

Symposium explores Macau's end-of-life care, palliative service for elderly

Ida Cheong

The 5th End-of-Life Care Symposium, held yesterday at the private City University of Macau (CityU) in Taipa, focused on exploring new prospects for the development of end-of-life care and palliative services for the elderly, as well as the latest progress in Advance Care Planning (ACP)* across Macau and neighbouring regions.

The one-day symposium was jointly organised by CityU's Faculty of Innovation and Technology for Health, the Pou Tai Integrated Services Centre for the Elderly, and the Kiang Wu (KW) Nursing College of Macau, attracting over 200 industry professionals, community members, and students.

CityU Rector Liu Jun said in a speech that as Macau transitions into an ageing society, the primary goal of senior care is no longer limited to merely extending life, but rather guaranteeing full life-cycle health and dignity, while upholding the right to self-determination in the final stages of life.

According to official demographics, senior citizens aged 65 and over accounted for 15.3 percent of Macau's population last year.

Under United Nations definitions, a region is considered an "aged society" when the 65+ demographic exceeds 14 percent. Macau has crossed this mark, up from 14.6 percent in 2024 and 12.0 percent in 2020.

The elderly population now significantly outnumbers the youth population (11.7 percent), aged between 0 and 14, driven by Macau's average life expectancy (83.5 years),



City University of Macau (CityU) Rector Liu Jun (second from left) and other representatives pose during yesterday's opening ceremony for the "5th End-of-Life Care Symposium" on the CityU campus in Taipa. — Photo: Ida Cheong

alongside low birth rates, according to the Statistics and Census Bureau (DSEC).

Liu underscored that palliative care is not solely a medical service, but a holistic field encompassing medicine, nursing, social work, psychological support, family

communication, and legal considerations.

Speaking to reporters yesterday about the faculty's ongoing research into public awareness and attitudes toward Advance Care Planning (ACP), Wang Wenjin, an assistant professor of Innovative Social Work at CityU,

pointed out that over 90 percent of residents hope medical and community institutions will provide ACP-related services. However, she noted that some elderly residents still misunderstand the core concepts of ACP.

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INTELLIGENCE REDEFINING LUXURY
PARIS MOTOR SHOW 2026

Fairgoers check out a new model at the booth of Chinese automaker Aito during the 2026 Paris Motor Show in Paris, France, on Tuesday. The seven-day 91st Paris Motor Show opened in the French capital on Monday, with a record number of Chinese automakers taking part to showcase their latest models and technologies. — Xinhua

Hot US inflation data dents Wall Street stocks

LONDON — A hotter-than-expected inflation reading dented Wall Street stocks yesterday, while the US dollar and bond yields pushed higher as investors pencilled in a higher chance the Federal Reserve would raise interest rates later this month.

The US consumer price index (CPI) was up more than analysts expected in September, rising 3.7 percent on a year-on-year basis, the Labor Department said.

It was a marked acceleration from the 3.4 percent reading in August. Economists had forecast a slightly cooler reading of 3.6 percent, according to MarketWatch.

"[Yesterday's] CPI report came in hot,

with annual headline inflation reaching its highest level since May," said eToro analyst Bret Kenwell.

"The knee-jerk reaction may be for traders to reassess the odds of a Fed rate hike later this month," he said.

Investor expectations of a quarter-point rate hike at this month's Fed meeting nearly doubled to 44 percent after the data was published, according to the CME Fedwatch tool.

"The equity futures market, which had been tracking higher in front of the CPI report, did an about-face in its wake, largely because Treasury yields spiked following the release," said Briefing.com analyst Patrick O'Hare. —AFP

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Li Qiang stresses continued pursuit of high-quality development

Premier Li Qiang yesterday emphasized that China will continue to promote high-quality development, expand high-standard opening up, and take proactive and practical actions to add more impetus to the world economy. — Story on p. 7

Russia expects 1st diesel contracts with US in 'next few days': official

Russia indicated yesterday that the first contracts on providing diesel to the United States would be signed in the coming days, following US President Donald Trump's decision to ease sanctions on Russian diesel. — Story on p. 11

Lufthansa wins contest for TAP Air Portugal stake

German airline Lufthansa has won the contest to buy nearly half of TAP Air Portugal, the Portuguese prime minister said yesterday, after months of efforts to privatise the state-rescued airline. — Story on p. 12

SSM urges public to take anti-mosquito precautions during Chong Yeong Festival

Sherwin Hng

The Health Bureau (SSM) has urged residents to take precautions against dengue fever and chikungunya fever when visiting cemeteries and grave sites during the upcoming Chong Yeong Festival this Sunday.

An SSM statement yesterday noted that with neighbouring regions continuing to record cases of both mosquito-borne diseases, local activity of *Aedes albopictus*, aka Asian tiger mosquitos, remains high. To reduce the risk of community transmission, residents participating in grave-sweeping and outdoor activities are advised to properly dispose of used containers to prevent stagnant water from becoming mosquito breeding sites.

Although temperatures in Macau have begun to cool, mosquito activity has not declined significantly. The Health Bureau reported that the ovitrap index for September stood at 55.8 per cent. Mosquito activity in Macau typically peaks between April and October.

According to the SSM statement, to mitigate mosquito nuisance and disease risks, the bureau has stepped up inspections and vector control measures across high-risk community sites and major event venues. Up to September this year, SSM officers conducted 11,835 inspections of potential breeding grounds.

The statement also underlined that the bureau has carried out chemical anti-mosquito spraying 2,884 times in the first nine months of the year across roughly 130 hygiene blackspots and areas identified as having a higher risk of disease transmission.

Meanwhile, the Municipal Affairs Bureau (IAM) continues its monthly regular mosquito control operations in public parks, leisure areas, and municipal cemeteries across the city.

In addition, the statement noted that as dengue fever and chikungunya fever are both transmitted by *Aedes albopictus* mosquitoes, eliminating breeding sites remains the most effective preventive measure. The

bureau advised residents to clear away stagnant water and rubbish after completing grave-sweeping rituals, ensuring that containers such as flower vases, lunch boxes, drink cans, plastic bags, and metal incense-burning buckets are not left behind.

Residents are also reminded to take personal anti-mosquito measures outdoors by applying insect repellents containing effective ingredients such as DEET* to exposed skin, wearing light-coloured, long-sleeved tops and trousers, and seeking medical attention promptly if symptoms such as fever or skin rash develop.

Meanwhile, the statement said, the Health Bureau is closely monitoring the epidemiological situation in Macau and neighbouring regions. It urged the public to stay vigilant and observe three main anti-mosquito rules:

Prevent indoor breeding: Regularly clear stagnant water at workplaces and around the home.

Block mosquito entry: Use window screens, mosquito nets, or air conditioning to reduce the risk of bites indoors.

Prevent outdoor bites: Wear light-coloured, long-sleeved clothing and apply insect repellent to exposed skin or clothing during outdoor activities.

For enquiries, residents can call the Health Bureau's Infectious Disease Hotline on 2870 0800 or visit its communicable disease website at <https://www.ssm.gov.mo/csr>.

**DEET (Diethyltoluamide) is the most common active ingredient in insect repellents. Developed by the US Army in 1946 for military use in insect-infested areas, it was registered for public use in 1957. DEET doesn't kill insects - it blocks their ability to detect human sweat and breath, making it harder for mosquitoes, ticks, fleas, and other biting insects to locate you. DEET can pose health risks to certain people or under specific conditions, such as infants, toddlers and people with sensitive skin or skin conditions. DEET should never be sprayed directly onto the face. - Gemini/DeepSeek*

Police prevent potential 1.5 million patacas scam targeting university student

Khalel Vallo

The Judiciary Police (PJ) have prevented a potential telephone scam loss exceeding 1.5 million patacas involving a non-local university student after an anti-fraud quiz helped the student recognise similarities between the questions and their own experience, the police said in a statement yesterday.

The statement did not reveal the student's gender, place of habitual residence and the local university where he or she is enrolled.

The Judiciary Police's Anti-Fraud Coordination Centre has conducted anti-scam talks for newly arrived non-local students at the Public Security Police Force's (PSP) Immigration Building since August 10, with the campaign running for three consecutive months, the statement noted.

The initiative, now in its fourth year, aims to raise students' awareness of telecom and online scams, particularly telephone scams in which fraudsters impersonate Chinese mainland public security, procuratorial and judicial authorities, the statement underlined.

By September 30, the centre had conducted about 180 talks, reaching more than 9,000 students who had newly arrived in Macau to attend higher education institutions, the statement said, adding that during the sessions, students



This undated handout photo provided by the Judiciary Police (PJ) yesterday shows its Anti-Fraud Coordination Centre conducting an anti-scam talk for newly arrived non-local students at the Public Security Police Force's (PSP) Immigration Building in Pac On.

were also asked to complete anti-scam quizzes designed to assess their potential exposure to fraud. In mid-September, a student recognised that a scenario in the quiz resembled his or her own experience and sought help from the officers present, according to the statement.

The investigation found that the student had received calls from scammers impersonating law enforcement authorities since August 30 and had been manipulated by them, the statement said, noting that the student had

also asked his or her parents for money under the pretext of studying abroad, following the scammers' instructions.

The timely intervention prevented potential losses exceeding 1.5 million patacas, according to the statement.

The statement also said that the number of student-related telephone scam cases involving impersonation of Chinese mainland law enforcement authorities fell by more than 30 percent in the first three quarters of this year compared with the same period last year. ■

Mainlander nabbed for armed robbery, accomplice caught in Hengqin

Sherwin Hng

A 37-year-old man from the Chinese mainland has been arrested for aiding and abetting an armed hotel room robbery that netted HK\$21,000, after his accomplice fled to Hengqin using an underwater propulsion device, Judiciary Police (PJ) spokesman Ho Wai Lok said during a special press conference yesterday.

Ho identified the two suspects, aged 37 and 36, as surnamed Song and Meng, both from the Chinese mainland.

According to Ho, the case involved two middle-aged non-local women, and the robbery took place in a Cotai hotel room in the early hours of September 23, after one of the victims, who intended to buy a property in Macau, sought to exchange currency through an illegal currency dealer.

Ho said the victims joined a WeChat group used for "illegal currency exchange" on September 22 through a friend's introduction and came into contact with Meng. They arranged to meet at a hotel restaurant the following day, and the woman was accompanied by a female friend.

The suspect then took both women to a hotel room and asked

the victim to transfer money first. When she became suspicious and asked him to show the cash, he pulled out an about 20-centimetre-long knife from the wardrobe and threatened to kill them if they refused to hand over their cash, Ho added.

Fearing for their lives, the two women handed over HK\$15,000 and HK\$6,000 respectively. The suspect then fled, and the victims reported the robbery to the Public Security Police Force (PSP).

According to Ho, after the robbery, Meng used an underwater propulsion device to flee Macau by sea. He was intercepted by mainland border control officers along the Hengqin coast later that day.

Ho added that, following an investigation, the Judiciary Police believe that Song helped transport the underwater propulsion device and luggage, leaving them at a convenience store near the hotel, and acted as a lookout during the crime.

Ho also said records showed that both suspects had also been involved in another robbery on December 24 last year, and had been allowed to remain in Macau subject to judicial measures



Judiciary Police (PJ) officers escort Song to a PJ car outside the PJ headquarters in Zape yesterday.

- Photo: MPDG

prohibiting them from leaving the city and requiring them to report to the authorities periodically.

The Judiciary Police intercepted Song in the peninsula's Nape district on Monday.

Song was transferred to the Public Prosecutions Office (MP) yesterday, facing charges of robbery, aiding and abetting illegal immigration, and illegal stay. ■

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MACAU POST

Macau Weather

CLOUDY APART FROM SUNNY PERIODS.
FORCE 4 TO 5 EASTERLY WINDS.
RELATIVE HUMIDITY WILL RANGE BETWEEN 65% AND 90%.



25°C~30°C

Source: SMG

Govt drafts fire safety regulations on maintenance and repair works

Ida Cheong

In order to strengthen fire safety regulations over maintenance and repair works on existing building façades and to ensure overall building safety, the Lands and Urban Construction Bureau (DSSCU) announced in a statement yesterday that its interdepartmental coordination group has drafted relevant guidelines and gathered feedback from industry stakeholders.

According to the statement, the draft will be further refined by incorporating input from both the industry and the group to ensure that the guidelines are operational, practical, and widely accepted.

Secretary for Transport and Public Works Raymond Tam Wai Man gave the instruction that the fire safety guidelines for building façade repairs be finalised as quickly as possible to eliminate potential safety hazards at their root, the statement said.

The statement noted that the coordination group convened a meeting yesterday to discuss the refinement and implementation mechanism of the draft guidelines, namely “Guidelines

on Fire Safety Precautions for External Wall Maintenance of Existing Buildings”.

Reflecting the consensus reached among the participating entities, the guidelines lay down clear standards for key supervisory aspects of maintenance work on existing building façades, including defining specifications for scaffolding safety netting, site smoking control rules, and pre-construction re-examinations of fire evacuation systems.

Tam instructed the coordination group to expedite the completion of the fire safety guidelines to ensure they align closely with real-world construction scenarios, highlighting that the provisions are clear and workable so both regulatory authorities and industry professionals can reference and enforce them seamlessly, thereby eliminating hazards at the source.

Tam also urged the relevant government entities to maintain continuous inter-agency collaboration, optimise joint inspection and supervision mechanisms, and engage in regular communication with the industry to jointly safeguard building maintenance safety, the statement said. ■



This undated handout photo provided by the Lands and Urban Construction Bureau (DSSCU) shows its interdepartmental coordination group convening a meeting yesterday to discuss the implementation mechanism of the draft “Guidelines on Fire Safety Precautions for External Wall Maintenance of Existing Buildings”.

