patterns, geopolitical and trade uncertainties, and the rapid development of digital technologies, he said.

Centering collaboration and science in OIV's mandate, Barker said a multilateral collaboration-

based development path is needed more than ever to tackle challenges and explore opportunities.

At the event, an initiative unveiled by Ningxia's core wine zone, the eastern foothills of Helan Mountain, calls for deepening multilateral coordination, advancing eco-friendly cultivation, boosting innovation, refining standard governance, upholding safety thresholds and unleashing market momentum.

The eastern foot of Helan Mountain has become China's largest contiguous wine grape production area. This region has 607,000 mu, or about 40,467 hectares, dedicated to wine grape cultivation and development, accounting for nearly 42 percent of China's total planting area.

Carole LY, director of the French National Institute of Origin and Quality, noted that Sino-French institutional wine cooperation has spanned more than three decades. Under a long-standing partnership framework, the cooperation has been practical and dynamic, she said.

Describing wine as a messenger of peace, dialogue and culture, Andrian Digolean, state secretary of the ministry of agriculture and food industry of Moldova, said it can transcend boundaries and bring people and regions closer.

He noted that China has been

integrating millennia-old tradition with cutting-edge technology and visionary innovation, showing the sector's boundless potential via close cooperation.

The congress, themed around building a new landscape for the global vine and wine industry, features an opening ceremony, a seminar on high-quality development of the Chinese vine and wine industry, a sci-tech sub-session, industry visits and a closing ceremony.

Over 400 academic papers from 35 countries will be on display at the sci-tech sub-session, introducing cutting-edge technologies that could help drive the transformation and upgrading of the vine and wine industry.

The 6th China (Ningxia) International Wine Culture and Tourism Expo opened alongside the congress, attracting 84 world-renowned wineries and enterprises from distinctive production areas in 16 countries. It has also drawn a total of 146 leading domestic wineries from Ningxia and other core production areas in China.

The local wine industry has also become a driver of tourism. Wineries in Ningxia receive more than 3.7 million tourist visits each year, generating combined benefits of over 50 billion yuan.

— Xinhua



This photo taken yesterday shows an exterior view of the venue of the opening ceremony of the 47th World Congress of Vine and Wine in Yinchuan, capital of the Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region. The 47th World Congress of Vine and Wine opened yesterday in Yinchuan, capital of northwest China's Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region, the country's top wine-producing area. — Xinhua

China-EU consensus on vehicle trade averts escalation of trade frictions: MOC

BEIJING – The consensus reached recently between China and the European Union (EU) on hybrid and electric vehicle trade has helped prevent an escalation of trade frictions, a spokesperson for China's Ministry of Commerce said yesterday.

The spokesperson made the remarks in response to speculation by some foreign media outlets over details of the trade arrangements, particularly those concerning hybrid vehicles, following the latest meeting of the China-EU trade and investment consultation mechanism in Beijing.

The spokesperson said China and the EU had engaged in sustained dialogue under the mechanism and reached consensus on a number of outcomes, helping maintain a stable and balanced relationship between these two key trading partners.

Guided by the principles of mutual respect and equal consultation, the two sides held intensive talks on hybrid and electric vehicle trade, addressing economic and trade differences and each other's concerns in a balanced manner, the spokesperson noted.

Regarding hybrid vehicles, the two sides emphasized and confirmed three basic principles: respect for facts, non-discrimination and compliance with World Trade Organization (WTO) rules.

Citing Eurostat data, the spokesperson said the EU imported 107,000 hybrid vehicles from China in 2024 and 302,000 in 2025.

Building on the 2025 level, the two sides reached an arrangement allowing for further increases, ensuring room for Chinese

enterprises to maintain exports and achieve steady growth while taking into account the legitimate concerns of industries on both sides based on actual conditions, the spokesperson said.

Under the principle of non-discrimination, no measures will specifically target Chinese products, let alone discriminate against Chinese enterprises. The quota allocated to China will be no lower than that granted by the EU to any other source of imports, according to the spokesperson.

The two sides also confirmed that the trade arrangement should comply with WTO rules. China reserves all its rights under the WTO framework, including the right to resort to dispute settlement and seek trade compensation, the spokesperson said.

Regarding electric vehicles, the spokesperson said China and the EU achieved a "soft landing" in the EU's anti-subsidy case in January this year, with the bloc issuing a general guidance document on price undertakings. The EU will continue to advance relevant procedures concerning price undertakings by companies involved in the case, as well as other review procedures, the spokesperson added.

The spokesperson stressed that the consensus, reached on the basis of reciprocity and mutual benefit, has effectively safeguarded the interests of Chinese enterprises, prevented an escalation of China-EU trade frictions, and provided a stable, predictable and sustainable environment for bilateral trade and investment, contributing to the stable, balanced and sound development of China-EU economic and trade relations.

– Xinhua

Xi, PNG governor-general exchange congratulations over 50th anniversary of diplomatic ties

BEIJING – President Xi Jinping and Bob Dadae, governor-general of Papua New Guinea (PNG), yesterday exchanged congratulations on the 50th anniversary of diplomatic relations between the two countries.

In his message, Xi noted that Papua New Guinea is a good friend, good partner and good brother of China in the Pacific island region.

Over the past 50 years since the establishment of diplomatic ties, the two countries have deepened political mutual trust, achieved fruitful results in mutually beneficial cooperation, and expanded people-to-people exchanges, raising bilateral relations to new heights, Xi said. These achievements have benefited the two peoples and injected strong impetus into building a China-Pacific Island countries community with a shared future, said Xi.

Noting that he attaches great importance to the development of China-Papua New Guinea relations,

Xi said that he stands ready to work with Dadae to take the 50th anniversary of diplomatic relations as an opportunity to carry forward traditional friendship, strengthen exchanges and cooperation across various fields, and elevate the comprehensive strategic partnership between China and Papua New Guinea to a new level, so as to deliver greater benefits to the two peoples.

For his part, Dadae said that over the past 50 years, bilateral relations have made significant progress, benefiting both countries and their peoples.

Papua New Guinea cherishes the longstanding friendship with China, firmly upholds the one-China principle, and looks forward to taking the 50th anniversary of diplomatic relations as an opportunity to further deepen and advance bilateral relations, he said.

On the same day, Chinese Premier Li Qiang also exchanged

congratulations with Papua New Guinea's Prime Minister James Marape.

China is willing to work with Papua New Guinea to take the 50th anniversary of diplomatic relations as an opportunity to promote high-quality Belt and Road cooperation and advance the comprehensive strategic partnership between China and Papua New Guinea, Li said in the message.

For his part, Marape said that the Papua New Guinean government highly appreciates China's significant contributions to the country's economic and social development.

Papua New Guinea will continue to uphold the one-China principle it has long adhered to, deepen mutually beneficial cooperation with China across various fields and advance the development of the comprehensive strategic partnership between the two countries, said Marape.

– Xinhua



Premier Li Qiang (right) shakes hands with Tran Thanh Man, chairman of the National Assembly of Vietnam, at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing yesterday.

– Xinhua

China ready to expand cooperation with NZ in services trade, new energy sectors: Li Qiang

BEIJING – China is ready to work with New Zealand to tap the potential of trade in services and expand cooperation in sectors such as new energy vehicles, photovoltaics and wind power, Premier Li Qiang said yesterday during a phone conversation with New Zealand Prime Minister Christopher Luxon.

China-New Zealand relations have maintained steady and sound momentum, with new progress made in cooperation across various fields, Li said.

Meanwhile, the international situation remains complex and evolving, with unilateralism and protectionism continuing to weigh on the global economy, he said, adding that calls from

the international community to safeguard the multilateral system and strengthen openness and cooperation are growing louder.

As supporters and practitioners of multilateralism and free trade, China and New Zealand should strengthen communication and coordination, Li said.

Noting that the two countries will mark the 55th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations next year, Li said China stands ready to work with New Zealand to carry forward their traditional friendship, expand mutually beneficial cooperation and deepen their comprehensive strategic partnership, injecting fresh impetus into the stability, development and prosperity in both

countries, the region and the world.

Li said China is willing to work with New Zealand to remain partners that respect each other and pursue mutual benefit and win-win cooperation.

He called on both sides to continue to expand the scale and improve the quality of bilateral trade in goods, tap the potential of trade in services, and expand cooperation in areas such as new energy vehicles, photovoltaics and wind power to deliver more tangible results.

The premier expressed hope that the two sides will accelerate negotiations on a negative list for trade in services under the China-New Zealand Free Trade Agreement (FTA) and achieve substantive progress at an early date.

The two countries should facilitate people-to-people exchanges and deepen exchanges and cooperation in culture, tourism, education, young people and sub-national entities to strengthen the foundation of friendship between their peoples, Li said.

As members of the Asia-Pacific family, China and New Zealand should also strengthen cooperation within the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) framework and actively advance the building of an Asia-Pacific community, he added.

For his part, Luxon said New Zealand-China relations are developing steadily, with practical cooperation advancing across various fields and benefiting the peoples of both countries.

New Zealand attaches great

importance to its relationship with China and remains firmly committed to the one-China policy, he said.

New Zealand is willing to take the opportunity of next year's 55th anniversary of diplomatic relations to strengthen high-level exchanges with China, deepen mutual understanding and trust, and enhance practical cooperation in trade, tourism, new energy and other areas to advance the comprehensive strategic partnership, he said.

Luxon also expressed New Zealand's support for China's hosting of the APEC Economic Leaders' Meeting.

