

Sam urges Judiciary to align with overall national & local interests

Tony Wong

Chief Executive Sam Hou Fai said yesterday that the judicial organs, as an important integral part of Macau's governance, must adopt a holistic perspective and address issues from the country's fundamental interests and Macau's overall interests, thereby making their contributions to enhancing Macau's governance effectiveness.

Sam made the remarks while delivering a speech during a ceremony at the Macau Cultural Centre (CCM) in Nape, which marked the formal start of the 2026/27 Judicial Year.

The annual event was also addressed by Macau's top judge – Court of Final Appeal (TUI) President Song Man Lei, Chief Public Prosecutor Tong Hio Fong, and Macau Lawyers Association President Vong Hin Fai.

The ceremony was attended by 350 guests, including Central People's Government Liaison Office in the MSAR Director Zheng Xincong, Foreign Ministry Acting Commissioner Cheng Lei, top MSAR officials, and legislators – including Legislative Assembly (AL) President André Cheong Weng



Chief Executive Sam Hou Fai addresses yesterday's ceremony marking the start of the 2026/27 Judicial Year at the Macau Cultural Centre (CCM) in Nape.

– Photo: GCS

Chon, alongside a large number of judges, prosecutors, and lawyers.

National security

In his speech yesterday, Sam acknowledged that the MSAR's

judicial organs – over the past year – have steadfastly fulfilled the duties conferred by the MSAR Basic Law and other local laws, strictly abided by the fundamental principles of the rule of law, and effectively

safeguarded its core values.

Sam noted that the judicial organs initiated the investigation and trial of the MSAR's first national security case, firmly safeguarding national security and social stability.



On September 18, the Criminal Chamber of the Lower Court (TJB) of the Court of First Instance (TPI) concluded the trial hearing of the MSAR's first national security case involving defendant Au Kam San – a former lawmaker – two days after the start of the trial. The date for the reading of the sentence is yet to be announced. Au was arrested in July last year for alleged violations of Macau's Law on Safeguarding National Security. He has been remanded in custody since his arrest.

Continued on p.6

Germany, France reach deal on future of car industry

BRUSSELS – Germany and France have backed a further scaling down of EU emission rules for cars as part of a long-negotiated deal on the automotive industry struck yesterday, diplomatic sources confirmed to AFP.

Europe's two economic powerhouses also agreed to include Britain in the definition of what vehicles would count as "made in Europe" under EU measures aiming to bolster the bloc's industries, according to a draft document outlining the pact.

Paris and Berlin had long been at loggerheads on the course Europe should take as it seeks to revive its

struggling auto industry and the accord is likely to shape the continent's policy going forward.

Germany wanted less stringent carbon emission targets for car-makers and a broad interpretation of "made in Europe" to include key non-EU trade partners.

France on the other hand had pushed to preserve the bloc's climate ambitions and to keep the "made in Europe" public procurement scheme the purview of European nations.

Berlin won the first argument while Paris carried the day on the latter, the draft shows.

The European Commission had proposed that the bloc's ban on sales of new petrol and diesel vehicles in 2035 be scrapped in favour of a requirement for manufacturers to cut new vehicle exhaust emissions by 90 percent.

The remaining 10 percent would have had to be compensated for through various credits obtained among other things by using low-carbon steel.

The Franco-German deal scraps the latter requirement stating that residual emissions should not have to be compensated by manufacturers.

– AFP



Senior citizens attend a long-table banquet in Yanggang Village of Lanxi City, Zhejiang Province, yesterday. Funded by kind-hearted people, the banquet was attended by more than 500 people aged 60 and above to mark Sunday's Double Ninth Festival. Celebrated on the ninth day of the ninth lunar month, it is an occasion to care for and send blessings to older compatriots. In Hong Kong and Macau the festival is known as Chung Yeung and Chong Yeong, respectively. – Xinhua (Another photo on page 16)

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

The Macau Post Daily

Wang Yi meets Palestinian counterpart

Wang Yi met with Palestinian Foreign Minister Varsen Aghabekian Shahin on the sidelines of the 7th Summit of the Conference on Interaction and Confidence Building Measures in Asia in Baku yesterday.