Spanish travel agents name Macau ‘Preferred Destination 2027’

Khalel Vallo

The Spanish Confederation of Travel Agents (CEAV) has designated Macau as its “Preferred Destination 2027”, as the Macao Government Tourism Office (MGTO) is stepping up promotional efforts to attract more Spanish and European visitors, according to a MGTO statement yesterday.

The designation recognises Macau’s appeal as a World Centre of Tourism and Leisure and is expected to support the city’s efforts to expand its presence in the Spanish and wider European markets, the statement said, adding that from January to August this year, visitor arrivals from Spain to Macau increased by nearly 20 percent year on year, while arrivals from Europe rose by more than 30 percent.

The statement did not reveal the corresponding arrival numbers.

In April, MGTO held the “Experience Macao Roadshow in Madrid” and the “China Taste – Macao Flavour” promotional activity, alongside a tourism product update and networking session for Spanish travel trade representatives, the statement said, adding that in July, the office arranged a visit by a Spanish travel trade delegation in collaboration with online travel agency DESTINIA.

Earlier this month, MGTO



This undated handout photo provided by the Macao Government Tourism Office (MGTO) yesterday shows a delegation from the Spanish Confederation of Travel Agents (CEAV) visiting the city’s main square, Largo do Senado.

organised a five-day familiarisation trip for 22 representatives of CEAV to experience Macau’s tourism offerings and explore business opportunities, the statement said.

According to the statement, the itinerary included the Macao Science Centre (MSC), Macao Museum of Art (MAM), Handover Gifts Museum of Macao, and the 34th Macao International Fireworks Display Contest. Delegates also sampled Macanese and Portuguese cuisines, Chinese hotpot and local street food, and learnt to prepare Macanese dishes at the public Macao University of Tourism (UTM), the statement said.

The delegation also met local tourism operators to explore cooperation and the development of tourism products for Spanish travellers, the statement noted.

MGTO Director Maria Helena de Senna Fernandes said the familiarisation visit aimed to give Spanish travel agents firsthand experience of Macau’s development and tourism diversity, the statement said, underlining that the office will continue working with CEAV and tourism partners to promote single-destination and multi-destination trips to Macau and the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area (GBA). ■

Symposium explores Macau’s end-of-life care, palliative service for elderly

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To address this, Wang recommended that the government compile an official, easy-to-understand ACP toolkit to clarify concepts and classifications, as well as outline residents’ rights and choices. She also suggested launching one-on-one, face-to-face promotional sessions tailored for seniors to address individual concerns, while promoting general ACP awareness among all

residents aged 18 and above.

The symposium featured comprehensive discussions centred around new advancements and practices in end-of-life care across Macau and neighbouring regions, highlighting the latest applications of innovative nursing models in palliative care, detailing the Hong Kong government’s “10 Tips for a Carefree Later Life” (a comprehensive framework for

late-life and end-of-life planning), alongside survey findings on Macau residents’ attitudes towards Advance Care Planning and their key underlying factors. ■

*Advance Care Planning (ACP) is a voluntary process that allows people to make decisions about their future healthcare preferences before they face a situation where they are unable to speak or decide for themselves. – Gemini

Forum explores cultural heritage, exchange: IC chief

Armindo Neves

Cultural Affairs Bureau (IC) President Deland Leong Wai Man announced yesterday that the International Forum on Mutual Learning Among Civilisations, taking place next month, aims to explore the contemporary value of cultural heritage and exchange.

The government-appointed Cultural Development Consultative Committee held its fifth plenary meeting of the year at the Nape-based Macao Cultural Centre (CCM). The meeting was chaired by Leong in her capacity as acting president of the committee.

During a press briefing following the meeting yesterday, Leong stated that the session included presentations on the “hush! Beach Concert x City Sports Festival 2026” and the “2026 International Forum on Mutual Learning Among

Civilisations”. The committee also sought members’ views regarding the submission of 2026 annual summary reports by legal entities within the cultural sector.

Leong noted that the “hush! Beach Concert x City Sports Festival 2026” will take place at Hac Sa Beach on November 14 and 15 under the theme “Energy Island”. The event will transform the coastline into a youth lifestyle scene incorporating live music and urban sports to create a brand-new cultural tourism experience, according to Leong.

Committee member Ieng Weng Fat cited suggestions from fellow members recommending that more representative and high-profile bands be invited to take part in order to raise the standard of the event.

Leong also noted that the forum will take place on November 9 and 10, continuing the theme

of “Mutual Learning Among Civilisations”. It will feature three main sub-themes: “Dialogue of Civilisations Across Mountains and Seas”, “Civilisational Connections between China and Portuguese-Speaking Countries”, and “The Light of Civilisation in the AI Era”.

Ieng echoed views from other committee members, expressing agreement on the forum’s significance and voicing hope that it would bring together experts and scholars from around the world, align with the national cultural development strategy, and promote global dialogue among civilisations.

Meanwhile, during the Q&A session, a reporter asked about an old cannon – measuring approximately 3.1 metres long with an internal bore diameter of around 20 centimetres – that was discovered last Thursday at a construction site in Ilha Verde.



Cultural Development Consultative Committee Acting President and Cultural Affairs Bureau (IC) President Deland Leong Wai Man (right) and committee member Ieng Weng Fat look on after the committee’s regular closed-door meeting at the Macao Cultural Centre (CCM) yesterday.

– Photo: Armindo Neves

Leong confirmed that the cannon has been transferred to the bureau’s warehouse for storage. She added that its origin cannot yet be determined at this stage, pending in-depth verification and research by experts and scholars.

She further noted that, based on experience from several similar discoveries of old cannons in the past, the authorities will prioritise ensuring the cannon’s protection, with detailed testing and restoration measures set to take place in the next phase. ■



‘VESSEL • RAGING WAVES’ PRESENTS ANDERSON CHAN’S ARTISTIC EVOLUTION

Rui Pastorin

The “Vessel • Raging Waves” exhibition continues to be on view at the Portuguese Bookshop (Livraria Portuguesa) basement gallery until October 22, inviting members of the public to view abstract and representative paintings from artist Anderson Chan Man Kin’s career that also highlight how his art has evolved.

Presenting a total of 32 paintings including oils, digital photography, and mixed media, the exhibition is organised by AFA (Art for All Society) Macau and curated by artist and architect André Lui Chak Keong. It is part of AFA’s New Members Solo Exhibition series.

The representative pieces selected to be showcased are, in all, aimed at showing the evolution of Chan’s “artistic language”, starting with figurative realism, gradually

dismantling established forms, and opening up possibilities for abstract expression, a statement displayed at the gallery noted.

Chan is described by a separate statement as being an artist with “a solid foundation in academic painting”, highlighting a key moment when his practice transformed while opening parcel boxes during the COVID-19 pandemic, with the “box” becoming a focus of his visual motifs.

The statement said that the exhibition uses the “box” as a perfect vessel representing rational order, along with natural forms like peaches and lilies, which evoke vitality and perishability. Beyond that, exhibitiongoers are invited to “journey through the multi-layered dimensions of Chan’s practice”, with pieces ranging from those from “The Box” series through to “Raging Waves”, where the canvas is

“liberated from all recognisable objects”, the statement added.

Regarding Chan’s background, an artist’s introduction highlighted that his works have been repeatedly selected for national-level exhibitions organised by the Chinese Artists Association, while his pieces have been collected by the Beijing Li Keran Academy of Painting, Guangzhou Academy of Painting, the Rui Cunha Foundation gallery, the Dongguan Guancheng Art Museum, and the Shenzhen Dafen Art Museum.

The artist, who is the recipient of various awards, has also held four solo exhibitions between 2024 and this year, while he has joined a variety of group exhibitions since 2012.

One can continue to view the works daily until next Thursday from 11:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m.



Photos taken recently by Rui Pastorin

Govt urges riders to choose motorcycle lanes for peninsula-Taipa trips

Tony Wong

Yesterday's current affairs phone-in programme hosted by Ou Mun Tin Toi, the Chinese-language radio channel of public broadcaster TDM, discussed motorcycle riding safety, during which guest speakers were divided over whether motorcycles should be barred from using the Macau-Taipa Friendship Bridge.

In a written reply to the phone-in programme, the Transport Bureau (DSAT) said yesterday that the government will continue to improve the road network in the Zone A new urban area with the aim of encouraging more motorcyclists to choose to use the motorcycle-only lanes on Macao Bridge, the newest of the four bridges between Macau peninsula and Taipa.

The city currently has four sea-crossing bridges linking the peninsula and Taipa.

Governor Nobre de Carvalho Bridge (informally known as the "old bridge") is only open to public buses, taxis, emergency vehicles, and other authorised vehicles.

While both Sai Van Bridge and Macao Bridge have special lanes for motorcycles only, Friendship Bridge doesn't have motorcycle-only lanes.

Each direction of Friendship Bridge has only two vehicular lanes. In each direction, Sai Van Bridge and Macao Bridge have three and four lanes respectively – each including one motorcycle-only lane.

Zone A, a new land reclamation area primarily being developed for public housing projects, is located between the peninsula's northeastern coast and the man-made island where the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge (HZMB) Macau checkpoint is located.

Macao Bridge connects Zone A (on the peninsula side) and Taipa's Pac On district.

Yesterday's phone-in programme came after a fatal motorcycle crash occurred on Friendship Bridge again early this month. Over the years, this bridge has seen numerous fatal motorcycle accidents.

During yesterday's phone-in programme, the Transport Bureau made a written reply to TDM. The reply said that regarding the fatal motorcycle accident on Friendship Bridge early this month, the bureau expressed deep condolences to the victim's family.

The bureau will maintain close communication with the police to cooperate with their investigation

findings, which will serve as a reference for reviewing traffic arrangements and safety management for sea-crossing bridges, the reply said.

The reply pointed out that both Sai Van Bridge and Macao Bridge have motorcycle-only lanes, providing motorcyclists with an option to travel more safely. Moreover, the bureau stressed that it will continue to improve Zone A's road network and road signage with the aim of encouraging more motorcyclists to choose to use the motorcycle-only lanes on Macao Bridge.

The reply underlined that any adjustments to traffic arrangements for sea-crossing bridges will require a comprehensive evaluation of the city's overall traffic flow, residents' needs for travelling around the city, road safety, potential impacts on surrounding road networks, and broad social consensus.

During yesterday's phone-in programme, Macau Motorcycle Trade Association President Lei Chong Sam said that Friendship Bridge has been in use for over 30 years since its opening in 1994. Back then, the number of residents and motor vehicles in Taipa was far lower than now. With a surge in the number of vehicles using Friendship Bridge, it is obviously no longer suitable for motorcycles to use this bridge, so it is now quite dangerous for motorcyclists to ride on this bridge.

Lei urged the government to study the feasibility of gradually barring motorcycles from using Friendship Bridge.

Kou Kun Pang, an associate professor in the public University of Macau's (UM) Department of Civil and Environmental Engineering, said that when traffic is busy on Friendship Bridge – with a speed limit of 80 kilometres per hour – it is quite difficult for motorcyclists to ride safely on the bridge if there is a strong wind.

However, Kou said that for the time being it is not suitable to impose a ban on motorcycles using Friendship Bridge, adding that such a ban would require a broad social consensus that could only be achieved over a relatively long time.

Instead, Kou suggested that the government – for the time being – roll out more initiatives to encourage more motorcyclists to use the motorcycle-only lanes on Sai Van Bridge or Macao Bridge. ■

BEE Macau playing card factory hosts grand opening



This photo provided by BEE MACAU on Tuesday shows a group photo of company representatives and guests taken during the grand opening ceremony held at Grand Lisboa Palace earlier that day.

Rui Pastorin

Macau's first professional-grade playing card manufacturing facility "BEE Macau", a joint venture between the Belgium-headquartered Cartamundi Group and Asia Pioneer Entertainment Holdings Limited (APE), hosted its grand opening on Tuesday with a ceremony held at Grand Lisboa Palace (GLP) in Cotai, marking "one of the largest Belgian commercial investments established in Macau to date", BEE Macau said in a statement.

Bringing the production of the playing cards to the city for the first time, the statement said that selected Bee casino card decks will

also carry the "Made in Macau" label. The statement added that the facility also features "advanced manufacturing, enhanced security and sustainability under one roof".

The statement said that the opening follows five years of planning, technology development, testing and pilot production. "After successful trial runs and initial deliveries to gaming operators in Asia, BEE Macau entered full-scale commercial production in May 2026", the statement added.

Cartamundi Group CEO Stefaan Merckx was quoted by the statement as saying: "By bringing advanced manufacturing capabilities closer to customers in

Macau and across Asia-Pacific, we can serve them with the speed, quality security and reliability they expect from us."

The statement also quoted APE CEO and Executive Director Herman Ng (吳民豪) as saying: "The playing cards produced here in Macau will be distributed across the globe, demonstrating the strength and uncompromising quality of the 'Macau Standard.'"

Moreover, BEE Macau Chairman Jason Pearce also pointed out in the statement that the company "combines embedded authentication technology, AI-assisted quality assurance and sustainable packaging solutions." ■

Local disabled athletes to compete in Asian Para Games in Japan



Macau-China Paralympic Committee & Macau-China Recreation and Sports Association for the Disabled President Chan Meng Kam (second row, centre) poses with athletes and staff of the Macau delegation at the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge's (HZMB) Macau checkpoint yesterday. – Photo courtesy of the group

Armando Neves

The Macau-China Paralympic Committee & Macau-China Recreation and Sports Association for the Disabled announced in a statement yesterday that the Macau delegation has departed for Japan to participate in the Asian Para Games.

The 5th Asian Para Games will be held from this Sunday to next Saturday in Aichi Prefecture and Nagoya City, Japan.