The two sides also exchanged views on international and regional issues of common concern. – Xinhua

Singapore rolls out haze subsidies as Malaysia extends school closures

Isabelle Leong

SINGAPORE – Singapore rolled out subsidies for haze-related medical treatment yesterday and schools were closed in parts of neighbouring Malaysia, as both countries grapple with persistently unhealthy air quality due to fires in nearby Indonesia.

Singapore again ranked the world’s most polluted major city yesterday afternoon, according to Swiss-based air quality monitor IQAir, as the fires on Borneo and Sumatra islands – intensified by a turbo-charged El Niño weather phenomenon – keep emitting toxic haze.

The fires have created severe haze locally, with tens of thousands of cases of respiratory illnesses.

In Singapore, which recorded an Air Quality Index (AQI) reading of 191 yesterday, the government activated schemes that allow citizens to receive affordable care for haze-related conditions.

The AQI converts measurements of pollutants into a single figure indicating air quality and potential health risks. Readings above 150 are classified as unhealthy, while levels above 300 are considered hazardous.

Free masks

The government subsidies cover conditions including “allergic rhinitis, asthma, bronchitis, conjunctivitis, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, upper respiratory tract infection, and their complications,” the health ministry said in a statement late Sunday.

Treatment is capped at Sg\$10 (under US\$8) for most eligible Singaporeans, and Sg\$5 for senior citizens aged 67 and above.

The city-state last activated its haze subsidy scheme in 2015 when smoke from Indonesian forest fires cloaked Southeast Asia in toxic smoke for weeks, driving up illnesses and leading to school closures and flight cancellations.

Singapore’s National Trades



A pedestrian wearing a mask walks along the boulevard at Marina Bay as buildings are seen shrouded with haze in Singapore yesterday. – AFP

Union Congress yesterday announced that public transport workers and delivery riders could receive free N95 masks.

Its assistant secretary-general Yeo Wan Ling said the National Transport Workers’ Union would also open its canteens at 30 bus interchanges and terminals for riders to refill water bottles and take a break.

In neighbouring Malaysia, schools reopened yesterday in most areas as air quality improved slightly, but remained closed across southern Johor state and parts of the capital Kuala Lumpur and central Selangor state.

Indonesia regularly battles wildfires during the dry season, but the fires have intensified this year because of El Niño, set to be one of the strongest since comparable records began four decades ago.

Experts have also pointed to slash-and-burn land-clearing practices that have changed the naturally fire-resistant landscape.

‘Safety measure’

The transboundary haze has also disrupted regional travel.

Malaysian low-cost carrier Firefly has suspended its route between Sultan Abdul Aziz Shah Airport near Kuala Lumpur and Singapore’s

Seletar Airport since Saturday.

Yesterday, the airline extended flight cancellations until today as a “proactive safety measure”, it said.

Malaysia’s Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim said last week that Indonesian President Prabowo Subianto had “agreed to take necessary steps” to respond to the choking haze, in talks between the two leaders.

Anwar did not provide specific details.

The Malaysian prime minister said he had also told his foreign minister to request a meeting of the 11-nation Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) to discuss the pollution.

Malaysia’s Foreign Minister Mohamad Hasan said yesterday he would raise the issue of transboundary haze at an ASEAN foreign ministers’ meeting ahead of the 11-nation bloc’s 49th summit in Manila next month and seek a regional mechanism to tackle the problem.

Mohamad said Malaysia recognised Indonesia’s efforts to extinguish the fires and sympathised with its challenges.

He said Malaysia hoped that Indonesia “could do something more effective to put out the fire immediately.” – AFP

Indonesia arrests Brazilian with cocaine in shampoo

DENPASAR – A Brazilian woman risks life in an Indonesian prison after she was caught with nearly four kilograms of liquid cocaine hidden in toiletries, police on the popular resort island of Bali said yesterday.

Police and customs officers arrested the 36-year-old shortly after she landed in Bali from Brazil last Tuesday.

They found more than 3.6 kilograms of liquid cocaine in seven bottles of shampoo and other personal care products in her luggage.

“We are committed to ensuring there is no room for illicit drug trafficking in the Bali region,” police spokesman Ariasandy, who like many Indonesians has only one name, told AFP.

Police said the bust was one of the largest liquid cocaine seizures in Bali.

The woman told police she was ordered by a Brazilian man to deliver the drugs to someone in Bali for a payment of US\$50,000.

Indonesia has some of the world’s toughest anti-drug laws, including the death penalty for traffickers, but has maintained a moratorium on executions for several years.

The country has dozens of alleged foreign traffickers on death row.

The woman faces life in prison if found guilty.

Indonesia last carried out the death sentence in 2016, when an Indonesian and three Nigerians convicted of drug offences were executed by firing squad.

In July, a Malaysian pilot was arrested for allegedly smuggling more than 70,000 ecstasy tablets in his suitcase and flying a plane into Indonesia while under the influence of meth, MDMA and cocaine. – AFP

N Korea fires ‘several ballistic missiles’ into Sea of Japan

Kang Jin-kyu

SEOUL – North Korea yesterday fired multiple ballistic missiles off its east coast, Seoul’s military said, after weeks of mounting friction over a landmine explosion along their heavily fortified border.

Since the blast that injured three South Korean soldiers in the Seoul-controlled area of the Demilitarised Zone (DMZ), both countries have touted the test-firing of upgraded missile technology.

“Our military detected around 09:20 [8:20 a.m. Macau time] several ballistic missiles launched from the Pyongyang area towards the East Sea,” the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) said yesterday, referring to the body of water also known as the Sea of Japan.

“Our military has stepped up surveillance and vigilance against possible additional launches,” it added in its statement.

Japan’s defence ministry separately confirmed the launch of at least one suspected ballistic missile.

Some of the North Korean missiles detected flew more than 900 kilometres, the JCS said, while Seoul and longtime ally the United States were now conducting an analysis of their exact specifications.

South Korea’s National Security Office convened an emergency security meeting following the launch to review the country’s military readiness.

A joint Seoul-UN investigation last week concluded that North Korea had planted the landmines that exploded in the DMZ over a year ago, something Pyongyang has angrily denied.

Kim Yo Jong, the powerful sister of North Korean leader Kim Jong Un, has blasted South Korean demands for an apology as “despicable” while separately rejecting an offer of medical equipment from Seoul.

Duelling tests

On October 3, Pyongyang test-fired an intermediate-range ballistic missile that Kim Yo Jong said employed unspecified artificial intelligence technology and was “capable of changing its flight orbit at a low altitude”.

Seoul said days later that it had successfully tested a domestically produced hypersonic glide vehicle (HGV), a weapon carried into the upper atmosphere by rocket boosters or ballistic missiles before gliding towards its targets.

The presidential Blue House said the HGV offered “a new deterrence capability capable of striking key targets within the Korean Peninsula’s operational environment”.

On Thursday, Kim Yo Jong said Seoul must offer “utmost respect” if it hoped to mend ties with the North.

“If they (South Korea) truly wish to restore relations between the DPRK and South Korea, they should be mindful of the other side’s feelings in every word and deed, and first demonstrate the utmost respect, consideration and sincerity,” she said Thursday, using her country’s official acronym.

The ratcheting tensions come as US President Donald Trump’s recent overtures to Pyongyang have raised concerns that Seoul – an ally of Washington – could be sidelined in potential nuclear talks involving the North.

In October, North Korea launched several short-range ballistic missiles a day after Trump suggested he might meet with Kim Jong Un this year.

Seoul and Pyongyang remain technically at war as the Korean conflict ended in 1953 with a truce rather than a peace treaty.

The DMZ is one of the world’s most heavily fortified frontiers, and landmine incidents have previously heightened tensions between the two countries. – AFP

Japan’s opposition party calls on farm minister to resign over scandals

TOKYO – The secretary general of a Japanese opposition party yesterday called on farm minister Kazuo Yana to resign over his controversial remarks about slashing road funding for two municipalities whose leaders did not back him in a past general election, local media reported.

Kyodo News quoted Takeshi Shina of the Democratic Reform Party as saying that Yana must step down voluntarily and that if he does not resign, Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi should dismiss him.

Yana has come under fire following recent media reports that he told supporters in May that fiscal 2026 road budgets had been sharply cut for Nasukarasuyama City and Nakagawa Town, two

municipalities in his constituency whose mayors did not support him in the House of Representatives election in February.

Shina said the remarks amounted to voter intimidation, regardless of whether Yana had actually asked the Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism to cut the funding, the report said.

Amid widespread criticism, Yana last week largely acknowledged making the reported remarks, retracted them and apologized, but said he would not resign.

Although opposition lawmakers called for a full investigation and Yana’s removal, Takaichi said last week that she has no intention of dismissing the embattled minister.

Yana is also facing a newly

reported allegation that he violated the public offices election law by providing free shuttle bus rides to supporters during past lower house elections. The practice could constitute an illegal provision of benefits, according to the report.

Yana, who only became minister of agriculture, forestry and fisheries last month, was among the ruling Liberal Democratic Party lawmakers disciplined over a high-profile political slush fund scandal that came to light in late 2023 and dealt the party a heavy blow.

In addition to the latest call for Yana’s resignation, six opposition parties agreed at a meeting of their upper house Diet affairs chiefs late last week to consider submitting a censure motion against him. – Xinhua

Thousands march in India's capital to demand election chief resign

Arunabh Saikia and Uzmi Athar

NEW DELHI — Thousands of protesters marched in New Delhi yesterday demanding the resignation of India's election chief over alleged misconduct during a voter roll revision, the latest showdown with authorities in the heavily fortified capital.

Opposition parties and supporters of the youth-led Cockroach Janta Party protest movement have taken to the streets in recent days, defying a strict security clampdown to demand a halt to the revision exercise and the resignation of the chief election commissioner.