– Story on p. 7

Ukraine's Zelensky defies Trump with Russian refinery strikes

Ukraine will no longer abide by US President Donald Trump's demands not to strike Russian oil refineries, President Volodymyr Zelensky said yesterday.

– Story on p. 11

Brazil's Congress approves shorter work-week, a Lula pledge ahead of runoff

Brazil's Senate has approved a shorter workweek, a pledge President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva is counting on to close the gap with his rival ahead of next week's election runoff.

– Story on p. 12

3 women arrested over 3.9 million pataca crèche subsidy fraud



Judiciary Police (PJ) officers escort the three hooded women suspected of subsidy fraud to a police vehicle outside the PJ headquarters in Zape yesterday.

— Photo: MPDG

Sherwin Hng

Three local women have been arrested for allegedly defrauding the government of about 3.9 million patacas in crèche subsidies by fabricating employment relationships and forging payroll bank records, Judiciary Police (PJ) spokesman Ho Wai Lok said during a special press conference yesterday.

Ho identified the three suspects as a 63-year-old woman surnamed Leong, who was the person in charge of a crèche in Taipa and the alleged mastermind; a 39-year-old businesswoman surnamed Lao; and a 47-year-old accountant surnamed Wong. A local man, who also participated in the scheme, remains at large.

According to public broadcaster TDM, Leong is a former vice-director of the Financial Services Bureau (DSF) and the Economic Services Bureau (DSE). TDM identified the crèche as SMART Nursery at Zonta Club of Macau.

According to Ho, the investigation began on July 31 after the police received authorisation from the Public Prosecutions Office (MP) to investigate suspected fraud involving a crèche in Taipa.

The centre's person in charge signed a government funding agreement with the Social Welfare Bureau (IAS) in August 2019, and the facility began operating the following month. The government provided the centre with premises, facilities, and financial subsidies, including funding for staff salaries. The crèche was required to declare its income and expenditure

truthfully and return any unused funds to the bureau, Ho said.

However, investigators found that the two female suspects surnamed Lao and Wong, respectively, and the male suspect had never worked at the centre. Nonetheless, the crèche allegedly fabricated their employment and payroll records to pass government subsidy reviews and continue receiving public funds, Ho added.

The alleged fraud dates back to January 2020, Ho said, adding that preliminary investigations indicate that the 63-year-old suspect alone was involved in defrauding about 1.8 million patacas, while the exact amounts involving the other three suspects and the total government funding received by the crèche remain under investigation.

However, Ho put the total, provisionally estimated fraud at 3.9 million patacas.

According to Ho, police arrested the three women on Wednesday at their respective homes and seized their mobile phones, two computers, and a hard drive as evidence. The male suspect, who has been away from Macau for an extended period, remains at large, and police are pursuing his arrest.

The four suspects face charges of fraud involving a considerably large amount, computer forgery, money laundering, and membership of a criminal organisation. The three arrestees were transferred to the Public Prosecutions Office (MP) yesterday for further questioning the possible arraignment of a range of charges. ■

Macau, Zhuhai police bust fake 'Douyin' customer service fraud ring, arrest trio

Sherwin Hng

Macau and Zhuhai police have dismantled a cross-border telecommunications fraud ring that impersonated "Douyin customer service representatives", with 54 local residents losing more than 10 million patacas between September 18 and October 12, a Judiciary Police (PJ) spokesperson said during a special press conference yesterday.

The victims, including young people and elderly residents, lost amounts ranging from several thousand to two million patacas each, and investigations showed that the proceeds were mainly deposited into three channels: Chinese mainland and Hong Kong bank accounts, overseas credit card purchases, and various e-payment transfers, according to the PJ spokesperson.

The joint operation on Monday led to the arrest of three members of the fraud ring in Zhuhai.