According to the statement, this year's delegation comprises 24

members, led by Lee Chi Kin. They will compete in five sports: table tennis, boccia, athletics, swimming, and wheelchair fencing. The statement added that the delegation includes coaches, support staff, and athletes competing in the physical disability and intellectual disability categories. Following an extended period of regular training and pre-competition preparation, all members are in high spirits and are setting foot on the Asian Para Games stage with great anticipation, the statement noted.

In the statement, the association's president, Chan Meng Kam, said that the Asian Para Games is the most important multi-sport event for athletes with disabilities in Asia. He expressed his hope that all athletes would cherish the hard-won opportunity to compete, approach the competition with a relaxed mindset, and compete courageously – without placing excessive emphasis on results, but rather focusing on demonstrating good sportsmanship and challenging themselves. ■



This undated file photo shows vehicles travelling on Friendship Bridge.

– Photo courtesy of TDM

AJAEM aims to build high-quality teaching staff

Armindo Neves

Youth Association of the Chinese Educators' Association of Macau (AJAEM) Chairman Ma Io Fong announced during the group's general meeting on Friday that it aims to build a high-quality teaching workforce in Macau.

According to an AJAEM statement released to the *Post* earlier this week, the meeting was held at Plaza Restaurant in Zape. It was also attended by Chinese Educators' Association of Macau (EDUM) President Cheang Hong Kuong and Chairman Zheng Jiezhao.

During the meeting, the 2023–2026 board of directors' report, supervisory board report, and financial report were approved. Elections were also held for the president and members of the board of directors and supervisory bodies for the 2026–2029 term. Chan Sio Ieong, Lei Kit Ian, and Ma Io Fong were elected AJAEM President, Chairman of the Board of Directors, and Chairman of the Supervisory Board, respectively.

In the statement, outgoing AJAEM Chairman Cheong Teng Wang said that over the past three years, the association has continued to focus on the professional development of young teachers. It has organised the "Young Teachers' Education Forum" and carried forward the tradition of nurturing educators through the "Mentor-Mentee Partnership"



Chinese Educators' Association of Macau (EDUM) President Cheang Hong Kuong (centre), Chairman Zheng Jiezhao (seventh from right), Youth Association of the Chinese Educators' Association of Macau (AJAEM) Chairman Ma Io Fong (seventh from left) and other representatives pose for a group photo during Friday's general meeting held at Plaza Restaurant in Zape. — Photo courtesy of AJAEM

scheme. It has also strengthened exchanges with the Chinese mainland's education sector by organising study tours for young teachers, as well as promoting cross-sector exchanges through various cultural and recreational activities to support teachers' physical and mental wellbeing.

Supervisory Board Chairman Mak Chi Kei presented the board's report, stating that

the body had diligently fulfilled its oversight duties and fully endorsed the work of the Board of Directors over the past three years.

In his concluding remarks, Ma said the association has always remained true to its founding mission of uniting young teachers, pooling educational strength, and building platforms to empower professional growth.

He expressed the hope that the association

would closely align itself with the Macao Special Administrative Region (MSAR) Government's policy of "revitalising Macau through education and building Macau through talent", promote AI and digital teaching, enhance teachers' professional skills, uphold the spirit of loving the country and loving Macau, and build a high-calibre teaching team for the MSAR. ■

'China Hotline' helps foreigners plug into people-centered governance

Analysis

BEIJING — After "China Travel" draws global travelers to its capital, China is offering the world another way in: the "China Hotline," a 12345 service that lets foreign nationals make their voices heard and help improve the city they reside in.

The service is part of a broader reform that began in Beijing in 2019, when the city, home to over 20 million residents, launched a "swift response to public complaints" initiative. The goal is to address concerns promptly and resolve everyday challenges efficiently. More than 60 hotline services have been integrated into a single number, 12345, which now serves as the main channel for residents to report issues.

Operating 24/7, the hotline is staffed by over 1,700 operators who work in shifts to take calls and handle requests covering nearly every aspect of urban life, including transportation, housing, education, healthcare, employment and business services. Foreign visitors and residents in Beijing are covered by the service, where they are treated not as outsiders but as part of the city.

Official data shows the Chinese capital has handled about 200 million public appeals in just over seven years, with resolution and satisfaction rates both exceeding 97 percent.

"The experience of Beijing's citizen service system offered valuable lessons for Athens in advancing people-centered urban governance and building a city that listens to its citizens and responds to their concerns," said Georgios K. Giannaros, first deputy mayor of Athens, Greece, during the 2026 Beijing Forum on Swift Response to Public Complaints.

The two-day event, which opened Monday, brought together more than 3,200 participants from over 70 countries and regions to explore new paths for modernizing urban governance, a challenge shared across the world.

OPEN HOTLINE

Marie, an expat living in Beijing, once

hit a snag when signing up for a water show on the Grand Canal in Tongzhou District: the online registration form on WeChat only accepted Chinese mainland resident ID cards, leaving no way to enter foreign passport details.

After Marie raised the issue through the 12345 hotline, the case was assigned to Tongzhou authorities, who activated a fast-track mechanism for requests involving foreign nationals. Working with the platform operator and its technical team, they upgraded the registration system within just one working day, adding a field for passports and other foreign ID documents.

The 12345 hotline's foreign-related services are not only efficient, but also expanding in both scope and capacity.

"Foreign callers have all kinds of requests, with visa and entry-exit policies and work permit applications among the most common inquiries," said Wang Dongbo, an English-language operator on the hotline, adding that whether they live in Beijing or are just visiting briefly, foreigners who run into trouble can call 12345, and someone will see the matter through.

"Besides our dedicated English lines, calls in other languages are transferred to the multilingual service center at Beijing Foreign Studies University, where volunteers join in on a three-way call," said Shan Qiang with the Beijing Citizen Hotline Service Center. The hotline now provides round-the-clock services in eight foreign languages.

Beyond the hotline, Beijing has rolled out "12345 Online," a digital platform offering the same service. Meanwhile, a multi-dimensional support network for foreigners is taking shape in the Chinese capital.

The network spans "GO BEIJING" — a one-stop service platform for overseas visitors — the English edition of Beijing's official public services app, the International Web Portal of Beijing and airport service points, responding to their needs at every stage, from pre-trip planning and entry, to life in Beijing.

"In the governance logic of China's

capital, where every complaint gets a response, the 'people' in 'the people's voices are heard' now include foreigners living in Beijing," said Zhang Yi, director of the institute for capital governance at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences.

SHARED GOVERNANCE

Being heard is only part of the story. Traik Souhail from Morocco spends almost every weekend studying at Beijing Library in Tongzhou District. He noticed that seat-hogging was a common problem here. "Public resources shouldn't sit idle or go to waste. Every seat should go to someone who actually needs it," he said.

In August last year, he submitted a proposal through "12345 Online," suggesting the library set a 30-minute limit on unoccupied seats to stop long-term seat-hogging.

After verifying the situation, the library moved quickly to address this issue. It posted notices in Chinese and English urging readers to use the library respectfully and refrain from hogging seats, stepped up manual patrols, and promptly cleared unattended items from seats, bringing order back to its reading areas.

Li Wenzhao, a professor at the School of Public Administration and Policy, Renmin University of China, said Beijing's "swift response to public complaints" has transformed the traditional top-down model of urban governance into a collaborative, multi-stakeholder approach. It is equally open to foreign residents, encouraging them to take ownership and bring international perspectives, experience and expertise into the capital's governance.

"Cities become more beautiful through openness, which is also essential to a world-class, harmonious and livable capital," he said.

"Anyone who lives in this city has a channel to voice concerns and take part in governance. The hotline not only bridges language barriers but also opens a path for diverse groups to integrate into urban

governance," said Yao Lei, director of the Beijing Citizen Hotline Service Center.

CHINESE SOLUTION

In June, more than 20 young scholars from leading think tanks across Latin America visited the 12345 hotline call center in Beijing.

"Over 20 million appeals a year. That's incredible!" Chilean scholar Maria Fernanda Garredon said after seeing the full call-handling process for herself. "If residents didn't find it effective, they wouldn't call. Such a high volume shows that once you get through, your concerns are heard and solutions are found."

In recent years, the center has hosted nearly 2,500 foreign visitors from more than 120 countries, including the United States, Belarus and Thailand. Belarusian delegations have visited three times to learn from the hotline's experience, and the country plans to draw on Beijing's 12345 model to set up its own hotline.

"When you set foot on Chinese soil, see firsthand how institutions operate and learn how ordinary people get their problems solved, you come to understand that China is truly committed to improving people's livelihoods and tackling real problems," said Salvadoran scholar Juan Gilberto Contreras Gomez.

"There is a global phenomenon unfolding in Western countries, developing countries and elsewhere. People don't feel that governments respond to their needs or their immediate problems — mainly services and quality of life," said Omar Razzaz, a senior fellow at Harvard Kennedy School and former prime minister of Jordan. He has been actively promoting Beijing's "swift response to public complaints" reform at various international events.

Razzaz called the 12345 citizen hotline "a model of efficient and balanced governance," noting that it represents a deep integration of technological empowerment and institutional innovation. "I've seen elements of it in different countries. But the way it worked here was quite impressive, and I felt like China should share that experience," he added. — *Xinhua*

Li Qiang stresses continued pursuit of high-quality development, expansion of high-standard opening up

GUANGZHOU – Premier Li Qiang yesterday emphasized that China will continue to promote high-quality development, expand high-standard opening up, and take proactive and practical actions to add more impetus to the world economy.

Li made the remarks while delivering a keynote speech at the opening ceremony of the 140th China Import and Export Fair, also known as the Canton Fair, in Guangzhou.

Noting this year marks the 70th anniversary of the establishment of the Canton Fair, Li said that President Xi Jinping specially sent a congratulatory letter, fully affirming the achievements made by the Canton Fair and reaffirming China's determination to expand high-standard opening up.

Through the Canton Fair, the world has witnessed the tremendous vitality in China's economy and society, seen the magnificent journey of hundreds of millions of Chinese people striving forward all the way, and

felt the increasingly deep connection between China and the world, Li said, adding that an increasingly open, continuously innovative and trustworthy China brings new opportunities, provides new impetus and injects certainty into the world.

Li pointed out that the Canton Fair has stood the test of shifting international circumstances and kept brimming with fresh vitality, embodying plain yet profound inspirations.

"Market connectivity is not a tool for playing games, but an effective means to generate incremental growth. China is committed to promoting the continuous integration and common growth of its domestic market and the international market, and building an open world economy," the premier said.

Li said China is willing to import more high-quality products, especially high-value-added products. "We hope that more countries will work with China in the same direction, lift restrictions and actively promote the



Premier Li Qiang (center) tours the venue of the 140th China Import and Export Fair, also known as the Canton Fair, after presiding over its opening ceremony in Guangzhou yesterday. Li delivered a keynote speech at the opening ceremony. — Xinhua

optimized and balanced development of trade," he added.

"As the largest developing country, China has always been committed to promoting common development,"

said the premier. "China will always be a trustworthy and reliable good friend of developing countries, and is willing to join hands with the vast number of developing countries on the journey to

modernization," he added.

He said China stands ready to share more market opportunities, expand more mutually beneficial cooperation, and firmly safeguard the international economic and trade order with all parties.

WTO Director-General Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala delivered a video address, noting that China has achieved remarkable development and provided rare opportunities for the world.

Noting that the Canton Fair is an important platform connecting China with the world, Okonjo-Iweala said that against the backdrop of increasing global uncertainties, it is hoped that all parties will jointly advance WTO reform and build an open, rules-based global trading system.

More than 700 representatives from nearly 90 countries and regions attended the opening ceremony.

This edition of the Canton Fair brought together more than 30,000 exhibiting companies and about 340,000 overseas buyers. — Xinhua

Li Qiang attends symposium with representatives of overseas buyers, exhibitors at Canton Fair

GUANGZHOU – Premier Li Qiang yesterday attended a symposium with representatives of overseas buyers and exhibitors at the Canton Fair in Guangzhou, calling on Chinese and foreign enterprises to actively promote global supply-demand matching and lead international innovation cooperation.

About 70 business representatives from nearly 30 countries and regions participated in the symposium in Guangzhou, capital of Guangdong Province, where the Canton Fair will be held from today to November 4.

After hearing remarks from representatives of overseas buyers and exhibitors, Li said that over the past 70 years since its launch, the Canton Fair has grown along with China's opening up and development. "It has become not only a bright business card of China's opening up to the outside world, but also an important window for the world to observe China," Li said.

As one of the world's one-stop trade platforms boasting a complete range of goods and high efficiency, the Canton Fair brings together cutting-edge products and technologies, Li said, adding that it serves as a grand stage for traditional goods trade and a barometer for the development of new types of trade.

In recent years, the enterprises participating in the Canton Fair have engaged in more diversified business exchanges and are gradually upgrading to all-round partners, Li said. He noted that China will continue to foster an open and innovative ecosystem, strengthen the protection of foreign-related intellectual property rights, and actively address the concerns of enterprises.

"China will continue to optimize the investment environment for

foreign investors, expand market access and support foreign enterprises in local production," the premier said. "It will also accelerate the building of a modern industrial system and promote the planning and construction of new power grids, computing power networks and new-generation communication networks," he added.

"We welcome enterprises from all countries to invest more in China, deepen their presence in the Chinese market, strengthen mutually beneficial and practical cooperation in the industrial and supply chains, and promote the building of open and inclusive global industrial and supply chains," Li said.

Li also called for enhancing the digital and intelligent content of the Canton Fair, introducing more green products and exhibition areas and promoting green trade, and highlighting the humanistic elements of the fair.

Noting that global production and supply chains are undergoing profound restructuring, business representatives said the competitiveness of "Made in China" is increasing day by day, making significant contributions to promoting the development of the world economy.

They said the Canton Fair is the most reliable global business platform and that the Chinese government has been continuously implementing precise policies, constantly optimizing the business environment, and helping enterprises from all countries achieve leapfrog development.