"You can see how big the crowd is," demonstrator Abhay Aryan, 28, told AFP as protesters marched towards the Supreme Court, chanting slogans and waving placards.

"The government has to listen to the voice of the people."

Critics say the large-scale revision of electoral lists could benefit Prime Minister Narendra Modi's ruling Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party.

The Election Commission of India, which oversees the voting process in the world's most populous nation, has denied wrongdoing.

A protester who gave his name as Mehvaish said he could no longer "tolerate the injustices" meted out by Modi's government.

"We want removal of this government (because) of all the injustices we have suffered in the past 12-13 years," he said.

"Now if they take away our right to vote, what is left with us?"

Rights advocates and critics say Modi's government has eroded democratic freedoms during more than a decade in power, citing pressure on journalists, civil society groups and political opponents — allegations the government rejects.

Thousands detained

Authorities deployed thousands of security personnel across central Delhi for a third straight day, erecting heavy metal barricades and closing key metro stations.

The protests yesterday were led by Rahul Gandhi of the main opposition Congress party, who waved a copy of the constitution as crowds cheered during the procession to the Supreme Court.

He later filed a writ petition in the court through his lawyer, challenging the voter revision exercise.

Public attention has also focused on the police response, after a chaotic weekend in which thousands of protesters including organisers were detained, according to local media reports.

Most of those detained, including three top leaders of the "cockroach" movement, have since been released.

Opposition figures have accused authorities of trying to suppress dissent through mass detentions.

Parliamentarian John Brittas of the Communist Party of India (Marxist) alleged he was "manhandled, dragged, assaulted" by police during Sunday's demonstrations.

"This is not merely an assault on an MP. It is an assault on democratic freedoms and the rule of law," Brittas said.

Police did not respond to questions on detentions or their actions during a news conference on Sunday.

Several journalists covering the protest said they were detained despite prominently displaying their press cards.

Nitin Katiyar, a digital journalist, told *The Times of India* newspaper police had punched him in the eye. AFP could not immediately verify his charge.

'Spirit of resistance'

Hundreds of yellow metal barricades were set up on roads leading to central Delhi, while six major metro stations remained shut.

The protests have become a major political challenge for Modi, drawing together opposition parties, student groups and activists angered by the voter roll revision.

The leaders of the Cockroach Janta Party, which has millions of social media followers, have pledged to continue their protests until Kumar steps down.

They reiterated that pledge yesterday after Delhi Police announced that Jantar Mantar in the heart of Delhi was no longer designated as an official protest site.

"If Modi thinks taking away Jantar Mantar will put an end to protests, he is mistaken," the group's founder Abhijeet Dipke said on social media.

"Jantar Mantar is not just a location but a spirit of resistance that nobody can ever take away."

The revision of voter rolls that started last year has resulted in more than 133 million names being removed from electoral lists, according to media reports.

Critics say the measure has disproportionately affected minorities, particularly Muslims.

Election authorities say the move was intended to eliminate duplicate, deceased and fraudulent entries.

A senior minister from Modi's party accused Gandhi's Congress yesterday of trying to undermine legitimate electoral processes.

"By discrediting constitutional institutions (and) spreading chaos and riots on the streets, all that the Congress is seeking is to seize power," Shivraj Singh Chouhan told reporters. — AFP

Nepal rescuers search for missing after flash flood

Paavan Mathema

KATHMANDU — Nepali rescuers searched for five missing people yesterday, a day after devastating flash floods swept away more than 200 houses and five bridges along the Budhi Gandaki river.

Videos showed a dark, debris-filled river surging through the hills in central Nepal's Gorkha district.

No deaths have been confirmed.

On Sunday, 95 people including nine foreigners were rescued.

"We are continuing our work on rescue and relief," Raja Ram Basnet, Nepal Army spokesman told AFP, adding that four helicopters had been deployed.

"We do not have any new information on the five missing," he added.

About 150 foreign trekkers are in the area, according to the Trekking Agencies' Association of Nepal, many on the popular Manaslu circuit trek.

"We are working with authorities to rescue those who are stranded because of the roads," the association's president Sagar Pandey said.

Authorities were also delivering aid to affected communities, with many residents fleeing their homes on Sunday morning as the torrent hit.

The flood also struck hydropower plants, according to the national disaster agency.

"I screamed out loud to get people out. Just a few minutes after people ran out the flood crashed through," local resident Indra Bahadur Gurung said.

"We have always lived here, and find it difficult to leave. I hope the government will manage something safe for us soon."



Locals stand over sludge along the banks of the Budhi Gandaki river, a day after a flash flood caused by a dry landslide, at Sallari Chumnubri in Nepal's Gorkha district yesterday. — AFP

'Reducing future risks'

Preliminary data suggests that a landslide had dammed the river. It then burst, with the water surging downstream.

"The government has already begun taking the necessary steps to restore normal life," Prime Minister Balendra Shah said in a post on social media late Sunday.

He urged residents to stay in safe locations and to avoid travel on risky roads and bridges.

Nepal is still recovering from devastating floods on August 26, triggered by a mountain glacial collapse, which killed more than 1,400 people and left over 5,000 missing.

Shah told the United Nations last month that the August flooding "was a warning to the world" about the rising dangers of climate change.

Basanta Raj Adhikari, director at the Centre for Disaster Studies at Tribhuvan University, said that

the latest flood showed the need for better monitoring.

"The frequency of the disasters is dangerous... it shows we need to go beyond our traditional river-level based early warning systems," Adhikari said, suggesting satellite images and seismometers could help detect events earlier.

The Kathmandu-based International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development said Sunday that the floods highlighted the "range of hazards capable of generating destructive floods" in Himalayan river systems.

"Understanding what triggered this flood will be critical for reducing future risks and strengthening resilience," the centre's director general Pema Gyamtsho said in the statement.

Heavy rainfall in late September also triggered floods and landslides, killing at least 21 people, according to the disaster agency. — AFP

Pakistan detains chief minister, cabinet members from Khan's party

ISLAMABAD — The chief minister of Pakistan's Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, Sohail Afridi, and several provincial cabinet members have been placed

in preventive detention following the suspension of the provincial government under emergency rule, a minister said yesterday.

Leaders of former Prime Minister

Imran Khan's Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf (PTI) party who are facing legal cases will be formally charged and tried, while the remaining detainees will be released, Minister of State for Interior Talal Chaudhry told the media.

The detentions came after the federal government imposed governor's rule in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, suspending the provincial administration led by the PTI.

The province, which borders Afghanistan, has witnessed persistent militant violence. The federal government has cited security concerns and the provincial administration's alleged failure to effectively address militancy to justify the move.

Khan, who served as prime minister from 2018 to 2022, has been in prison since 2023 while facing multiple legal cases. His party, PTI, has repeatedly demanded his release and criticized actions against its leadership. — Xinhua



Lawyers scuffle with police during a protest in Lahore, Pakistan yesterday, condemning the imposition of emergency rule in Pakistan's Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province amid anti-government demonstrations by the opposition Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party demanding the release of party leader and jailed former Prime Minister Imran Khan. — AFP

Americans Hall and Woodford win economics Nobel for stabilisation models



File photos of the winners of the 2026 Sveriges Riksbank Prize in Economic Sciences in Memory of Alfred Nobel, Robert E Hall (left) and Michael Woodford, are displayed on a screen at the Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences in Stockholm yesterday.

— AFP

Johannes Ledel

STOCKHOLM — US citizens Robert Hall and Michael Woodford were awarded the Nobel economics prize yesterday for their work on how monetary and fiscal policy can better stabilise disruptive economic fluctuations.

The two were honoured for developing new models for managing recessions and other crises that fail to respond to traditional tools.

“On the basis of these models, well-timed fiscal and monetary policy measures can reduce the economy’s peaks and troughs,” the jury said.

The Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences explained in a statement that ever since John Maynard Keynes formulated his economic theories almost a century ago, “stabilisation” policies had long let officials boost economic growth when needed.

But during the oil shocks in the 1970s, the Keynesian models that governed when and how action should be taken no longer worked.

“Rather than basing the models on statistical links between macroeconomic variables, such as inflation, production and consumption, they chose to build them on a microeconomic foundation,” the jury said.

Hall and Woodford’s models include an “understanding for how the total mass of individual households and businesses affect the economy through their actions”, it said.

A fundamental aspect of this is the understanding that households are forward-looking when making decisions about spending or saving.

This means the way governments and central banks communicate their policies can influence people’s views of the future when making such decisions.

Exam plans

In 1978, Hall, now 83 and a Stanford University professor, published a seminal article on consumption. The academy described this as “something of a eureka moment” and his work then became key to the development of modern research on consumption.

In 2003, Woodford published a book where he presented a “New Keynesian macro model built upon microfoundations,” the academy said.

“The laureates’ work has provided us with a stable theoretical foundation for the models that are now used by central banks and governments around the world,” said John Hassler, chair of the prize-awarding committee.

“It’s a staggering piece of news,” Woodford told the Nobel Foundation in an interview after the announcement.

Woodford, who was born in 1955 and is a professor at Columbia University, said he was preparing for an exam for his students.

“They’re probably hoping I’ll cancel the exam,” he said, laughing.

A concrete example of his work implemented in practice was when the 2008 financial crisis created a situation where “traditional tools of monetary policy were not really adequate to deal with the problem of restoring economic activity,” Woodford told reporters via phone during the announcement of the prize.

Interest rates had already been lowered to zero in many countries.

One of the new approaches employed by central banks was to start making “more explicit statements” on where they believed guiding interest rates were headed in the future, which continues to this day.