The foreign representatives said they are fully confident in China's development prospects and are willing to cooperate with China, share innovation, promote mutual growth and achieve mutual benefit and win-win results. — Xinhua

China's foreign trade maintains sound momentum as new drivers power exports

BEIJING – China's foreign trade maintained sound momentum in the first three quarters of 2026, with both exports and imports growing rapidly and the overall growth rate reaching its highest level for the same period in five years, official data showed yesterday.

The country's total imports and exports rose 18.8 percent year on year to 39.94 trillion yuan in the January-September period, according to the General Administration of Customs (GAC).

Growth accelerated through the year, with the expansion rate rising from 15.3 percent in the first quarter to 18.3 percent in the second quarter and 22.3 percent in the third quarter.

Foreign trade growth in the first three quarters was the fastest for the same period in the past five years, with both quarterly and monthly growth rates generally accelerating, said Wang Jun, GAC's deputy head.

"Latest international data show that such a growth rate ranks among the top among major economies, and China remains the world's largest trader of goods," the official told a press conference yesterday.

Wang said the performance could be summed up in four words: "fast, new, quality and open." Describing the "new," he noted that trade in industrial robots, electronic components, computer parts and electrical equipment exceeded 10 trillion yuan in the first three quarters, up 58.9 percent and driving overall import and export growth by 11.3 percentage points.

Exports increased 16.4 percent year on year to 23.2 trillion yuan, while imports expanded by 22.3 percent to 16.74 trillion yuan, GAC data showed.

In September alone, China's total imports and exports reached 5.16 trillion yuan, up 27.5 percent from a year earlier and crossing the 5-trillion-yuan mark for the first time. This figure also marked the sixth consecutive month of double-digit monthly growth.

Exports rose 29.6 percent year on year to 3.03 trillion yuan, while imports grew 24.6 percent to 2.13 trillion yuan for the month.

Exports continued to shift toward smarter and greener products. Integrated circuit exports surged 99.1 percent year on year in the first three quarters, while exports of electric vehicles, lithium batteries, and wind power generating sets and their parts rose 72.3 percent, 36.4 percent and 22.4 percent, respectively.

In east China's Anhui Province, robotics manufacturer EFORT Intelligent Robot Co., Ltd. has continued to see growth in overseas orders this year. After completing simulated spray-painting tests on vehicle bodies, a batch of its spraying robots will be exported to Italy.

The company's overseas revenue increased by more than 50 percent year on year in the first half of 2026. "We provide well-known automakers like Maserati and Volkswagen with integrated robotics solutions for smart production, covering painting, welding, precision assembly and the handling of materials," said You Wei, EFORT's chairman and CEO, adding that EFORT's overseas robot business has grown at a compound annual growth rate of nearly 100 percent over the past three years.

Foreign-invested enterprises in China remained active players in the trade expansion. Their

total imports and exports rose 19 percent to 11.69 trillion yuan, a record high for the same period, with intermediate goods trade up 27.4 percent to 7.9 trillion yuan and high-tech product exports up 42.1 percent. Wang said more foreign firms are embracing "China Opportunity 2.0," deepening their integration into China's industrial and innovation chains.

"The global AI investment boom has kept overseas demand firm, and rising prices will continue to drive rapid growth in chip exports, which is currently the main driver of China's export expansion," said Wang Qing, chief macro analyst at Golden Credit Rating. He added that China's manufacturing upgrading has continued to boost exports of new energy vehicles and high-tech products.

The country's trade with more than 180 countries and regions expanded during the first three quarters. Trade with free trade partners reached 19.55 trillion yuan, up 30 percent and contributing over 70 percent of the total trade increment. Meanwhile, trade with other APEC economies rose 23.9 percent to 24.07 trillion yuan.

Trade with ASEAN grew 22.7 percent to 6.84 trillion yuan, that with the European Union rose 8.4 percent to 4.78 trillion yuan, and trade with the United States increased 4.1 percent to 3.18 trillion yuan.

Exports continued to shift toward new and higher-quality growth drivers. The equipment manufacturing sector contributed nearly 90 percent of the export increment, while intermediate goods accounted for more than half of total exports, underpinning global industrial and supply chains, according to the GAC. — Xinhua

Indonesia haze spikes Singapore pollution, shuts East Timor schools



This picture provided by The Straits Times taken and received yesterday shows the city shrouded with haze in Singapore.

– AFP

Taryn Ng

SINGAPORE – Air pollution in part of Singapore hit the country’s “very high” band yesterday while East Timor shut schools, as haze from forest fires raging in Indonesia causes a regional crisis.

In Indonesia, authorities said more than 280,000 respiratory problems have been recorded in haze-affected regions since August 18, as blazes burned through hundreds of thousands of hectares of forests and plantations on Borneo and Sumatra islands.

Air pollution in western Singapore yesterday hit “very high” - the country’s top level - the National Environment Agency said.

It recorded levels of tiny particulates capable of penetrating the bloodstream and lungs, known as PM2.5, at 288 micrograms per cubic metre, vastly exceeding the World Health Organisation’s recommended average annual exposure of five micrograms.

Indonesia regularly battles wildfires during the dry season, but has seen stronger-than-usual blazes this year as a powerful El Niño cycle brings drought.

Experts also point to slash-and-burn land-clearing practices that have changed the naturally fire-resistant landscape of Sumatra and Borneo.

The haze has drifted into neighbouring Singapore, Malaysia and East Timor, which said it would shut schools nationwide for three days from today, and as far afield as the Philippines.

The closures in East Timor were necessary “as a preventive measure to protect the health of students, teachers and other members of the educational community, given current air quality conditions”, the government said.

It urged families to keep children indoors and to use “respiratory protection” if going outside.

Singapore rolled out subsidies for haze-related medical treatment from Monday, a measure last activated in 2015 when similar blazes in Indonesia cloaked Southeast Asia in toxic smoke for weeks.

The city-state has also begun distributing N95 masks to eligible residents when pollution reaches very unhealthy levels.

Singapore’s National Trades Union Congress said Monday that public transport workers and delivery riders

could receive free N95 masks, but AFP found uptake was slow.

“It’s a little bit uncomfortable to wear a mask, and some orders we have to walk around blocks, or park outside,” a delivery rider who gave his name only as Daniel told AFP.

“With the mask, I will have to breathe heavier,” the 27-year-old said.

‘Nothing left’

In Indonesia, tens of thousands of people have sought treatment for respiratory illness linked to haze from fires burning in Borneo, South Sumatra and Papua regions.

On Sumatra island, a fire razed nearly 300 homes, forcing hundreds of people to evacuate, an official said Tuesday.

Residents first spotted the fire approaching their village in Bangka Belitung province on Saturday and tried to put it out themselves with portable water pumps.

But the fire continued to smoulder underground in peatland, and when the wind shifted, the flames moved towards their homes.

The local disaster agency said nearly 1,000 people fled the village.

“My house is gone,” Leni, a 55-year-old villager now staying at a shelter with her family, told AFP.

“There’s nothing left. I could only save myself and take my kids with me... I panicked and didn’t have the time to grab anything,” said Leni, who like many Indonesians has one name.

President Prabowo Subianto on Monday ordered the government to mobilise maximum efforts, with officials saying more than 60,000 personnel had been deployed to combat fires on the ground.

But efforts so far, including cloud seeding and water-bombing, have had limited success.

Malaysia has been in talks with Indonesia to explore how the two countries can cooperate, Foreign Minister Mohamad Hasan said yesterday.

“The form of cooperation will depend on the outcome of the discussions, but the authorities of both countries have... begun talks on how we can work together to tackle the haze, which appears to be getting worse,” Mohamad told the Bernama national news agency.

– AFP

Deluge by design: Thai villages flooded to protect capital

Chayanit Itthipongmaetee

AYUTTHAYA, Thailand – Stilt houses in villages north of Bangkok are no longer high enough to stay dry as Thai authorities deliberately flood riverside communities to spare the capital.

Inside the home of Kamonchanok Sathaphonamwut, raised more than three metres above the ground in Ayutthaya province, her family of three sleeps on makeshift platforms and cannot use the waterlogged toilet.

Her village has been flooded six years in a row, pushing some to move away, while others have raised their houses higher.

“Our area simply cannot cope with this much water anymore,” the 34-year-old told AFP, wading through her soaked home.

But while authorities prioritise protecting Bangkok and other business hubs from floods, “when it comes to our residential communities, they neglect us”, she said.

Thailand experiences flooding every year during the monsoon season, and scientists say human-made climate change has made heavy rain and floods more frequent and severe.

After devastating floods in 2011, the government expanded embankments, water gates and other infrastructure to direct water away from Bangkok, the historic city of Ayutthaya and industrial zones along the Chao Phraya River, which flows through the capital.

The defences have largely kept commercial centres safe, but residents of other areas have been left to fend for themselves.

Around 20 kilometres from Ayutthaya’s centuries-old temple ruins, a UNESCO heritage site, residents say floods that once reached their knees now rise above their heads in some areas and can take several months to recede.

Office worker Kamonchanok has been forced to commute by boat, and hoist her household appliances and other belongings above the waterline.

“All we can do is deal with the consequences,” she said.

“There’s only so much we can do to adapt.”

‘Cruel’ but effective

Thai irrigation department spokesman Thanet Somboon said climate change, low-lying geography and recently built embankments that altered the natural flow of the Chao Phraya have contributed to more severe flooding of downstream communities.

“Even when water is released from the Chao Phraya Dam at the same rate as before, the impact is greater than it used to be,” Thanet told AFP.

And after irrigation channels were completely full of diverted water, he said authorities had “no choice but to discharge the remaining water downstream”.

But Thanet acknowledged that officials may need to review infrastructure to “ensure floodwater can be kept within the intended limits”.

Environmental conservationist Sasin Chalerm-larp said the government has done “an excellent job” managing floods across the central plains.

But its efforts were “cruel” to those bearing the brunt of the flooding.

In low-lying riverside districts that serve as flood retention zones, AFP journalists saw stretches of villages underwater this month, with some homes abandoned and others submerged up to their roofs.

Sasin said floodwater that once spread across much of Ayutthaya is now concentrated in just “five to 10 percent” of the province.

Rising costs

As flooding in hard-hit districts has become more severe, many who remain have paid to lift their stilt houses higher and keep their living space dry.

Kamonchanok’s family raised their home twice in the 1990s, the second time by 1.5 metres.

But floodwater reached their house in 2011, and again for the past six consecutive years.

Raising a house can cost between 100,000 and one million baht (US\$3,000-US\$30,000), depending on its size and height, residents say.

Some families have lifted their homes twice in just a few years, exhausting their savings and borrowing to get by.

Despite spending more than one million baht raising her home, Sawong Raksri, 87, is unfazed.

“It floods like this every year recently. What’s the point of complaining?” she said.

‘Flood-free tax’

Sasin acknowledged that the area’s low-lying land made it a natural route for floodwater.

“But the villagers have no choice. They are being forced to make sacrifices,” he said.

Sasin, who lives in a protected part of Ayutthaya, has proposed a “flood-free tax” on those who benefit from the defences, to help impacted families raise their homes and repair damage.

Thanet from the irrigation department said the idea warranted further study to determine “how to support people who sacrifice their land to accommodate floodwater”.

The government’s flagship fix is a US\$780-million flood diversion canal, designed to carry 1,200 cubic metres of water – around half the volume of an Olympic-size swimming pool – per second around the bottleneck where the Chao Phraya narrows through Ayutthaya.

It is expected to be completed by 2030.

Until then, Kamonchanok said her community was not even demanding an end to intentional flooding, but rather a cap on water levels and financial support for those whose homes sit below the flood line.

“All we’re asking for is to be able to live comfortably in our own homes,” she said.

“Why can’t they give us that?” – AFP



Ayutthaya resident Yupin Nakbanlang, 57, sits in her boat in front of the entrance of her flooded home in Bang Ban district, in the central Thai province of Ayutthaya last Tuesday.

– AFP

Nepal flood triggered by rock and ice avalanche: report

KATHMANDU – Nepal’s disaster authority said yesterday that an avalanche of rock and ice triggered a recent flash flood, echoing the mountain collapse that unleashed a tsunami-like wall of water in August.

The flood on Sunday came less than two months after an ice and rock collapse on August 26 sparked a catastrophic flood in Rasuwa district, killing more than 1,400 people and leaving over 5,000 missing, raising fresh concerns about the risks posed by Nepal’s unstable mountain terrain.

The latest flood left five people missing and swept away 200 houses and five bridges in central Gorkha district.

It was initially blamed on a landslide, but the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Authority said its analysis showed the torrent was triggered by an avalanche in an area with weak rock and at an altitude of about 6,000 metres.

The findings underscore the need for better monitoring and early-warning systems in Nepal’s mountainous regions, where sudden collapses can unleash devastating torrents as

mountain permafrost thaws.

“The nature of this disaster is similar to what we saw in Rasuwa,” disaster authority head Dharam Raj Uprety told AFP.

“The frequency shows that it has become critical that we monitor our mountains and make our early warning systems more effective.”

Uprety said authorities had received some warning of the flood, allowing them to alert communities and help minimise casualties.

The report said several smaller landslides also occurred, blocking the river before the debris gave way and the Budhi Gandaki surged downstream.

“The largest flood surge, reaching an estimated height of 20–25 metres, subsequently struck and swept away the hydropower camp in Salleri,” the report said.

Scientists say climate change played a key role in the August 26 floods.

Prime Minister Balendra Shah told the United Nations last month that the flooding “was a warning to the world” about the rising dangers of climate change.

– AFP



An aerial view shows people walking past a temporary shelter set-up for flood-victims near the banks of the Budhi Gandaki river (top left) in Nepal’s Gorkha district yesterday, in the aftermath of a flash flood caused by a dry landslide.