“I think it did contribute to better stabilisation. It didn’t magically solve the problem, but I think it was an important contribution,” Woodford said.

Condoleezza Rice, director at the Hoover Institution, where Hall is a senior fellow emeritus, said he “has been instrumental in the way policy leaders think about the free market economy.”

Different situation

The decision to honour work on monetary policy comes as the Federal Reserve faces unprecedented pressure from President Donald Trump to cut interest rates. The US central bank recently hiked rates to combat inflation.

Fed Chair Kevin Warsh, who assumed office in May, has also revamped the bank’s communication strategy.

Warsh has reduced transparency around Fed discussions on monetary policy and stepped away from providing roadmaps of potential future actions, arguing markets should react to data rather than analysing the wording of central bank statements.

“I think it’s very appropriate to periodically reassess these things,” Woodford told AFP in an interview, noting it was not yet clear what the new communication strategy would be.

Woodford also noted the approach developed after the 2008 financial crisis “was developed in a situation that was certainly very different from where we find ourselves right now.”

The economics prize is the only Nobel not among the original five created in the will of Swedish scientist Alfred Nobel, who died in 1896.

It was instead created through a donation from the Swedish central bank in 1968. But like the Nobels in chemistry and physics, the Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences chooses the winner using the same selection process.

Like other Nobels, the economics prize consists of a diploma, a gold medal and a US\$1.2 million cheque. — AFP

Pope to enter hospital today for lung operation

VATICAN CITY — Pope Leo XIV will be admitted to hospital this morning for an operation to remove a lump from his lung, the Vatican said.

The 71-year-old Leo announced on Sunday that he would undergo an operation “in the coming days”.

The surgery to remove a pulmonary nodule, a small growth of tissue in the lung, will mark the pope’s first hospitalisation since he became head of the 1.4 billion Catholics on May 8, 2025.

Vatican spokesman Matteo Bruni told AFP yesterday that the pontiff would be admitted on “Tuesday, late morning”.

The recovery time could be about a week, the Vatican said. Leo’s audiences have been cancelled until October 20.

The operation is expected to take place at Rome’s Gemelli hospital, which has a dedicated papal suite.

In a surprise announcement following Angelus prayers on Sunday, Leo told assembled crowds in St Peter’s Square that doctors had discovered the nodule “at a very early stage” during recent medical checks.

“The doctors believe it would be right to intervene and so, following their advice, I have decided to have the operation to remove it,” he said.

General anaesthetic

A pulmonary nodule is a small growth in the lung. Most are benign, meaning they are non-cancerous. But a small percentage can be an early stage of lung cancer.

Most small nodules cause no symptoms and are only discovered

during checks for other health issues.

Larger nodules can cause shortness of breath, chest pain and persistent coughing — sometimes with blood.

The operation is normally carried out under general anaesthetic with the patient breathing through a tube.

Rome’s Gemelli hospital, north of the Vatican, is where popes are usually treated.

Leo’s predecessor Francis spent weeks there for treatment before his death last year.

John Paul II, head of the Church from 1978 until his death in 2005, was treated nine times at Gemelli.

A top-floor apartment was set up at the hospital, accessed by a long corridor guarded by Italian and Vatican police.

Besides the pope’s room, the suite reportedly includes a meeting room for medical staff, a kitchen, bathroom and rest areas, as well as a small chapel.

Latin America trip

Chicago-born Leo, the first US pope, is believed to generally be in good health, enjoying sports, especially playing tennis.

He is expected to recover from the operation in time for a planned visit to Latin America next month.

The 11-day official trip from November 6-17 will see him visit Uruguay, Argentina, and Peru.

Since his election, the former Robert Francis Prevost has gradually imprinted his style on the leadership of the Catholic Church, finding his voice as he takes on some pressing issues, from conflicts to AI. — AFP



The faithful sit near a life-size cutout of Pope Leo XIV inside Chiclayo Cathedral in the Lambayeque department (region) of northern Peru on Sunday.

— AFP

EU says Palestinian polls should be held ‘as soon as possible’

BRUSSELS — The EU’s top diplomat Kaja Kallas said yesterday that Palestinian legislative elections should be held “as soon as possible”, after they were delayed to 2027.

Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas on Saturday postponed the polls — due to be held on November 28 — to September next year, official media said, confirming widespread speculation they would be deferred.

“Ministers regretted the postponement of Palestinian elections. Palestinian legislative and presidential elections should take place as soon as possible,” Kallas said, after a meeting of EU foreign ministers.

Legislative elections, which the West has strongly advocated for, have not been held since 2006.

Now the elections will be held alongside the presidential vote on September 11, 2027, Abbas said in a decree, blaming “obstacles” imposed by Israel, according to the Palestinian official news agency Wafa.

Holding elections is part of the reforms demanded by the international community, including the European Union, which is the biggest international financial supporter of the Ramallah-based Palestinian Authority.

— AFP, MPD

Germany probes sex assault using robot

FRANKFURT AM MAIN – German police are investigating a 16-year-old and 19-year-old for allegedly using a robot to sexually assault a teenage girl, and live-streaming the act on social media, officials said yesterday.

The victim, aged 16, was with two friends in the western city of Cologne late Saturday when the 1.2 metre robot approached her, police said.

The device, coloured red and gold, is then alleged to have touched the girl on the buttocks and performed thrusting motions, they said.

The 16-year-old male, allegedly the owner, and the 19-year-old man are “said to have filmed the alleged assault, streamed it live on social media, and commented on it,” said a Cologne police statement.

A video circulating on platform TikTok shows a red and gold humanoid robot, accompanied by two males, pressing up against a teenage girl, who screams and moves away.

Police were alerted and found the robot in a car boot, where the owner is suspected of having hidden it.

Authorities seized the robot and two phones belonging to the suspects, who are now under investigation. –AFP

French supermarkets suffer refrigerator shutdown after ‘unprecedented’ cyberattack

Aurélie Carabin

PARIS – Major French supermarket chains yesterday said they were hit by a cyberattack that caused their refrigerators to shoot up in temperature in hundreds of stores, forcing spoiled food to be thrown away and raising concerns about food security.

Top retailers E. Leclerc, Intermarche and Cooperative U confirmed to AFP they suffered a cyberattack that Cooperative U’s chief executive described as “unprecedented”.

“Food security requires more attention at all levels,” said the EU’s food and agriculture commissioner Christophe Hansen on X, condemning the attack and saying such “exploitation of food” was now a “reality”.

At least 300 shops of Intermarche or its Netto brand were targeted, along with over 100 Cooperative U outlets, and several E. Leclerc stores, the retailers told AFP in separate statements.

Paris prosecutors confirmed the attack, which reportedly also hit other major chains, and also indicated it had sparked fires.

BFM TV said hackers “managed to remotely trigger the forced defrosting of the refrigeration systems in numerous stores”.

Those branches that were affected will have to “throw away all of the products” that are fresh and frozen, Intermarche told AFP.

Specialist French retail sector news website jebosseengrandedistribution.fr said other retail giants Carrefour Market and Monoprix were affected but the companies have yet to confirm this.

E. Leclerc confirmed to AFP “that a cyberattack affected one of its refrigeration equipment suppliers,” resulting in “repercussions

on the operation of refrigeration systems in several stores”.

A source close to the issue said refrigeration control systems from Danish manufacturer Danfoss were targeted.

Danfoss told AFP in a statement that most of the affected equipment was “legacy” products which “no longer receive software or security updates”.

It said its AK-SM800 and AK-SC355 fridge regulator systems were notably affected, with a version of the former using “outdated firmware”. It added that it had long advised supermarkets to update from those models. Danfoss gave no figures of how many systems were affected.

Effort to contain the hack

A person close to French Prime Minister Sébastien Lecornu said France’s cyber security agency had already identified “a vulnerability in software supplied by a Danish company and has contacted the vendor”.

“It is liaising with its European counterparts, as other countries may be affected,” and is seeking “to identify other French companies involved in order to alert them” and “prevent the spread”, the source added.

The chief executive of Cooperative U, Dominique Schelcher, described the attack as “unprecedented” and confirmed the cyberattack had affected refrigeration systems since Sunday night.

“Targeting equipment essential to the preservation of fresh products and to the food supply of the French people is extremely serious and is unprecedented. It is unacceptable,” he wrote on X.

He added that the company’s teams were

“fully mobilised” to restore the situation as quickly as possible.

“An investigation will be necessary to shed full light on this attack,” he added.

The office of the Paris prosecutor confirmed to AFP that an investigation has been opened into “the large-scale cyberattack affecting the refrigerators of several major food retail chains across France”.

The probe will help “identify the victims and establish the link with the damage they reported in terms of foodstuff losses and the outbreak of fires”, the prosecutor’s office said.

Intermarche condemned the food waste and financial losses resulting from the attack, without providing figures.

BFM TV said temperatures were “altered remotely, resulting in the destruction of stocks of fresh and frozen products”.

Rising fears of hybrid attacks

The incident comes against the background of growing concern over the potential havoc that can be caused in Europe in all sectors by malicious actors carrying out cyberattacks.

President Emmanuel Macron, a strong supporter of Ukraine in its fight against the Russian invasion, last month ordered measures to protect France’s critical infrastructure from Russian “hybrid attacks”.

Industrial equipment such as refrigeration units, long isolated from the internet, are now connected via sensors or remote monitoring systems, Antoine Hautin of cybersecurity consultancy Almond told AFP.

By likely affecting hundreds of units simultaneously, the attack demonstrated “a certain level of sophistication,” he added. –AFP

New York’s notorious Rikers jail awaits elusive closure

Raphaëlle Peltier

NEW YORK – New York’s notorious Rikers Island jail, long criticised for unsanitary and violent conditions, will miss a deadline for the vast complex to close down, prompting disappointment from activists.