– AFP

Indian festival boat capsize kills 13 children

PATNA, India – Rescuers dragged out 13 dead children from India’s Ganges river after an overloaded boat capsized en route to a Hindu festival, officials said yesterday, with Prime Minister Narendra Modi expressing grief over the “deeply painful” tragedy.

The boat overturned late Tuesday in Vaishali district in eastern Bihar state, with locals rushing to pull people out of the water in the dark using mobile phones to find the bodies.

“It was dark when we suddenly heard children screaming and crying for help as the boat capsized,” Ravi Yadav, a young villager who joined the rescue effort, told AFP.

“We managed to rescue only three children, using the light from mobile phones and torches, because it was dark.”

Villager Ramlakhan Rai said the boat was “small” and “not in good condition”, saying people were crammed onto a vessel suitable for just a handful.

“It is devastating – a few families have lost all their children,” he said.

Six people were pulled out alive, including two children reported to be in critical condition.

Medic Nirmal Kumar, from the local health centre, said four children and two adults were taken to the district hospital.

“We tried our best to revive them... but 13 were already dead,” Kumar said.

Vaishali district magistrate Varsha Singh told AFP 13 bodies had been recovered.

“The loss of lives in the boat capsizing incident in Vaishali, Bihar is deeply painful,” Modi said in a statement yesterday, announcing compensation for their families.

“My thoughts are with the bereaved families in this difficult time.”

Boat accidents are common on Indian waterways, often blamed on overcrowding, poor enforcement of safety norms and inadequate life-saving equipment.

– AFP

India sends ‘cockroach’ leaders to jail after protest

Uzmi Athar

NEW DELHI – Two leaders of India’s youth-led movement Cockroach Janta Party (CJP) were remanded in custody for five days yesterday, as police clamp down on protests against the election commission.

CJP activists and opposition parties have defied a security crackdown to demand the resignation of India’s chief election commissioner, accusing the poll body of manipulating voter rolls to benefit Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s ruling party.

The commission, which oversees voting in the world’s most populous nation, has denied any wrongdoing.

Delhi Police said CJP leaders Ashutosh Ranka, 30, and Saurav Das, 27, were taken into custody for their “alleged repeated attempts to disturb public peace and violate the law”.

At the end of the five-day remand period, they could have their detention extended, be granted bail or be released.

On Tuesday, the pair jumped security barricades to wave the national flag at Jantar Mantar, a decades-old protest site that police have barred people from using.

“Their alleged attempts to instigate others through social media to engage in similar unlawful activities were also taken into consideration,” police said.

Jantar Mantar, in the heart of the capital, has been sealed off for days with yellow metal barricades and guarded by security personnel.

Delhi Police said on Monday it had removed the site from the list of designated protest venues.

‘Not a crime’

Parliamentary opposition leader Rahul Gandhi, from the Congress party, backed the protest leaders.

“Waving the Tricolour at Jantar Mantar in a peaceful protest is not a crime,” he said in a post on social media. “Jailing youth for it is an act of cowardice.”

There were smaller demonstrations in the city yesterday with police detaining protesters and bundling them into buses.

CJP founder Abhijeet Dipke called on people to gather tomorrow in Connaught Place, close to Jantar Mantar.

“And those who cannot come to Delhi, take out a march in your own cities and tell these people... that our flag is our pride and waving

it is not a crime,” Dipke said on social media.

He earlier said that Ranka and Das had “shown the entire country that the only way to stand up to a bully like Modi is to never bow down, no matter the consequences”.

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.

Human Rights Watch said yesterday the Indian government must uphold the right of citizens to protest peacefully.

“The Modi government should stop throwing young protesters in jail and instead engage with them to address concerns over the right to vote and fairness of elections,” it said in a statement.

‘They punched me’

Protester Atira, who gave only her first name, said yesterday that she was taken to a detention centre and beaten by police.

“They punched me here,” said Atira, pointing to her face at a news conference in Delhi, standing next to Gandhi.

“I begged them to stop, but then they started kicking me in my private parts, lower abdomen, and back. They didn’t consider me as a human.”

AFP could not immediately verify her claim.

The electoral list revision, which began last year, has led to more than 133 million names being removed from voter rolls, according to media reports. Critics say the exercise has disproportionately affected minorities, particularly Muslims.

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

Members of Modi’s Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party have long alleged that large numbers of undocumented Muslim migrants from neighbouring Bangladesh have fraudulently entered India’s electoral rolls.

Home Minister Amit Shah, Modi’s powerful right-hand man, dismissed the protests as localised and accused Gandhi of pursuing an “action plan to protect infiltrators”.

“The people of India are not going to fall for your deception,” he said, predicting a “resounding majority” for government in the next general election, due in 2029.

– AFP

Japanese farm minister resigns over scandals

TOKYO – Embattled Japanese farm minister Kazuo Yana resigned from the cabinet yesterday, dealing a major blow to Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi’s government, Kyodo News reported.

Yana has come under fire for a series of controversies over his past remarks and conduct. Japanese media said his resignation could raise questions about Takaichi’s responsibility for the appointment.

A successor to Yana is expected to be announced today.

According to media reports in late September, Yana told supporters in his constituency in May that fiscal 2026 road budgets had been sharply cut for two municipalities whose mayors did not support him in the House of Representatives election in February.

The remarks sparked widespread criticism, with some opposition lawmakers saying they amounted to voter intimidation.

A weekly magazine reported last week that Yana had also provided free shuttle bus rides to his supporters during past lower house election campaigns, possibly in violation of the Public Offices Election Act.

According to Kyodo News, Takaichi had initially made clear that Yana would stay on, but her stance shifted as opposition parties stepped up pressure for his resignation.

At a House of Representatives Budget Committee session on Tuesday, she criticized Yana’s remarks as “deeply inappropriate” and said she “will not hesitate” to dismiss him “if illegality is found” in his conduct.

Yana had previously been disciplined by the ruling Liberal Democratic Party over a high-profile political slush fund scandal. Nevertheless, he was appointed minister of agriculture, forestry and fisheries in the cabinet reshuffle in September, becoming one of the first disciplined lawmakers to enter the cabinet since the scandal came to light in late 2023.

Japan’s *Mainichi Shimbun* pointed out that Yana is the first cabinet minister to step down over scandals since the Takaichi administration took office, and Takaichi may face questions over her responsibility for the appointment.

Kyodo News said the resignation marks a setback for the prime minister, who is set to mark a year in office later this month.

– Xinhua

Pope out of bed, progress 'normal': doctors

Ella Ide

Pope Leo XIV is out of bed, walking and eating following an operation to remove a cancerous tumour from his lung, and has undergone post-surgery tests which show his progress is "normal", his doctors said yesterday.

Part of the pope's right lung was removed in Tuesday's operation at Rome's Gemelli hospital and the leader of the world's 1.4 billion Catholics is now awaiting the results of a biopsy to determine if the cancer has spread.

Blood tests and a chest X-ray meanwhile "confirm a normal post-operative course", doctors Luigi Carbone and Stefano Margaritora said in a statement released yesterday by the Vatican.

"The values are within the expected range for the type of procedure performed," they said.

The discovery on Tuesday that Leo's nodule was cancerous plunged the Catholic Church into a period of uncertainty.

But a day later, his doctors said his recovery was "proceeding as expected" and the pontiff had eaten both breakfast and lunch, been walking about his room, and had done some respiratory physiotherapy.

"It's a shock for everyone. We're in 'wait-and-see' mode," a Vatican source told AFP.

The sporty 71-year-old, who was elected as the first US pope only last year, made the surprise announcement that he would be undergoing surgery after Sunday prayers.

Support

Messages of support flooded in from around the world, including from Britain's



Members of the media work outside of the Gemelli University Hospital, where Pope Leo XIV is recovering after undergoing surgery to remove a cancerous tumour from his right lung, in Rome yesterday. — AFP

King Charles III, who is also being treated for an undisclosed cancer.

Flying outside the hospital north of the Vatican a banner read "Long live the pope!"

Experts said much would depend on how advanced the cancer was, and whether it had spread, but the Vatican has said it had been detected early and was localised.

The Vatican said the pope's recovery should take around a week. All his audiences have been cancelled until October 20.

"If we are dealing with stage I or II disease, and recovery is good... the patient can resume a normal life and usual activities within a few weeks," Alain Gelibter, an oncologist at Rome's

Policlinico Umberto I hospital, told AFP.

Chicago-born Leo is staying in a room on the 10th floor of the building, next to a papal suite with a private chapel that is currently under renovation.

He had entered the hospital smiling and waving on Tuesday.

In the hospital chapel, dozens of faithful prayed for the pope's health during the operation.

New uncertainty

The shock news of the tennis-playing pope's illness has rattled the Catholic Church.

A Vatican source told AFP the pope

seemed "unwell" after his trip to France at the end of September.

"If this forces him to slow down, it might not be a bad thing, given his very hectic pace," the source said.

Expert Marco Politi, who has spent decades covering the Vatican, told AFP: "The Church is now in a state of uncertainty. When Leo was elected everyone foresaw a long papacy."

Hendro Munsterman, a theologian and expert for Dutch newspaper *Nederlands Dagblad*, told AFP: "We have a pope whom everyone described as young, active and athletic. Now, we have a pope who also has his own vulnerabilities, which will change his image."

His health issues may prompt him to speed up personnel appointments, Munsterman said.

Politi said Leo had been working on "repairing" rifts between various wings of the Church, and many will want him "to continue with this important mission as soon as possible".

Filipino Cardinal Luis Antonio Tagle, the dean of the College of Cardinals, celebrated a Mass on St Peter's Square yesterday that was to have been presided over by the pope.

The surgery has raised questions about whether Leo will go ahead with a lengthy visit next month to Uruguay, Argentina and Peru, where he worked as a missionary for two decades.

It marks Leo's first hospitalisation since he became pope on May 8, 2025.

The Vatican has historically been very secretive about the health of popes, but began to be more transparent during the illness of Leo's predecessor, Francis, an Argentine who freely discussed his ailments. — AFP

Nobel winner Pillay blasts 'unlawful' Trump ICC sanctions

Interview by Richard Carter

THE HAGUE — Nobel Peace Prize winner Navi Pillay yesterday hit out at Donald Trump's "illegal" sanctions against the International Criminal Court (ICC), saying the US president needed a lesson in international law.

In an interview with AFP, Pillay also said it was no coincidence the US sanctions on the ICC were announced just hours after her Nobel, as a "reaction to the fact that the award was not given to President Trump."

Asked what her message was for Trump, the 85-year-old judge told AFP: "Call in your legal advisors to explain to you what international law is."

"He should call in his advisors to tell him why we say that it is unlawful for him to interfere with an independent international court."

On Friday, the US announced sanctions against the ICC aimed at crippling the day-to-day operations of the court, which tries individuals for alleged war crimes, crimes against humanity, and genocide.

Trump's administration has vowed to dismantle the court "brick-by-brick", furious that judges have issued an arrest warrant for Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu for alleged crimes in Gaza.

Pillay noted that previous US administrations had welcomed an ICC arrest warrant against Russian President Vladimir Putin, saying, "that's selective, that's double standards, and that's wrong."

The sanctions, which will hit the court's technology and banking operations, take effect in six months and Dutch Prime Minister Rob Jetten has urged talks with Washington during that time to discuss reforms to the court, based in The Hague.

But Pillay said the idea of reforms to the ICC was "euphemistic", adding that what Trump wanted was "an undertaking that they won't pursue investigations of US citizens."

"You can't do that, because you can't have double standards. You can't selectively pursue one lot of people and not the other," Pillay told AFP.

"It will be such a bad, dangerous precedent."

'Hurtful and insulting'

Pillay also hit back at Israeli officials who reacted with outrage to her Nobel, after she headed the UN Independent International Commission of Inquiry (COI), which claimed last year that genocide was occurring in Gaza.

Netanyahu called her a "bigot" while Israel's foreign ministry said Nazi propagandist Joseph Goebbels must be "applauding from hell" at her award.

"I think it's very hurtful and insulting," said Pillay.

"Goebbels had blood on his hands... responsible for the death of thousands of people. Not only Jews, but people of colour like me," she added.

She acknowledged there was little political appetite to arrest Netanyahu to face the ICC accusations, which he furiously denies.

"But all my life I've seen people get around difficulties, so I'm confident that it will happen," she said, asked if Netanyahu was ever likely to appear in the ICC dock.

'Age will constrain me'

Pillay said she was still digesting the news that she had won. She found it difficult



The 2026 Nobel Peace Prize laureate, South African lawyer and champion of international law Navi Pillay (centre) poses with the former president of the International Criminal Court (ICC), Silvia Fernandez de Gurmendi (left), and the director of the International Nuremberg Principles Academy Christoph Safferling after she gave a press statement last Friday at the historic Courtroom 600 of Nuremberg's Palace of Justice, the venue of the 1945-1946 Nuremberg Trials against leaders of defeated Nazi Germany, in Nuremberg, southern Germany, where she was attending the Nuremberg Forum 2026 conference of the International Nuremberg Principles Academy. — AFP

to believe at first "because they give their awards to very few women — gross inequality in the practice so far."

At 85, she frets she will be unable to travel far and wide to sing the praises of international justice with the amplified voice of a Nobel Peace Prize winner.

"I think that age will constrain me somewhat. I can't be as active as I used to," she said, noting that she visited 79 countries when she was UN High Commissioner for Human Rights.

She said she was consulting people about how best to spend the 12 million Swedish krona prize (US\$1.2 million) but hinted some of it might be invested in her native South Africa.

"Africa is suffering. South Africa is suffering. It's very difficult to raise funds there," she said.

"The University of KwaZulu-Natal has set up a unit in my name, so I'll begin to have discussions with them. I believe in education for children and the youth." — AFP

Germany's far-right, far-left parties pass motion against Ukraine aid in regional parliament

BERLIN – Far-right and far-left parties passed a motion in a German regional parliament yesterday calling for an end to the country's military aid for Ukraine and for normalising relations with Russia.