The jail, which opened in 1932 and has counted John Lennon’s killer Mark David Chapman, rapper Tupac Shakur, and Sex Pistols musician Sid Vicious among its inmates, was due to shutter by 2027.

That was a pledge by former mayor Bill de Blasio, responding to persistent issues ranging from staff shortages, broad drug use and broken cell doors and windows.

He promised to replace Rikers with smaller facilities, but their construction is lagging behind schedule.

Lauren Stossel, a former psychiatrist at the jail who now sits on New York City’s independent Board of Correction, has raised several concerns about the jail.

“Conditions generally, I think, are very poor,” she told AFP, adding that violence is “rampant.”

Rikers, which sits on the East River between the Bronx and Queens boroughs, primarily holds people who are awaiting trial in New York, as was the case for disgraced producer Harvey Weinstein.

Mayor Zohran Mamdani, who took office this year, has strongly supported closing Rikers but has acknowledged the city will not meet the 2027 deadline.

“We are very focused on advancing the closure of Rikers Island on the fastest timeline possible,” said Dana Kaplan, who is overseeing the mayor’s efforts to shutter the jail.

“This can’t just be a project that’s about replacing one set of buildings with the other. It really is about a transformational vision of our city’s pretrial justice system.”

“We see the closure of Rikers Island as part of shutting the door on what has been a stained history in our city of a correctional system that does nothing to serve the people in its custody or the staff that work there every day,” Kaplan said.

The first calls to close Rikers date back to the 1960s, driven by dangers for both inmates and correction officers –

three of whom were injured by an inmate in early September.

Politicians and public opinion rallied to the cause in the 2010s partly due to fierce campaigning by families and former inmates.

Darren Mack, who was once held at Rikers and co-founded the Freedom Agenda criminal justice nonprofit, pointed to the “human cost and the financial cost” of the jail.

The Vera Institute of Justice nonprofit, which wants to see Rikers closed, has attributed 48 deaths in New York City jails from 2022 to 2025, while Rikers has an annual operating budget of nearly US\$3 billion.

Insha Rahman, president of Vera, said both the COVID-19

pandemic and the previous administration of mayor Eric Adams produced delays in shutting down Rikers.

But, she added, “I feel more hopeful today about the progress and the opportunity in front of us than I have at any other moment.”

Until the jail can be closed, activists and city officials are calling for basic repairs such as to hundreds of cell doors that are broken.

They also want better social and educational programs, as well as a reduction in the inmate population from over 6,500 to 4,000 – driven by quicker court proceedings and transferring inmates to other units. –AFP



This photo taken last Monday shows the entrance to the notorious Rikers Island prison in the Queens borough of New York City.

–AFP

Spanish court rules thousands of overseas voters out of coming election

MADRID – Spain’s Supreme Court on Monday maintained its suspension of the voting rights of overseas voters who obtained Spanish nationality under a law for the descendants of exiles of the Franco dictatorship, potentially excluding many thousands from November’s election.

The ruling is a blow for Socialist Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez, who is battling unfavourable polls to try and extend his eight-year premiership and wanted the suspension lifted.

His left-wing government passed a law in 2022 that granted nationality to the descendants of Spaniards who fled the country during the 1936-1939 civil war and part of General Franco’s 1939-1975 dictatorship.

But the conservative and far-right opposition accused Sánchez of exploiting the measure to add to the electoral register a mass of left-leaning voters from abroad, mainly Latin America.

In September, before Sánchez

called the election, the Supreme Court provisionally suspended the voting rights of some of the beneficiaries, requiring more evidence of their ties to victims of repression.

On Monday, it announced in a statement that it had rejected an appeal from the state legal service against the suspension, which is set to remain in force for the November 29 vote.

The court said its ruling would not apply to those who could prove they were children or grandchildren of Spaniards who “suffered exile for political or ideological reasons, or for reasons of belief or sexual orientation”.

‘Manufacture voters’

As of August 1, the overseas voter register included more than 163,000 people who had acquired Spanish nationality through the 2022 law, according to the court’s ruling.

Almost 97,000 further nationality applications had been



Spain's Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez gestures as he arrives at a pre-campaign rally of the Spanish Socialist Workers' Party (PSOE) in Dos Hermanas, near Seville, on Saturday, ahead of the November 29 early legislative elections. – AFP

approved but yet to be added to the register by the end of August, and more than 304,000 requests were still being studied, the ruling said.

It was unclear how many of these voters would be excluded from the election.

Sánchez has dismissed the accusations of manipulating the electoral register, slamming the main conservative People’s Party (PP) and far-right Vox for wanting to take away basic rights from Spanish citizens.

“What does this mean? That the grandchildren of the exiles of Francoism will not be able to vote, and the grandchildren of the Francoist regime will?” he told a campaign rally in the northwestern city of Ponferrada on Sunday.

PP leader Alberto Núñez Feijóo, who tops most polls, welcomed the decision on X, saying the court “has again put a limit on the government’s irresponsibility and put the common good before its haste and its botched work”.

Vox’s leader Santiago Abascal told right-leaning online newspaper Okdiario: “You cannot manufacture voters illegitimately and illegally... we’ve caught him [Sánchez] red-handed.”

Sánchez, a global leftist hero for his clashes with US President Donald Trump and Israel, brought forward a vote originally scheduled for 2027 after failing to pass housing decrees that aimed to placate nationwide protests. – AFP



Mozambican President Daniel Chapo (center, front) is briefed on wheat cultivation during a harvesting ceremony at the Wanbao rice farm in Gaza Province, Mozambique, on Oct. 3. Chapo called for stronger agricultural cooperation between Mozambique and China and expressed hope that the Wanbao farm’s cooperation model could be expanded to other parts of the country. – Xinhua

Lula stages mass rally ahead of presidential run-off

SÃO PAULO – Brazilian President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva led a mass rally on Sunday to call for more days off for workers ahead of an election runoff against his right-wing opponent Flavio Bolsonaro.

A sea of people massed along São Paulo’s Avenida Paulista, which was awash in red, the colour of Lula’s Workers’ Party (PT).

The leftist leader, vying for a fourth term in office, is trying to

regain ground on Bolsonaro who was the surprise winner of the first-round vote on October 4.

Polls show the son of former President Jair Bolsonaro is favoured to win the October 25 runoff.

While Bolsonaro has proposed a plan to cut public spending, inspired by Argentina’s Javier Milei, Lula is looking to make improved working conditions a key plank of his campaign.

The Senate is due to vote tomorrow on legislation, approved by the lower house in May, to increase weekly paid days off from one to two, and reduce the maximum working week from 44 to 40 hours.

Bolsonaro “has to say whether he is in favour of workers resting more or continuing to work longer hours,” Lula told reporters.

Bolsonaro has labelled the proposal as “opportunistic.” – AFP

Thailand, Timor-Leste to open talks on rice trade deal, push for direct flights

BANGKOK – Thailand and Timor-Leste agreed on Friday to begin negotiating a rice trade agreement and to push for direct flights between the two countries as their prime ministers pledged closer cooperation on food security and tackling online scams.

Thai Prime Minister Anutin Charnvirakul and his Timor-Leste counterpart, Xanana Gusmão, who is on a two-day official visit to Bangkok, said in a joint statement that they would open talks on a memorandum of understanding (MoU) on rice trade to strengthen food security in Timor-Leste.

The leaders stressed the need for enhanced air connectivity to advance economic relations and tourism, and foster people-to-people ties. They called for the earliest possible conclusion and implementation of an air services agreement so that direct air links could begin.

The two sides also agreed to step up cooperation against online scams and other transnational crime.

The two countries’ foreign ministries signed a memorandum establishing a bilateral consultation mechanism, with the first round to be held in Timor-Leste. – Xinhua

Bank of Portugal raises 2026 growth forecast to 2.3 pct

LISBON – The Portuguese economy is projected to grow by 2.3 percent in 2026, accelerating from previous estimates, the Bank of Portugal said last week in its latest economic bulletin.

This growth is driven by Recovery and Resilience Plan (PRR) fund disbursements, fiscal measures and stronger export performance, the bank said in a statement on Wednesday.

The forecast represents an upward revision of 0.5 percentage points from the June projection, and Portugal’s growth is expected to remain above the eurozone average throughout the 2026-2028 period.

Inflation, meanwhile, is forecast to reach 3.1 percent in 2026. It will then ease to 2.4 percent in 2027 and 2.0 percent in 2028, as the effects of the energy shock dissipate and labor cost growth moderates, in

line with eurozone projections.

The labor market is expected to remain favorable, though employment growth will slow, in the context of reduced migration flows compared with 2021-2024. Employment is projected to grow by 1.7 percent in 2026, 0.7 percent in 2027 and 0.3 percent in 2028.

The composition of growth is expected to shift, with a smaller contribution from private consumption and a larger one from exports. Real household income is projected to slow, reflecting wage deceleration and, in 2026, the unanticipated impact of higher prices.

The Bank of Portugal has identified predominantly downside risks to economic activity and upside risks to inflation, with both largely contingent on the evolution of geopolitical tensions in the Middle East. – Xinhua

Major anti-fraud operation launched in Portugal

LISBON – The European Public Prosecutor’s Office (EPPO) launched one of its largest operations in Portugal last week, with 250 search and seizure actions carried out simultaneously across the country and more than 20 arrest warrants executed.

Wednesday’s operation, targeting suspected fraud involving EU funds including Portugal’s Recovery and Resilience Plan, mobilized approximately 700 Judiciary Police (PJ) officers and 300 inspectors, was primarily in the northern region around Porto,

with ramifications extending to the Greater Lisbon area.

The suspected losses to the Portuguese state exceed 100 million euros (US\$112 million), according to local media agencies.

Two separate inquiries are at the center of the operation, both involving VAT carousel fraud schemes in which thousands of mobile phone handsets were traded in simulated cross-border transactions between EU companies, some of them shell companies created solely for the purpose,

enabling perpetrators to either avoid paying VAT or fraudulently claim VAT refunds.

Suspects face charges of criminal association, tax fraud, money laundering, corruption and misappropriation of subsidies. Detainees would be brought before the Porto Criminal Investigation Court, according to the reports.

The operation also involved simultaneous searches and arrests in other EU member states whose public finances were allegedly defrauded. – Xinhua

Arsenal lose Hincapie and Zubimendi in freak double blow



LONDON – Mikel Arteta said Piero Hincapie and Martin Zubimendi would both miss Arsenal's Champions League match with Lille after suffering freak ankle injuries in their warm-down after Saturday's win against Leeds.

Ecuador defender Piero Hincapie, a late substitute in the 2-1 victory at the Emirates, was carried off the pitch after hurting himself in the post-match session.

Arsenal boss Arteta told his pre-match press conference yesterday that Spain midfielder Zubimendi also suffered an injury in the warm-down.

"We had a training session planned after the game for the players that didn't have enough minutes to get everybody the recovery day on Sunday, and to get everybody in the right rhythm, and in two very unfortunate actions, we lost two players, and

yeah, not great," he said.

"We need to assess them. Today (yesterday) they have further scans to see where they are, and they will have a timeframe for how long they'll be out."

The Spaniard added: "What can you do? If I knew I had a crystal ball, I'd say, 'Guys, go in the jacuzzi, everybody, and see you tomorrow.'"

Arteta confirmed both players would miss the home game against French Ligue 1 team Lille today, adding: "Piero's one looks a little bit more serious, I think, but we have to wait and see."

Last season's Champions League finalists beat Napoli in their opening match in the competition last month.

Arsenal are second in the Premier League, three points behind Manchester City.

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

– AFP/MPD



Arsenal's Spanish manager Mikel Arteta (centre) takes a team training session at the Arsenal training centre in London Colney, north of London, yesterday, on the eve of their UEFA Champions League football match against Lille. - Arsenal's Spanish manager Mikel Arteta (C) takes a team training session at the Arsenal training centre in London Colney, north of London, on October 12, 2026, on the eve of their UEFA Champions League football match against Lille.

– AFP

Premier League in limbo as Man City soar



Kieran Canning

LIVERPOOL – Manchester City silenced a hostile Liverpool crowd in their first match since being found guilty of breaching Premier League financial regulations but there is a deep sense of uncertainty over what it actually means.

Enzo Maresca's men are top of the table with six wins out of six after their impressive 3-0 win at Anfield on Sunday.

Yet those points could count for nothing unless City are successful in their appeal against the findings of an independent commission that found them guilty of more than 100 breaches of Premier League rules.

No sanction has yet been decided, but the club could face a severe points deduction leading to relegation, or even expulsion from the English top flight.

There is even speculation that City could be stripped of the three Premier League titles they won between 2009 and 2018, the period to which the charges relate.

The Premier League, which has a huge global reach, faces an appeal process likely to drag on for months, putting a question mark against every City result, and with huge potential implications for other clubs.

"We're sat here not knowing what it means," former Manchester United captain turned pundit Gary Neville told Sky Sports on Sunday.

"City supporters will be delighted (with the win), but I don't think they recognise right now the stain, the stigma and the damage this is going to do to them."

The BBC's chief football writer, Phil McNulty, said the team's impressive win at Anfield had been overshadowed by what was happening off the pitch.

"Every victory, every league table, will come with a metaphorical asterisk until clarity and finality comes," he said. "No one knows when this will be."

Andoni Iraola's Liverpool are



Liverpool fans hold signs mocking Manchester City's financial scandal as the television crew work pitch-side ahead of the English Premier League match between Liverpool and Manchester City at Anfield in Liverpool, north west England on Sunday.

– AFP

ninth in the table, nine points behind leaders City.

But even if Liverpool fail to challenge for the title, the three points lost on Sunday could cost them dearly in the battle for a place in the Champions League.

Potential sanctions against City could also have an impact on the battle for relegation.

"That today, what does it mean going forward?" former Liverpool defender Jamie Carragher said on Sky Sports.

"This has to be done before the end of the season. There's no way this can carry on to the end of the season because we're all getting kidded."

Liverpool anger

The Premier League announced late last month that an independent commission had found that City had arranged "sham" deals to artificially inflate revenues and reduce costs by more than £900 million (US\$1.2 billion) between 2009 and 2018.

Liverpool feel particularly aggrieved, having finished second behind the Manchester club in the Premier League three times in the past 12 years.

City's rivals believe the Abu

Dhabi-backed club's spending in the 2009-2018 period built the foundations for a golden era that continues to bear fruit.

The Premier League leaders spent around £460 million (US\$609 million) in the 2026 summer transfer window - a new Premier League record for a single window - as new boss Maresca reshaped the squad following the departure of Pep Guardiola.

One of City's expensive new signings, midfielder Elliot Anderson, admitted the criticism of the club had galvanised the players as they stepped out at Anfield.

"We've got to stick together," said the England midfielder. "I think it really brings us together. It gives you that determination to come out here, everyone is against you, and turn them over, which we did."

Anderson and his teammates will have to get used to their new reality as the whole of English football waits for a definitive decision in a case that has rumbled on for years.

As chants, banners, flags and scarves at Anfield showed, City stand accused of cheating their way to the top - and opposition fans will not be silenced.

– AFP



Atletico consistency highlights Man United instability since Ferguson

MADRID – Manchester United head to the Spanish capital in search of a morale-boosting Champions League victory against Atletico Madrid today, but their trip is also a harsh reminder of the stability they have lacked since Sir Alex Ferguson's departure.

Diego Simeone has coached Atletico since December 2011, over a year before United's greatest ever manager retired in May 2013, after 26 trophy-laden years at the helm.

In the years since Ferguson left, United have gone through a series of slumps under seven permanent managers, as well as other caretakers and interims, and failed to win a single Premier League title.

By contrast, Atletico have maintained their position among Spain's elite under Simeone, winning La Liga in 2014 and 2021 despite battling against the financial

and sporting might of giants Barcelona and Real Madrid.

The Rojiblancos have played in the Champions League in every season since 2013-14, reaching the final twice and the semi-finals on two further occasions.

United, however, have missed out on Europe's top competition multiple times since Ferguson's departure, a remarkable decline for a club that spent much of the Scot's reign as one of the continent's dominant forces.

Atletico have kept a strong identity under Simeone, in terms of their non-negotiable work ethic and drive, even if they have turned from a rock-solid defensive outfit into a team more comfortable on the attack.

United have had a string of managers, with different philosophies and consistency only in their lack of sticking power.

Even Atletico's stadium is a

reminder of their differences. The modern Metropolitano will host the Champions League final in June, having already staged the 2019 showpiece, won by United's rivals Liverpool, while Manchester United's Old Trafford was not selected as a venue for Euro 2028.

Continuity

Atletico supporters have their own host of complaints, particularly with expectations rising over Simeone's tenure, but when contrasted with the constant upheaval at Old Trafford, they can perhaps be grateful for some of the continuity they have enjoyed.

This season, Atletico have started well despite uncertainty surrounding former Manchester City striker Julian Alvarez during the summer.

The Argentina forward ultimately stayed in Madrid despite trying to

force through a move to Barcelona, and is beginning to find his form.

Alvarez hit the post as a substitute as Atletico snatched a late 2-1 win at Alaves on Saturday to record a fourth consecutive victory.

"I thought Julian looked good today," said Simeone. "He came on with enthusiasm, eager to do well and help the team. He finished the match well."

Even without Alvarez playing a key role, Simeone's side are second in La Liga and beat Jose Mourinho's Real Madrid before the recent international break.

Michael Carrick's United, meanwhile, are struggling to find the same consistency, sitting 13th in the Premier League and enduring their worst start to a domestic campaign since 1986/87.

The draw against Tottenham on Saturday increased the scrutiny on Carrick and his team. The Red Devils

have two victories from eight matches across all competitions this season.

"The reality is the reality, we've got to accept it," said Carrick.

"We need to put things in a direction, in a positive direction quite quickly, that's pretty plain."

The Red Devils have been criticised for a lack of running this season, including against Tottenham, who covered more kilometres and sprinted both further and more times. Something which would never fly for Atletico's task-master Simeone.

Man United hammered Azerbaijan side Sabah 4-0 in their Champions League opener but the visit to the Metropolitano offers a vastly different proposition, against a team with wind in their sails and a culture of grit shaped over more than a decade.

The game will be played at 3:00 a.m. tomorrow morning, Macau time.

– AFP/MPD

Eala stunned by world No. 217 in Wuhan Open 1st-round exit

Tennis

WUHAN — Filipina star Alexandra Eala suffered a shock 4-6, 6-3, 6-3 first-round defeat against 217th-ranked Chinese qualifier Shi Han at the Wuhan Open yesterday.

Eala, the 13th seed, missed last week's China Open in order to compete in the Asian Games in Japan, where she claimed a bronze medal for the Philippines. Her return to the tour did not go as planned.

Just one week separates Eala and Shi in age and despite the gulf in their experience, very little separated the two 21-year-olds yesterday.