The far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD) party scored a stunning electoral victory last month in the eastern German state of Saxony-Anhalt, and has teamed up with the far-left BSW party to form a working majority.

Both the AfD and the BSW are united in denouncing the economic sanctions imposed on Russia by Western nations in retaliation for its military operation in Ukraine.

They have also demanded that Germany – one of Ukraine's most important supporters – halt military aid.

Their motion -- which is purely advisory -- urged Saxony-Anhalt's government to bring up sanctions relief for Russia and an end to aid for Ukraine in the Bundesrat, the upper house of the national parliament made up of Germany's 16 federal states.

"Financial support for Ukraine that goes beyond humanitarian aid must be stopped immediately," the text said, also advocating the "immediate" lifting of sanctions against Moscow.

"The West's one-sided stance in the Ukraine war has not contributed to ending the conflict; on the contrary, it has prolonged the population's suffering and increased the risk of the war spreading to other countries."

It also demanded an "immediate ceasefire and the initiation of peace negotiations with Russia".

The AfD hopes to take control of Saxony-Anhalt's state government in December, although it remains unclear if the party's firebrand leader Ulrich Siegmund will be able to secure enough votes to claim the post of state premier.

Chancellor Friedrich Merz has pledged to continue supporting Kyiv at all costs, and has accused Russia of waging a campaign of sabotage, disinformation, and espionage against Germany.

– AFP, MPD

Russia expects first diesel contracts with US in 'next few days': official



In this pool photograph distributed by the Russia's state newswire Sputnik, Russian President Vladimir Putin chairs a meeting on cybersecurity with government and business members via videolink at the Novo-Ogaryovo residence outside Moscow yesterday. – AFP

MOSCOW – Russia indicated yesterday that the first contracts on providing diesel to the United States would be signed in the coming days, following US President Donald Trump's decision to ease sanctions on Russian diesel.

Trump last week announced an agreement with Russian President Vladimir Putin to allow the country's diesel onto global markets in an effort to curb prices, which have soared in the wake of the Middle East war.

"It will all happen in the next few days," Kirill Dmitriev, the Kremlin's special envoy on economic cooperation, was quoted as saying by Russian news agencies when asked when the first contracts might be signed.

"We are in very close, hourly contact with the American side, and everything is moving very quickly."

Deputy Prime Minister for Energy, Alexander Novak, said that "we are currently working with American colleagues, at both the ministry and corporate levels, on supply contracts".

"Deliveries will be made to global markets, including directly to the United States," Novak said, adding that Russian supplies could "reach 3-3.5 million tonnes by the end of the year" – the same level as before Western sanctions were imposed.

He maintained that represented "10 percent of the global market", and would help bring down energy prices.

Energy prices have been soaring

globally since the United States and Israel attacked Iran in late February, prompting Tehran to block off the Strait of Hormuz, a vital route for oil and gas shipments.

Novak welcomed the agreement, which he said would mean "additional tax revenue for the [Russian] budget", as well as "investment opportunities, at a time when Russian military spending has skyrocketed since the start of its offensive in Ukraine in 2022."

The US-Russia diesel deal has drawn sharp criticism from Ukraine and Western allies, but the Trump administration has slammed the "hypocrisy" of Europeans, accusing them of having continued to purchase large quantities of Russian fossil fuels. – AFP

Sally Rooney books cannot be sold in UK amid Palestine Action ban: publisher

LONDON – Irish author Sally Rooney can no longer sell her books in the UK because of her support for the activist group Palestine Action, her publisher Faber said yesterday.

Rooney has previously expressed her support for the group, which was banned as a "terrorist" organisation by the UK government in July 2025. It is not banned in Ireland, where Rooney lives.

The proscription, which the organisation is appealing, puts Palestine Action on the same blacklist as militant groups Hamas and Hezbollah, making it illegal in the UK to be part of, support or finance it.

"Current legislation in the UK has led to circumstances where Faber cannot pass on UK earnings to Sally Rooney for her work. To sell a writer's work and not be able to pass on earnings is an unconscionable situation for a publisher," Faber said in a statement on its website.

"As such, and in full agreement with Sally, we have taken the decision that we can no longer supply her works in the UK in any format," the British publisher said, adding that it would continue to sell her work in other countries and regions.

The best-selling author of "Normal People" and "Intermezzo" previously said she

would donate earnings to Palestine Action, and told the High Court in London that the proscription would have an impact on freedom of expression.

"As a result, the fulfilment of contracts to publish my work in the UK could now constitute a serious criminal offence," Rooney said in a statement shared with AFP.

"After a process of consultation and deliberation, and with my full agreement, my publisher Faber has therefore determined that it can no longer supply my work within the UK," the author said, adding she was prepared to "accept the consequences" of her beliefs.

Britain's Supreme Court is set to hear an appeal against the ban from the group's cofounder Huda Ammori next month.

Thousands of people have protested against the ban and been detained in the process, while rights groups and some public figures have condemned the ban as criminalising dissent.

Palestine Action's stated goal on its website is to end "global participation in Israel's genocidal and apartheid regime."

Its proscription came after a series of high-profile stunts protesting the war in Gaza, including targeting weapons factories especially those belonging to Israeli arms group Elbit. – AFP

Canadian publisher supports novelist Orélien after AI denial

MONTREAL – The publisher of Haitian-Canadian writer Thelyson Orélien said yesterday it would keep his novel "It Was Either That or Die" in bookstores, after the author denied he had used AI to write the book.

"A publisher should not demand proof from [its authors] but rather stand by them and that is what we are doing," Boréal said in a statement.

"In the absence of definitive conclusions, the novel will therefore remain available in bookstores," the

statement said. "It will be up to each individual to decide what place to give it on their bookshelf."

The top-selling author has been accused of using AI to write his breakthrough French-language novel about migration titled "C'était ça ou mourir," which was set to be translated in more than 20 countries.

The book has become shrouded in suspicion and been withdrawn from the shortlist for France's top book prize, the Goncourt, after tests with AI detector Pangram indicated a

100 percent probability it contained computer-generated text.

"They say that 'C'était ça ou mourir' was written by an artificial intelligence. That's slander and heresy," Orélien said in a statement on Tuesday.

"Here and there I did use tools for research, particularly for foreign idioms. But not a single sentence in this book was created by a machine, nor the meaning or the structure of a story that comes from my gut."

– AFP

Netflix to cut about 1,000 jobs amid slower growth

NEW YORK – Netflix will cut about 1,000 jobs, or 6 percent of its workforce, US media reported yesterday, as the streaming platform experiences slower growth.

When contacted by AFP, the company did not immediately respond.

"Our mission – to entertain the world – is ambitious, and delivering on it requires us to be disciplined about where we prioritize our people and resources," co-CEOs Ted Sarandos and Greg Peters wrote in an internal memo, according to several US media outlets.

Now firmly established at the top of the video streaming market, Netflix is no longer able to grow at the same pace as before.

In the second quarter, revenue rose 13.4 percent from the same period a year ago, slower than the 16.2 percent rate in the first quarter.

The Los Gatos, California-based company is forecasting 11.7 percent growth in the just-finished third quarter.

Several media outlets reported a decline in time spent on the platform after years of uninterrupted growth.

In early July, Bloomberg reported that average viewership for

a series drops after the first season.

"Netflix's layoffs show that even the top streaming companies are not immune to stagnation and financial difficulties," commented Emarketer analyst Ross Benes.

"While the company will expand its sports roles, it's cutting back at a time when revenue matters much more than subscriber additions," he said. "With pressure mounting, Netflix will look to turn the tide by getting a boost from low-cost content."

The company's stock has fallen 15 percent since the start of the year.

– AFP

São Tomé's niche vanilla finds far-away fans



The co-founder of L'atelier Vanilha, Juliette Dohar (second from left), works with staff members in the French company's workshop in São Tomé, capital of São Tomé and Príncipe, on August 7. The plump, bright-green vanilla pods growing in tiny Atlantic Ocean two-island nation's vast leafy plantations may well end up in some of Europe's finest dining. On the island of São Tomé, where the mild, warm climate favours the growth of vanilla vines, cultivating the tropical orchid – which involves a demanding process of manual pollination – remains a largely underdeveloped sector. – AFP

Léa Nkamleun Fosso

SÃO TOMÉ AND PRÍNCIPE
– The plump, bright-green vanilla pods growing in tiny São Tomé's vast leafy plantations may well end up in some of Europe's finest dining.

Although better known for its cocoa, the central African island off the Gulf of Guinea has revived its cultivation of vanilla, the world's second most expensive spice, after saffron.

While his mother used to grow cocoa, Ifrásio de Barros Rompão has invested in the green pods that will turn yellowish on the thick, flat leaf vines once harvest time comes.

Spurred on by the promise of more profits, the farmer recently ventured into growing vanilla.

"Vanilla, in terms of money, for me, is essential," Barros Rompão said on his sloping forest plot in the heart of the island.

"I have a big family at home, and with this crop I manage to provide for our needs," he added.

Once nicknamed the "Chocolate Islands", the Portuguese-speaking Atlantic Ocean archipelago was the world's leading cocoa producer at the beginning of the 20th century.

The Vanilla planifolia orchid is believed to have been introduced in 1880 as an offering by French colony Gabon to the Portuguese governor at the time.

Its cultivation never took off, neglected in favour of intensive production of sugarcane and later cacao and coffee.

But the volatility of global cocoa prices and the ageing of the island's plantations have left São Tomé scrambling to diversify its economy.

And hopes are pinned on its niche vanilla cultivation.

Lengthy but lucrative

Only saffron commands higher prices than vanilla, which "adds an extra income for farmers", Juliette Dohar, co-founder of L'Atelier Vanilha, said.

The project was set up seven years ago and focuses on supporting the development of high-quality vanilla production in São Tomé.

With cocoa, producers can expect to earn small amounts spread across the year.

Vanilla brings in "much larger sums once or twice a year", said Dohar.

Her organisation buys the spice from around 50 farmers to process locally before exporting it to European markets.

Producing the sweet-smelling spice is a lengthy process.

Vanilla can take up to three or four years to develop its first flowers.

At their facilities in Pema Pema on the outskirts of São Tomé's capital, the plant, once harvested, undergoes a long, artisanal preparation process.

First, the green vanilla is dried in the gardens in the sun.

"We're in a very humid environment, so we need to remove part of the moisture from the pod fairly quickly," Francesco Mai, the other founder of L'Atelier Vanilha, said.

Afterwards comes several months of drying indoors, massaging the pods, scalding, fermentation and curing.

The vanilla then turns from green to dark brown and develops its characteristic aroma.

"At full production, we're at around 300 kilos. These are very small volumes, but the goal is to achieve high quality and target a premium market of fine grocery

shops and Michelin-starred restaurants in France, Switzerland and Belgium," Dohar said.

'Carries its landscape'

Madagascar and Indonesia dominate the global market, accounting for more than 80 percent of production with around 3,000 tonnes between them.

On the island of São Tomé, where the mild, warm climate favours the growth of vanilla vines, cultivating the tropical orchid – which involves a demanding process of manual pollination – remains a largely underdeveloped sector.

But more than 5,000 kilometres away, the vanilla of the "Chocolate Islands" is appreciated for its aromatic qualities.

"There are notes of cocoa nibs in the base notes," said Mathilde Roellinger, managing director of Epices Roellinger, a renowned, Michelin-starred name in French gastronomy.

"There's a real floral elegance with violet notes," she said, from the family restaurant in Cancale Bay in northwestern France.

"Then at the heart of the vanilla you almost get hints of small red berries. It's extremely rich in the diversity of its aromatic profile," she added, breaking off to inhale the scent of a newly arrived pod from the island.

Its flavours give a tiny taste of the far-away archipelago of 210,000 people which gained independence in 1975 from Portugal.

"For me, every spice carries the landscape it comes from," Roellinger said.

"And Sao Tome is a paradise island. There is a bit of that mystery and beauty in the vanilla bean."

– AFP

Lufthansa wins contest for TAP Air Portugal stake



This combination of pictures created yesterday shows the logo of German airline Lufthansa in Frankfurt am Main, western Germany, on March 6, and the logo of TAP Air Portugal airline at the Humberto Delgado Airport in Lisbon on April 2. – AFP

Levi Fernandes

LISBON – German airline Lufthansa has won the contest to buy nearly half of TAP Air Portugal, the Portuguese prime minister said yesterday, after months of efforts to privatise the state-rescued airline.

Lufthansa beat out Air France-KLM with an offer of 1.025 billion euros (US\$1.14 billion) for a 44.9 percent stake in TAP, Prime Minister Luis Montenegro told journalists after a cabinet meeting.

TAP, which was renationalised in 2020 to stem heavy losses from the COVID-19 pandemic lockdowns, is among the few remaining state-owned carriers in Europe.

"After studying the proposals, the government has chosen Lufthansa, whose financial offer was 16 percent higher than the competing bid," Montenegro said.

The state will keep 50.1 percent of the airline's shares, while for now employees will own the remaining five percent.

It wants to ensure that Lisbon remains a strategic hub for flights to Brazil and Africa, with its headquarters remaining in Portugal.

The deal requires approval from the EU Commission and likely will not close until 2028, the government said.

The government also evoked for the first time yesterday the potential of a full privatisation of TAP, in exchange for a stake in Lufthansa.

Lufthansa did not immediately respond to an AFP request for comment.

Still unprofitable

The Portuguese government committed to a deep restructuring of the airline in 2021 in exchange for EU approval of 3.2 billion euros of public aid to keep it afloat.

British Airways parent IAG and Spain's Iberia had also considered bidding to add TAP's network to their own operations, before abandoning the contest.

The airline has around 7,700 employees and a fleet of around 100 Airbus planes.

It revealed in August a net loss of 59.3 million euros in the second quarter even as the key summer travel season ramped up, a steep reversal from a profit of 38.3 million euros in the period last year.

Like other airlines, TAP has been buffeted by soaring jet fuel costs from the war in the Middle East.

It nonetheless hit a record of 8.2 million passengers during the quarter.

– AFP



Demonstrators march during a protest against the government of Colombia's far-right President Abelardo de la Esparilla in Bogotá yesterday, during a nationwide day of demonstrations called by labour unions, teachers' organisations, student groups and opposition forces. – AFP

Infantino could pull off 'Houdini' act as critics struggle for candidate

Pirate Irwin

FIFA PARIS — Gianni Infantino could survive weeks of criticism and secure re-election as FIFA president in the absence of a heavy hitter to challenge him, observers have told AFP.

The 56-year-old Swiss has lost the support of many associations in his bid to be re-elected to a fourth and final term since he launched and then hastily shelved his plan to allow private investment into the World Cup.

Infantino, though, does crucially retain his core support in Africa and South America.

His FIFA Forward Enterprise (FFE) plan, which came to light in July just after the hugely successful World Cup, would have created a commercial subsidiary to run FIFA's biggest events, such as the World Cup.

However, with two of his fiercest critics, Aleksander Ceferin and reportedly Victor Montagliani opting to run for re-election as heads of European governing body UEFA and North American grouping CONCACAF respectively, the opposition to Infantino is desperately seeking a viable candidate to challenge him in the election next March.

Candidates have to declare by November 18.

Terrence Burns, who was marketing strategist for two successful World Cup hosting bids, said Infantino was always in the box seat.

"He holds all the cards and always has," he told AFP. "Any prospective challenger at this point feels either performative or strategic to cut deals."

Former International Olympic Committee (IOC) marketing chief Michael Payne said "everyone is surprised" that no serious candidate has come forward to challenge Infantino.

"If he is re-elected, which is looking increasingly likely, it will redefine the term Houdini," Payne told AFP.

Long-time Infantino critic Lise Klaveness, the head of the Norwegian Football Federation (NFF), has impressed many but has ruled out running.

However, even if Klaveness changed her mind she would face a huge challenge in becoming the first woman to run world football and emulate Kirsty Coventry, who last year became the first woman elected as IOC president.

"People within the IOC administration were working towards the goal of Coventry being elected, as (her predecessor) Thomas Bach's wish was for her to be president," a source close to the

world of football governance, who asked not to be identified, told AFP.

"Lise faces exactly the opposite. FIFA staff would be working to stop her being elected."

Legal challenges

Infantino, though, is not safe yet as the opposition have mounted legal challenges in the US and filed official complaints with FIFA committees.

Klaveness and the Norwegian federation have highlighted three issues, with the common thread being Infantino's friendship with US President Donald Trump.

The venture capital firm of Josh Kushner, the brother of Trump's son-in-law Jared, was to be the major investor in FFE.

However, the same source warned "there is no certainty that the complaints will be looked into. Even if they were to consider them they would take their time."

"The fear in the Infantino camp is the Norwegians could take them to CAS (Court of Arbitration for Sport) if dissatisfied with the decision."

Burns, though, believes the greatest risk to Infantino comes from the legal challenges launched by UEFA in the US courts to gain access to the papers pertaining to FFE. FIFA are strongly contesting the case.

"This point is a fly in the ointment," Burns said. "If the FFE was just a case of misguided process and communications strategy, why hide its specifics?"

"That lack of transparency is a rock in Infantino's shoe that will not fade away."

Payne believes the lack of support for Infantino from leading football nations such as Spain, France and England could be damaging.

"Running a global sports federation requires unity - FIFA will be on the brink of civil war, and this is totally new territory for a sports governing body," he said.

Burns though thinks the opposition will reluctantly make peace with Infantino.

He said football's governing bodies would rather avoid division "unless of course there is overwhelming criminal activity to justify it - which there is not".

The other point that could tip the balance is if there is a "financial upside" for the federations by removing Infantino. On that point, he said, "again, there isn't."

Burns believes in fact that the process is likely to "result in even greater consolidation of power and influence for Infantino when it is all over."

— AFP



Mark Mogan (right), who is accused of racially abusing football player Antoine Semenyo - then with Bournemouth and now with Manchester City - during a match in August 2025, arrives at Liverpool Magistrates' Court in Liverpool, north-west England yesterday. — AFP

Regulator expects Man City appeal to be heard by Jan



LONDON - The chair of English football's Independent Regulator has said he expects Manchester City's appeal after being found guilty of more than 100 breaches of Premier League financial rules to be heard by January.

City, who have repeatedly maintained they are innocent of the charges, are currently top of the Premier League table with six wins out of six following their 3-0 defeat of Liverpool last weekend.

No sanction has yet been announced, but City could face a heavy points deduction leading to relegation and there is even been speculation they could be stripped of the three Premier League titles they won between 2009 and 2018.

"The Premier League have said that they want to get this resolved within season, and actually, of course, it's not the Premier League, it's an independent commission that's actually going to hear this, made of three retired either judges or lawyers," Independent Football Regulator (IFR) chair David Kogan told Times Radio yesterday.

"My understanding is that there is a prescribed process, which is 12 weeks, and so people are assuming this will actually be heard by the

middle or the end of January.

"But as I say, it's not our process, it's that of the Premier League's independent commission. What I don't think we can do is take any judgment until we're quite clear."

Kogan said Tuesday he would resign if there was political interference in any future IFR investigations of City.

Burnham 'concern'

British Prime Minister Andy Burnham was criticised for his comments saying he would be "really concerned" if City's Abu Dhabi owners left the club following the verdict.

Downing Street subsequently had to backtrack, insisting no one was "above the rules".

Burnham, who was mayor of Greater Manchester from 2017 to June 2026, has since published all of his dealings with the City hierarchy.

On Monday, the Greater Manchester Combined Authority said Burnham had met Manchester City chairman Khaldoon Al Mubarak at an investment summit several years ago when he was mayor of the city.

It was also revealed Burnham

had spoken to him in the stands at former City captain Vincent Kompany's testimonial and was accompanied by staff from the club on official overseas visits.

Burnham was pressed on the issue during Prime Minister's Questions in the House of Commons yesterday.

Jerome Mayhew, an MP for the main opposition Conservative party, asked Burnham if anyone associated with the running of Manchester City had raised the issue of the charges either with him or any member of his team.

Burnham replied: "They did not raise those issues with me."

Kogan said earlier yesterday: "We've had absolutely no interference from anybody since we created the regulator a year ago."

"We cannot, when regulating football, be subject to political interference on decisions we make about owners, directors or anything else."

He added: "And I won't actually be prepared to run an organisation which is subject to that degree of interference."

Manchester City manager Enzo Maresca said last week he "completely trusts" the club and believes it will win its appeal.

— AFP



Mexico's forward Lizbeth Ovalle (centre) and Jamaica's defender Allyson Swaby fight for the ball during the women's international friendly between Mexico and Jamaica at La Corregidora Stadium in Santiago de Queretaro, Queretaro State, Mexico on Tuesday. Mexico won the game 3-1.

— AFP

S Korean FA condemns 'personal attacks' as rift rumours grow

Football

SEOUL — South Korea's football association has told fans to stop "excessive personal attacks", warning of the "psychological burden" it could inflict on national team players in the crosshairs since their World Cup flop.

Hong Myung-bo quit as coach after the team failed to advance past the group stage in North America, and Spanish interim Robert Moreno is awaiting word on a possible extension.

With the Asian Cup scheduled to take place in January in Saudi Arabia, the national side are engulfed by claims of internal divisions.

Local media reports say some younger players feel held back by senior members of the squad, including long-time captain Son Heung-min.

In a lengthy statement, the Korea Football Association condemned what it called attempts to sow discord.

"Unverified information and speculative claims about national football team players have recently been spreading on social media and online forums, with some players facing excessive criticism and personal attacks," the KFA said on Tuesday.

"Such behaviour goes beyond the bounds of legitimate criticism and can place a severe psychological burden on individual players," it said, urging fans to refrain from "making assumptions about internal team dynamics and fuelling divisions within the squad".

Speculation about discord emerged after Bayern Munich

defender Kim Min-jae threw his boots in anger after being substituted in the second half of the disappointing home 0-0 draw with Venezuela this month.

Kim said afterwards that "every player needs to put their head down and give it their all", fuelling talk of divisions within the squad.

The latest firestorm follows public outrage over the behaviour of some players who earned exemptions from mandatory military service after winning gold at the Asian Games.

Their post-match celebrations, seen as suggesting that military exemptions had been their main motivation, sparked a backlash and prompted Defence Minister Kang Shin-chul to pledge to scale back the benefit.

— AFP

Top seed Sabalenka falls at first hurdle in Wuhan

Tennis

WUHAN – A frustrated Aryna Sabalenka suffered a second successive early exit as her bid for a fourth Wuhan Open title was foiled by American world number 31 Ann Li 3-6, 6-4, 7-6 (7/5) in round two yesterday.

The top-seeded Sabalenka fell to Nikola Bartunkova in the third round at the China Open last week and squandered a 6-3, 4-2 lead against Li to stumble at her very first hurdle in Wuhan.

The Belarusian four-time major winner lost her number one ranking to Elena Rybakina last month and has not won a title since March.

Playing with protective taping around her right knee, Sabalenka was in control of the match until Li swung the momentum in her direction halfway through the second set.

Sabalenka asked for the trainer when she was broken early in the decider and appeared to be struggling with her movement. Still, she was

able to wipe a 2-5 deficit, saving nine match points along the way.

Li steadied the ship, though, and finished the job in two hours and 27 minutes on her 10th opportunity, to set up a last-16 clash with Indonesia's Janice Tjen.

Meanwhile, second-seeded Jessica Pegula, the runner-up in Wuhan last year, was also sent packing.

The American suffered a 2-6, 7-6 (9/7), 6-3 upset at the hands of Jelena Ostapenko, wasting three match points en route.

Ostapenko is the first player to beat Pegula in her opening match at a WTA 1000 event since Indian Wells two and a half years ago, snapping Pegula's 22-event winning streak in openers at this level.

Relentless Swiatek

Earlier, six-time Grand Slam champion Iga Swiatek launched her Wuhan Open campaign by triumphing 6-2, 6-1 in an all-Polish battle against lucky loser Magdalena Frech.

Swiatek posted her 40th victory of the season in one hour and 42 minutes and no longer has Sabalenka as a potential roadblock in the quarter-finals.

"We know each other pretty well, so I just wanted to focus on being consistent and playing as good as possible," Swiatek, the seventh seed, said of Frech.

"I know she is running to every ball always and sometimes using the power of the opponent, so I wanted to not play too crazy but play solid and I'm happy that I did that," said Swiatek, who is chasing a qualification spot for the year-end WTA Finals.

Despite the lopsided scoreline the opening set was tight, lasting over an hour and requiring Swiatek to erase a 0-2 deficit and save seven of eight break points before she finally took the lead on her fourth set point.

Upping the pressure with her relentless forehand, Swiatek breezed through the second set to advance to a round of 16 meeting with American lucky loser Ashlyn Krueger.

Wimbledon finalist Karolina Muchova weathered a three-hour storm to come through 3-6, 7-6 (7/1), 7-6 (7/4) against American qualifier Caty McNally to extend her record in tiebreaks this season to a perfect 10-0.

The sixth-seeded Muchova will face Diana Shnaider in the round of 16.

British world number 170 Sonay Kartal, who missed six months this year with a spinal stress fracture, upset ninth-seeded Belinda Bencic 6-0, 7-5 to book a third-round date with Italian 15th seed Jasmine Paolini. – AFP



USA's Ann Li hits a return to Belarus's Aryna Sabalenka during their singles match at the Wuhan Open tennis tournament in Wuhan, Hubei Province yesterday. – AFP



France's Gael Monfils plays a backhand return to France's Hugo Gaston during their singles match on day 2 of the French Open tennis tournament on Court Philippe-Chatrier at the Roland-Garros Complex in Paris on May 25. Monfils has officially "retired" from the professional tour as of October 5, the International Tennis Integrity Agency (ITIA) confirmed to AFP yesterday. – AFP

F1 to return to Africa in 'early 2030s' in Rwanda

F1

PARIS – Rwanda will host Africa's first Formula One Grand Prix since 1993 in "the early 2030s" after the circuit announced a decade-long deal with the country on Tuesday.

The East African nation has been chasing a Grand Prix race for years, having already used football, basketball and other sports to enhance its image and attract investment.

President Paul Kagame had formally announced the bid when Rwanda hosted a gathering of the FIA, the governing body of the sport, in December 2024.

The last time an F1 race was held in Africa was the 33rd South African Grand Prix near Johannesburg in 1993, one year before apartheid formally ended there with democratic, multi-racial elections.

The first African Grand Prix in Rwanda will take place "once a new purpose-built circuit in Bugesera, Rwanda, has been completed", F1 said in a statement.

"Today is a landmark moment for Formula One," F1 president Stefano Domenicali added.

"With Rwanda joining the calendar from the next decade, our sport will race in every inhabited continent, bringing the world championship closer than ever to fans around the globe.

"Africa has always been part of Formula One's future, and from the beginning we were determined to return in the right way, with the right partner, a long-term commitment and a clear vision for creating meaningful impact."

A landlocked country still widely associated with a horrific genocide in 1994, Rwanda has used sports to revamp its image, attract tourists and impress investors with its organisational efficiency.

It has spent lavishly on football sponsorship deals with clubs including Arsenal and Paris Saint-Germain, partnered with the NBA to be the main hub of its African basketball league, and

hosted last year's cycling world championships.