Eala is ranked 19 in the world, a title winner on the WTA Tour and a former semi-finalist at the WTA 1000 level. Shi, meanwhile, is ranked outside the top 200 and entered the clash with just two tour-level victories under her belt.

For large stretches of their show-down though, their contrasting positions were completely unnoticeable.

Eala shook off trouble on her own serve and converted her first break point opportunity of the match to scoop the opening set in 54 minutes.

The second set followed a similar pattern but this time Shi utilised her powerful backhand to break Eala for a 4-3 advantage and she soon drew level to force a decider.

Riding a wave of momentum, Shi grabbed a seventh game in a row to leap to a 3-0 lead in the final set as Eala faded.



China's Shi Han hits a return to Philippines' Alexandra Eala during their singles match at the Wuhan Open tennis tournament in Wuhan, Hubei Province yesterday. — AFP

Shi finished the job to claim the first tour-level top-100 victory of her career and book a second-round date with former US Open finalist Leylah Fernandez.

Earlier, world number 91 Wang Xiyu opened up the evening session with a near-flawless 6-2, 6-0 performance against her compatriot Wang Xinyu in what was a highly-anticipated Chinese derby.

The left-handed Xiyu, who recently clinched the gold medal at the Asian Games to secure qualification for the Los Angeles 2028 Olympics, won the last nine games of the contest with Xinyu to set up a second-round meeting with

fellow wildcard Mia Pohankova.

Meanwhile, freshly-crowned China Open champion Zheng Qinwen announced her withdrawal from her home tournament in Wuhan citing fatigue and a right shoulder injury, a day after becoming the first Chinese player to clinch the Beijing title.

Mirra Andreeva, the player Zheng beat in the Beijing final, also withdrew, citing a change of schedule, as the duo joined a growing list of high-profile Wuhan absences that includes world number one Elena Rybakina, last year's champion Coco Gauff and reigning Wimbledon champion Linda Noskova. — AFP

Wang Manyu regains world No. 1 ranking after China Smash triumph

Table tennis

BEIJING — China's Wang Manyu returned to the top of the women's singles world rankings released by the International Table Tennis Federation yesterday after successfully defending her title at the 2026 WTT China Smash.

Wang swept Japan's Hitomi Sato 4-0 in Sunday's final at Beijing's Shougang Park, earning 2,000 ranking points to overtake compatriot Sun Yingsha.

Wang first reached world No. 1 in September but subsequently slipped to second after the ranking points from her 2025 China Smash victory expired.

Sato climbed five places to eighth, while Japan's Miwa Harimoto remained third, followed by China's Wang Yidi and Kuai Man.

In the men's singles rankings, Japan's Sora Matsushima retained the top spot after winning the China Smash title. France's Felix Lebrun ranked second, followed by Japan's

Tomokazu Harimoto, Sweden's Truls Moregard and China's Wang Chuqin.

Under ranking regulations introduced by the ITTF in 2022, a player's ranking points are calculated primarily from their eight best results over the preceding 12 months.

In doubles, French brothers Alexis and Felix Lebrun topped the men's rankings, while Japan's Hina Hayata and Miwa Harimoto led the women's standings. South Korea's Lim Jonghoon and Shin Yu-bin held the top spot in mixed doubles. — Xinhua

Bangladesh close on victory over Afghanistan after Litton century

Cricket

ABU DHABI, United Arab Emirates — Bangladesh pushed towards a big win over Afghanistan in the one-off Test after a brilliant century from Litton Das helped them set a target of 479 runs in Abu Dhabi yesterday.

Litton scored 102, his seventh Test hundred, as Bangladesh declared on 372-7 on day four at Sheikh Zayed Stadium, having achieved a 106-run lead in the first innings.

Afghanistan finished the day on 132-3 with Sediqullah Atal and Hashmatullah Shahidi batting on 35 and 19 respectively.

Bangladesh will expect their

pacers and spinners to seal victory on a wearing pitch today.

Bangladesh seamer Ebadot Hossain gave his team an early breakthrough when he dismissed Abdul Malik for two in just the second over of the innings.

Hasan Mahmud, who took a hat-trick during his five-wicket haul in the first innings, had Shahidullah Kamal caught behind for 19 before Rahmat Shah and Atal added 82 for the third wicket.

Shah, who made a century in Afghanistan's first innings of 240, compiled a battling 51, hitting five fours and a six, before Hossain had him caught behind by Litton.

It was Litton's eighth dismissal behind the stumps in the match, setting a new record for Bangladesh.

The previous best was seven dismissals by Khaled Mashud against Zimbabwe in February 2004.

Earlier, Bangladesh resumed at 223-6 and were indebted to a seventh-wicket stand of 149 between Litton and Mehidy Hasan Miraz, who finished with 52 not out.

Afghanistan were sloppy in the field as they let off Litton on 14, 26 and 67, also missing a run-out chance against Miraz, capping a disappointing day.

Mohammad Saleem, Zia-ur-Rehman and Yamin Ahmadzai took two wickets apiece for Afghanistan. — AFP

Alcaraz exits Shanghai Masters in straight-sets loss

Tennis

Mary Yang

SHANGHAI — Carlos Alcaraz fell to Zizou Bergs in straight sets at the Shanghai Masters yesterday, interrupting the former world number one's in-form return to the professional Tour after being sidelined for months by injury.

The 39th-ranked Belgian beat the second-seeded Spanish star 7-5, 7-6 (7/4) in the third round to land the tournament's biggest upset yet, and will play Tommy Paul next.

"Today wasn't a good match from my side. I didn't feel good," Alcaraz told reporters, crediting Bergs for taking chances and serving big.

"In a few important moments I didn't play my best, and I would say there were a few moments that he was lucky," the 23-year-old said of their two-hour battle.

Alcaraz said he was "disappointed" by a loss riddled with errors, which came a week after he won the Tokyo Open, adding he would return home and hit practice.

"Right now, you know, all the negative thoughts come to my mind and none of the positives, but I think I will take it, you know, the good things," he said.

His loss also ensures current world number two Alexander Zverev, the reigning French Open and US Open champion, will replace Jannik Sinner as world number one by the year's end, with the Italian's season over due to a knee injury.

Zverev, the top seeded player in Shanghai, will face Alexander Bublik in the last 16 today.

'Disbelief'

Alcaraz started with more quality until Bergs broke the Spaniard's serve to go up 3-2 in the first set.

Alcaraz grabbed back that break in the next game but was uncharacteristically off-target, sending a mess of shots into the net.

He double-faulted to hand Bergs a critical break point in the 11th game, and lost the first set when a volley went short.

Alcaraz, currently ranked third in the world, was visibly frustrated during the second set as he vented to his corner following a series of misfired shots that left him with no points in the fourth and eighth games.

He forced a tie-break but could not reach a third set as Bergs closed things out on the first match point.

"It's a little disbelief and not feeling too much," Bergs, 27, said after winning.

"You're just really in the moment, being focused on the points you have to play," he said.

Fritz fumbles

Earlier, Stefanos Tsitsipas came back to beat Taylor Fritz 3-6, 7-5, 6-3 and earn fourth round meeting with Daniil Medvedev, who brushed aside qualifier Dalibor Svrčina 6-2, 6-3.

A wardrobe malfunction delayed victory for the Greek world number 43 when a tennis ball tumbled out of the American's pocket a second time and forced the men to replay a match point.

A tired-looking Fritz, seeded 11th, hung on for a bit longer to save the eighth game but could not stick around beyond that, with Tsitsipas holding serve to win at the fifth time of asking.

"I could have done a few things easier, but I ended up being my biggest enemy," Tsitsipas told the crowd afterwards.

"I turned things around really well towards the end and became friends with myself and played some incredible tennis," he said.

Felix Auger-Aliassime, Casper Ruud and Rafael Nadal also went through to the last 16.

American world number 18 Paul sent off last year's winner Valentin Vacherot 6-4, 6-2 while Botić van de Zandschulp beat eighth-seeded Arthur Fils 7-5, 6-4. — AFP



Belgium's Zizou Bergs hits a return to Spain's Carlos Alcaraz during their singles match at the Shanghai Masters tennis tournament in Shanghai yesterday. — AFP

‘Other Mommy’ scares up N American box office win

LOS ANGELES – Horror flick “Other Mommy” starring Oscar winner Jessica Chastain debuted atop the North American box office with US\$27.5 million in ticket sales, while awards hopeful “The Social Reckoning” flopped with a weak start, industry estimates showed on Sunday.

“Other Mommy,” from Universal and Blumhouse, stars Chastain in a dual role as a sinister entity terrorising a child – made even worse by the fact that the demon resembles the girl’s mother.

The film triumphed despite poor reviews and audience reception, according to analyst David A. Gross of Franchise Entertainment Research.

“Horror movies are generally immune to a negative reception, but this is extreme and business is going to drop sharply,” said Gross.

“The idea of a possessed and frightening mom, played by Jessica Chastain, is attracting audiences and should work around the world, before poor word-of-mouth catches up with it.”

“Verity,” Amazon MGM’s psychological thriller based on a novel by Colleen Hoover, dropped from first to second place at US\$11.5 million, according to Exhibitor Relations. It stars Anne Hathaway and Dakota Johnson.

In third place was Sony’s “Resident Evil,” with US\$8.4 million this past weekend, bringing its North American total to US\$138.5 million. It has raked in another US\$181 million abroad.

Paramount’s “Heart of the Beast,” starring Brad Pitt as a former soldier and his loyal but traumatised combat dog as they survive in the Alaskan wilderness, finished in fourth place with US\$7.1 million.