'Today belongs to Africa'

Critics have called this "sports-washing" – using glitzy events to distract from accusations of serious human rights abuses, including a brutal crackdown on any opposition or dissent.

Others see that as Western hypocrisy, arguing no one described this year's World Cup in the United States as "sports-washing", despite the country's rights abuses.

"Today belongs to Africa," said Kagame.

"For more than three decades, the world's premier motorsport championship has raced without this continent, and that changes with this agreement."

"This partnership is long overdue, but it is a success and a milestone for the entire continent, especially for African fans.

"Ultimately, what we want is for the African Grand Prix to pave the way for other races to be hosted on the continent. This is not impossible to achieve, and what we are doing proves this."

The announcement will delight one of F1's biggest stars, Lewis Hamilton.

The seven-time world champion has long called for an African stop on the F1 circuit, backing Rwanda's plans in 2024 and calling the country "one of my favourite places".

South Africa had also been bidding to host an F1 race, and its sports minister emphasised last week it should not be ruled out.

"(Rwanda) have worked on it longer than (South Africa) and deserve it," South Africa's sports minister Gayton McKenzie posted on X last Thursday after the expected Rwanda deal was reported.

"Remember though that one country, Italy, has had two F1s a year, and some react like a continent of 55 countries can only get one." He predicted that "SA will get F1, even before 2030." – AFP



Kenya hosting 2029 World Championships will help doping fight, says Coe

NAIROBI – Kenya hosting the 2029 World Athletics Championships will help combat the endemic doping problem among its athletes, World Athletics president Sebastian Coe said on a visit to Nairobi yesterday.

The east African nation is a global athletics powerhouse, particularly in long-distance and middle-distance running, but has seen a surge in doping cases in recent years.

Around 140 Kenyan athletes have been suspended, including a positive test announced as recently as Tuesday by monitoring body Athletics Integrity Unit (AIU).

"The championships will help us in that quest" for a cleaner Kenyan athletics scene, Coe told AFP on the sidelines of a press conference in Nairobi.

"Is there more work to be done? Yes. Will these championships lend more focus to that? Absolutely," he said.

The AIU is "very clear in their reports to me that progress is being made" in Kenya, he said, adding the country had come a "long way".

Kenya has won the right to host the World Championships in Africa for the first time.

At last year's edition in Tokyo, Kenya finished second overall behind the United States, taking home 11 medals: seven gold, two silver and two bronze.

Yet Kenya's triumph was undermined by the fact that dozens of Kenyan athletes, mainly long-distance runners, have been suspended for doping since 2017, more than any other nation.

Marathon world record holder Ruth Chepngetich was handed a three-year ban by the AIU in October 2025 after admitting to doping.

Earlier that year, Benard Kibet, who finished fifth in the 10,000m at the Paris Olympics, was also suspended by the AIU.

In March, Albert Korir, who won the New York Marathon in 2021, was handed a five-year ban after testing positive for a banned performance-enhancing drug.

On Tuesday Kenyan marathon runner Ronald Kipkoech Korir was

provisionally suspended for using a prohibited substance, the AIU said.

Korir, 35, finished fourth behind winner Eliud Kipchoge in the 2023 Berlin Marathon and his time of 2hr 04min 22sec placed him in the elite bracket of marathon performers.

He went on to finish fourth at the 2024 Hamburg Marathon.

An athlete is provisionally suspended while his case is investigated.

Athletics is a national sport in Kenya - where unemployment remains high and well-paid jobs scarce - and is viewed by many as a way out of poverty.

Coe said that having spoken with Kenya's previous and current leader, integrity in Kenyan athletics is seen as a "key national imperative" and "should be in the best shape possible".

The Briton acknowledged that although Kenyan authorities had improved resources to fight doping, "we'll never be in a perfect world".

"But we're significantly further ahead than we were when we started out on this journey in 2015." – AFP

Stolen Renoir paintings found behind wall in France

Sabine Colpart

PARIS — Two paintings by impressionist master Pierre-Auguste Renoir (1841-1919), stolen from a museum in southern France and later discovered hidden behind a wall, have sustained slight damage, prosecutors said this week.

Thieves last month broke into the museum in the southern town of Cagnes-sur-Mer and escaped with two works by Renoir, abandoning two others as they fled.

Suspects behind the theft were arrested last week as authorities discovered they were next planning to target the Fondation Maeght in Saint-Paul-de-Vence, home to one of Europe’s largest collections of modern art.

Last Friday, authorities announced that the two missing stolen works valued at 4.2 million euros (US\$4.7 million) had been found.

They were a painting titled “Portrait of Madame Colonna Romano” and a depiction of a woman at a well called “Young Woman at the Well”.

Marseille prosecutor Nicolas Bessone told reporters in Paris that the paintings were recovered last Thursday during a search of a home in the southern town of Clermont-l’Hérault.



The two paintings by French Impressionist painter Pierre-Auguste Renoir, “Portrait de Madame Colonna” (“Portrait of Madame Colonna Romano”) (right) and “Femme au puits” (“Young Woman at the Well”), that were stolen from the Renoir Museum in Cagnes-sur-Mer, southern France, are presented to the press on Monday in Marseille, southeastern France, following their recovery.

– AFP

The discovery of the stolen works followed the arrest of six people, including a woman, last Wednesday, said Bessone.

Their arrests were brought forward after the main suspect carried out a reconnaissance visit to the Fondation Maeght.

“We were very clearly looking at

the repetition of a criminal scheme,” the head of the Alpes-Maritimes judicial police, Éric Antonetti, said on Monday.

The two key suspects include a 29-year-old, who was charged after investigators recovered DNA from a bag left behind during the getaway.

He had been under investigation

for drug trafficking, said the head of France’s national judicial police, Christian Sainte.

‘Completely undetectable’

The paintings were hidden behind a solid cinder-block wall and concealed so well that they were discovered only during a second search.

“They were completely undetectable,” Bessone said.

Police returned to the place after securing a confession.

“During the initial search, we had examined the walls, checking for hollow spaces,” said Sainte.

The two paintings were “in relatively good condition”, although “the two works showed signs of damage,” Bessone said.

The frame of “Young Woman at the Well” was slightly damaged, while “the canvas of ‘Portrait of Madame Colonna Romano’ had a tear,” Bessone said.

The tear was located “on the dress” in the portrait, the prosecutor said, adding both paintings “will require restoration work”.

The suspects appear to have acted without a buyer or sponsor,

said Antonetti.

The paintings were found hidden in the home of one of the suspects in Clermont-l’Hérault.

The four men under formal investigation are aged between 29 and 51, and three of them have previous criminal convictions. Two of them remain in custody.

Culture Minister Catherine Pégard praised “the efficiency and determination of all those who made this outcome possible.”

“Their commitment made it possible to recover these works in record time,” Pégard said.

A spate of heists at French museums – including at the Louvre – has highlighted inadequate security in some cases and led to questions about whether criminal gangs see them as soft targets.

Crown jewels valued at around US\$100 million were stolen in broad daylight from the Louvre in Paris last year.

While the four suspected Louvre robbers have been arrested, the jewels they are accused of grabbing in the seven-minute heist have still not been found.

– AFP

EU watchdog says smart glasses must give ‘clear warnings’ when recording

Raziye Akkoc

BRUSSELS — The European Union’s central data regulator on Tuesday said smart glasses should give “clear warnings” when they are recording, after a public outcry in recent months over secretly filmed footage of girls and women.

The European Data Protection Board (EDPB) warned in its non-binding guidance to users and manufacturers that smart glasses raised “serious privacy concerns” as it seeks to increase awareness about the risks.

Individuals wearing smart glasses can take photos, film videos, listen to music, make phone calls, translate text or interact with an AI assistant.

“These devices look like ordinary glasses, but they include cameras and microphones and are connected to the internet. This raises serious privacy concerns, as individuals may be recorded

without their knowledge,” EDPB chair Anu Talus said in a statement.

“Smart glasses should make their recording obvious – for instance with bright LED lights, audio signals or voice activation cues, privacy-friendly smartphone notifications, or unique designs,” Talus said.

“These warnings need to be reliable, hard to ignore, and always up to date.”

The glasses raise questions over the protection of personal data and the rights of individuals, the watchdog said.

The EDPB warned of greater risks in “sensitive” spaces like schools and hospitals as well as public spots like beaches, and raised concerns over children who are “more vulnerable to covert or intrusive processing of their personal data”.

The EU has stringent data protection rules. The regulator said if people use the glasses to share a

photo or video on a public social media account or in official or professional activities, they must adhere to those rules.

Meta’s smart spectacles, developed in partnership with Ray-Ban maker EssilorLuxottica, are the most popular globally, with sales reaching millions around the world. They have a blinking LED light when recording.

The US giant says it has taken multiple steps to prevent users tampering with the light – a key worry for many.

Other companies including Google and Snap are preparing to roll out their own AI-powered glasses as Big Tech looks for the next big thing in wearable tech.

Europe eyes more action

Across Europe, the backlash is growing.

Norway’s government said last week it wants a temporary ban on the use of smart glasses in certain public places, citing privacy concerns.

The capital Oslo already opted to ban glasses equipped with cameras in schools.

France’s e-Enfance association, which operates the national hotline for victims of online abuse, has also sounded the alarm about videos recorded with camera-equipped glasses and shared online.

And a “Stop Smart Glasses” campaign in Britain and Ireland has launched a petition and call for supporters to contact stores to stop their sale.

It reached over 10,000 signatures, which means the UK government must respond.

– AFP

Anita Mui’s ashes gone missing in HK



Hong Kong cantopop star Anita Mui speaks during a press conference at a hotel in Hong Kong on September 5, 2003. The ashes of late pop superstar Anita Mui, once dubbed the “Madonna of Asia”, have gone missing from a monastery in Hong Kong, police said on Tuesday.

– AFP

HONG KONG — The ashes of late pop superstar Anita Mui Yim-fong (梅艷芳), once dubbed the “Madonna of Asia”, have gone missing from a monastery in Hong Kong, police said on Tuesday.

The diva of Cantopop – a popular music genre sung in the Cantonese language – died from cervical cancer aged 40 in 2003 after selling millions of records.

Mui’s family went to the police in July after a fan spotted that the urn was no longer in its place, but without going public.

But on Saturday they issued a statement saying that the lack of progress in the police investigation was causing them “tremendous distress and emotional anguish”.

The statement, coinciding with what would have been Mui’s birthday, triggered outrage from fans.

“I’m really angry, and I feel so sad and heartbroken,” one said on social media on a page devoted to Mui.

Hong Kong police told AFP in a statement on Tuesday that the case had been referred to the Regional Crime Unit of New

Territories South for further investigation.

“No arrests have been made as yet. The police will continue to liaise with the complainant and relevant parties and take appropriate follow-up action,” police said.

With her bold and versatile visual style, raunchy stage performances and a stream of hits, Mui transcended the image of Chinese female singers.

Her distinctive, melancholy voice was used for the theme songs in dozens of films and shows, and she remained phenomenally popular right up to her death.

During her heyday in the 1980s, Mui performed for 28 consecutive nights to sold-out houses, breaking the Hong Kong record at the time.

The disappearance of her ashes is not a one-off in Hong Kong.

Last year, those of Hong Kong martial arts star and director Lau Kar-leung also went missing, and his family were reportedly blackmailed. The ashes were recovered months later.

– AFP, MPD

World Weather

CHINA	ASIA-PACIFIC	WORLD	LUSOPHONE
Beijing 12°C~26°C	Manila 23°C~33°C	New York 15°C~19°C	Lisbon 18°C~29°C
Shanghai 20°C~25°C	Bangkok 24°C~33°C	London 13°C~21°C	Rio de Janeiro 22°C~27°C
Hong Kong 23°C~29°C	Tokyo 16°C~23°C	Frankfurt 6°C~18°C	Luanda 23°C~26°C
Taipei 20°C~28°C	Singapore 25°C~34°C	Vancouver 10°C~18°C	Maputo 20°C~35°C
Guangzhou 21°C~31°C	Kuala Lumpur 23°C~34°C	Paris 12°C~23°C	Dili 22°C~33°C
Nanjing 16°C~23°C	Jakarta 24°C~36°C	Moscow 8°C~10°C	São Tomé 25°C~31°C
Guilin 21°C~31°C	Seoul 14°C~21°C	Las Vegas 15°C~26°C	Praia 23°C~31°C
Xi'an 15°C~24°C	Sydney 15°C~19°C	Monte Carlo 17°C~24°C	Bissau 24°C~32°C



Fabergé egg/girl

A model presents a creation during a show of the World of Wearable Art in Wellington, New Zealand, last month. — Xinhua

Bright cabin

A man walks his dog in Chapultepec Park in Mexico City on Tuesday. — AFP

Back to work...

Larry the cat walks outside 10 Downing Street, the official residence of Britain's Prime Minister, after his operation to remove a cyst yesterday. — AFP



Tears of a cow

This view shows a detail of the eye of cattle displayed for sale at the Municipal Livestock Market during the weekly market day in Sensuntepeque, Cabanas department, El Salvador on October 1.

Amid the bustle of an animal market in El Salvador, cows with skin stretched tightly over their ribs stand out. Their owners will sell them at reduced prices before they perish from the drought caused by the El Niño phenomenon. — AFP

Intricate carving

A visitor takes photos of a reconstruction model of the warship Vasa at the Vasa Museum in Stockholm, Sweden, last Monday. The Vasa Museum in Stockholm, Sweden, features the 17th-century warship Vasa as its centerpiece. Through the ship, artefacts and themed exhibitions, the museum tells the story of the vessel's construction, sinking and salvage. The Vasa sank on its maiden voyage in 1628 and was salvaged more than 300 years later. It is one of the best-preserved 17th-century ships in the world. — Xinhua



Ceiling needs to be higher

A sumo wrestler enters a railway carriage as other commuters look on in Tokyo on Tuesday. — AFP