Opening in fifth place at just US\$5.5 million was Facebook drama “The Social Reckoning,” the hotly anticipated sequel to the award-winning 2010 film “The Social Network,” which told the origin story of Mark Zuckerberg’s social media empire.

“The Social Reckoning,” written and directed by Aaron Sorkin, stars Oscar winner Mikey Madison as real-life Facebook whistleblower Frances Haugen, who leaked internal documents to

a reporter (Jeremy Allen White) revealing some of the company’s more nefarious practices.

Jeremy Strong plays Zuckerberg, a role taken on in the original film by Jesse Eisenberg.

“Stories about corporate intrigue, money and power have found a home on TV. They lack the cinematic qualities that excite big screen audiences, like emotion, spectacle and fantasy,” Gross said. – AFP



US actress Jessica Chastain poses on the sidelines of the fan screening of Universal Pictures’ film “Other Mommy” at Universal Cinema AMC in Hollywood, California, on Thursday.

– AFP

Saint Laurent designer Vaccarello leaves after glittering decade

Adam Plowright

PARIS – Belgian fashion designer Anthony Vaccarello is to leave Saint Laurent after a decade in charge, having overseen a surge in revenues at the French house and a last gold-themed catwalk show that was hailed as one of his best.

“Anthony Vaccarello has played a key role in Saint Laurent’s development, helping to strengthen its identity and influence across the worlds of fashion and culture,” the house’s parent company, French conglomerate Kering, said in a statement last week.

It did not give any reason for the departure, but Kering CEO Luca de Meo said: “Through his creative vision and exacting standards, he has contributed to strengthening the enduring influence of one of France’s greatest couture houses, as we embark on a new chapter in its history.”

The house will announce its new creative leadership soon, according to the statement.

Vaccarello, 44, was reported to be reluctant to leave the position, but he had dropped a heavy hint about the imminent change at his final show for the house in Paris on September 29.

“What passes sometimes leaves more light than what remains,” he wrote enigmatically in a message for guests at the Spring-Summer 2027 show in front of the Eiffel Tower.

A post on his Instagram account on Friday said “A bientôt” (“See you soon”) along with a video highlighting his looks over the past 10 years.

Speculation of potential successors has focused on Chemena

Kamali, currently artistic director at Chloe who previously worked at Saint Laurent.

Back in the ‘firmament’

Vaccarello was one of several chief designers said to be in the sights of nifty fashion bosses who are struggling with a downturn in the global luxury business linked to weak demand from China and broad concerns about the world economy.

His departure represents the biggest personnel change at a major Kering brand since de Meo, a former car company boss, took the reins as chief executive of the debt-laden Paris-based company in September last year.

It is seen as a risk, with Vaccarello established as a celebrity favourite and widely praised for his last collection, which featured models wearing a variety of almost entirely gold outfits.

Some speculated that it was a reference to his Midas touch, or perhaps his “golden age” at the brand.

The New York Times called it a “a 24-karat unofficial goodbye”, while the chief buyer of London’s Harrods luxury store, Simon Longland, described it as “a true fashion moment... that will live long in the memory of those of us privileged enough to witness it.”

“He did something great for this house – he returned it to the firmament,” Sophie Fontanel, the veteran fashion journalist at French magazine *Le Nouvel Obs*, said after Vaccarello’s exit.

She noted however that “the heels were too high and the clothing

too nightlife”, with designs that could be difficult for everyday wear.

‘Beautiful job’

Vaccarello began the difficult task of replacing France’s Hedi Slimane at Saint Laurent in 2016, taking several seasons to identify a fresh look for the brand while also respecting its illustrious heritage.

The Belgian’s style became associated with more modern fabrics, particularly metallic ones, as well as the introduction of younger streetwear looks to the catwalk, a trend that peaked several years ago and is now in decline.

The group’s revenues tripled over his tenure, reaching US\$3.2 billion in 2023, only to slide in recent years after the frenzied post-COVID-19 boom gave way to slower, more selective shopping from luxury buyers.

His star shone brightly enough for the group to brand its collections “Saint Laurent by Anthony Vaccarello”, while celebrity fans like Kate Moss, Dua Lipa, Zoe Saldana and Hailey Bieber gave him cross-generation appeal.

Saint Laurent also established itself as the first couture house to invest in film production over his time, co-producing a number of movies including Jacques Audiard’s hit musical “Emilia Pérez”.

“It was like a blink, and at the same time it was intense, it went so fast,” Vaccarello told CNN during an interview to mark his 10 years at the brand in May. “It’s such a beautiful job, it’s such a privilege to do that.” – AFP

Startups are betting on AI to predict the future

Thomas Urbain

NEW YORK – Several startups are betting that they can leverage artificial intelligence (AI) to make better forecasts than even the most specialised experts when it comes to topics as varied as stock market movements, the reopening of the Strait of Hormuz, or how a Shakira song will perform on music charts.

By 2030, “we’re going to feel that what we were doing for our decision-making was complete Stone Age thinking,” Dan Schwarz, cofounder of the forecasting company FutureSearch, said.

AI forecasting models are already on par with the best “superforecasters” – gifted individuals whose estimates are markedly superior to those of ordinary people – thanks to troves of data acquired from both public and private sources.

In early September, two AI models made history when they took the top spots in the Metaculus Cup, a competition among prediction champions, both human and nonhuman.

FutureSearch’s in-house human wizard, superforecaster Tom Liptay, is aware that “he’s not secure in his job” in the medium term, Schwarz said. “He knows that these things are going to surpass him.”

Theo Summer, who cofounded Preseen with Veniamin Veselovsky, used AI tools to turn US\$35 into US\$1.9 million in just seven months on the American prediction-making site Kalshi.

The idea is not to guarantee a result but to define a probability of occurrence, with the ability to cross-check assumptions related to several interconnected events – for example, changes in the price of oil and the war in the Middle East.

“Right now, the quickest buyers are normally the hedge funds, just because if they think they can make money off something, they can move pretty fast,” Veselovsky said.

Algorithms have shaped Wall Street for more than a decade, but the rise of AI forecasting is likely to further increase the automation of financial markets.

“I think it’s probably already having a small impact because we already have customers who use it when making trading decisions,” said Toby Shevlane, the cofounder of another forecasting startup called Mantic.

Now-famous prediction markets Kalshi and Polymarket, which are used by millions of Americans, are also becoming inundated by AI use.

It might soon be too late for retail

investors, who don’t have access to expensive AI tools, to profit on those types of consumer-oriented trading sites because “they will soon just be dominated by AI forecasting systems,” Veselovsky said.

Risk Management

The most advanced models no longer just predict events, either.

They can also formulate their own questions about the future and then assign probabilities based on the different possible outcomes, Shevlane said.

Their sphere of influence is beginning to extend beyond finance, as well, with potential applications in government policy, corporate decision-making, scientific research, and insurance risk assessments.

Mantic provides a large US company with likely scenarios of regulatory developments in its sector and has also worked for the British government.

Companies “are interested in risks and how to monitor them,” Shevlane said.

Meanwhile, other customers might be more interested in medical research, particularly to help make decisions around which types of treatments would be best to fund, Schwarz said. – AFP

World Weather

CHINA	ASIA-PACIFIC	WORLD	LUSOPHONE
Beijing 7°C~22°C	Manila 23°C~32°C	New York 18°C~24°C	Lisbon 15°C~27°C
Shanghai 17°C~28°C	Bangkok 24°C~34°C	London 9°C~21°C	Rio de Janeiro 21°C~27°C
Hong Kong 22°C~31°C	Tokyo 17°C~25°C	Frankfurt 10°C~15°C	Luanda 22°C~26°C
Taipei 19°C~31°C	Singapore 25°C~33°C	Vancouver 10°C~13°C	Maputo 20°C~33°C
Guangzhou 22°C~33°C	Kuala Lumpur 23°C~33°C	Paris 10°C~23°C	Dili 22°C~33°C
Nanjing 13°C~27°C	Jakarta 24°C~35°C	Moscow 7°C~12°C	São Tomé 24°C~32°C
Guilin 21°C~34°C	Seoul 9°C~22°C	Las Vegas 10°C~18°C	Praia 24°C~30°C
Xi'an 11°C~24°C	Sydney 15°C~21°C	Monte Carlo 17°C~22°C	Bissau 23°C~33°C



Bunnie hops

A rabbit leaps over an obstacle as its handler guides it during the jumping competition during the European Rabbit Jumping Championships in Lysekil, Sweden, on Friday. The three-day championship, running from October Friday to Sunday, featured several disciplines, including straight-course jumping and high jump. — AFP



Ice cream or hug?

A woman reacts while having her photograph taken with an entertainer in a gorilla costume in the historic part of Warsaw, Poland on Sunday. — AFP



Too true!

Protesters hold an Earth-themed placard reading "I cannot handle everything by myself!!" The Climate Coalition demands the federal and regional governments to stop subsidising polluting industrial activities in Belgium and levy higher taxes on these companies. — AFP



Honouring life

People wearing traditional dresses perform the 'Garba' dance as part of the annual Hindu festival of Navratri at the Laxmi Vilas Palace in Vadodara, India on Sunday. — AFP



Peace & quiet please

This undated handout photo taken by Curtin University professor and lead researcher Christine Erbe and received on Friday shows a fur seal during a hearing test at Taronga Zoo in Sydney. Scientists in Australia trained sea lions and seals to respond to a hearing test for research into how the marine mammals are affected by human-made noise. — AFP



Huge jack-o-lanterns

People carry the pumpkins they selected at a farm in Richmond, British Columbia, Canada, on Sunday. Visiting pumpkin patches is a popular autumn activity in Canada, attracting families to local farms to enjoy the harvest season. — Xinhua