The three suspects, all mainland Chinese, were identified by police as Chen, 37; Zhang, 39; and Zeng, 29. They served as technical staff and equipment maintenance personnel at the scam den, operating the equipment and making fraudulent calls.

According to the PJ spokesperson, the syndicate falsely claimed that the victims' Douyin livestreaming services were about to expire and that they had to pay 800 patacas to renew them. Under the pretext of helping victims cancel the service, the scammers persuaded them to download applications and enable screen sharing, allowing them



This undated handout photo provided by the Judiciary Police (PJ) shows Zhuhai police officers arresting three suspects during a raid on a 'Douyin' scam den in the adjacent Chinese mainland city.

to remotely control the victims' phones and transfer money from their accounts.

Some victims who had physical credit cards were also instructed to activate their phones' near-field communication (NFC) function, allowing the scammers to obtain card data for fraudulent overseas transactions.

During the investigation, police found that the syndicate operated from a den in Zhuhai, using Macau prepaid SIM cards and signals from an Ilha Verde mobile base station to camouflage calls to appear as originating from Macau.

Since late September, the den had made at least 19,500 scam calls to Macau residents. During the raid, mainland police seized 66 mobile phones, 42 of which were operating, along with more than 200 SIM cards and other suspected criminal equipment.

The three suspects are being investigated by mainland police. The Judiciary Police said there was no evidence so far that Macau residents had participated in the operation.

The investigation is continuing to identify the ring's masterminds, overseas accomplices, and the whereabouts of the stolen funds.

The Judiciary Police (PJ) have once again urged the public to hang up on fraudulent calls claiming to be customer service agents requesting screen sharing, app downloads, credit card details, or money transfers. They advised residents to verify any claims independently and reminded them to use the anti-fraud app, call the anti-fraud hotline on 8800 7777, or contact the crime-reporting hotline on 993 for assistance.

Douyin is known as TikTok overseas. ■

Govt promotes voluntary demolition of illegal structures



This undated handout combination of two photos provided yesterday by the Land and Urban Construction Bureau (DSSCU) shows the site before (left photo) and after the removal of its illegal brick wall and metal-roofed rooftop structures.

Ida Cheong

The Lands and Urban Construction Bureau (DSSCU) announced in a statement yesterday that recently five illegal rooftop structures built with brick walls and metal roofs on a building near Avenida do Ouvidor Arriaga were voluntarily demolished and restored to their original condition by the offenders following intervention by the bureau, eliminating potential safety hazards.

According to the statement, a DSSCU investigation confirmed the presence of the five illegal rooftop structures at the location, which posed fire safety risks. The bureau subsequently adopted a batch-

processing approach, collectively opening case files and issuing demolition orders.

Following up on the case, multiple offenders applied for voluntary demolition and completed the removal of all structures prior to the government's final decision, restoring the rooftop according to the original approved plans. As the offenders actively cooperated, they were legally exempted from relevant fines.

The statement noted that 614 cases of voluntary demolition of illegal structures were recorded in the first three quarters of this year, representing a significant increase compared to 241 cases in the entirety of last year.

Under the Urban Construction Legal Regime, incentive measures such as fine reductions and waivers are included to encourage the voluntary removal of illegal works. Residents demolishing lower-risk illegal structures do not need to obtain a licence or submit prior notifications.

In line with the local government's "Third Five-Year Plan," the bureau will utilise scientific tools (such as regular aerial photography) to monitor new illegal structures, curb new cases at the source, and continue its crackdown on illegal structures while encouraging residents to voluntarily demolish unauthorised builds, the statement said. ■

Published since Aug 2004

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

MACAU POST

Macau Weather

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



25°C~29°C

Source: SMG

Group urges govt to improve livelihood facilities in Chi Lam Vai

Armindo Neves

Local think tank Collective Wisdom Policy Centre issued a statement on Wednesday urging the government to improve livelihood facilities in the peninsula's Chi Lam Vai heritage walled village.

Chi Lam Vai (also known as Chi Lam Chuen – 茨林圍), known in Portuguese as Pátio do Espinho (“Courtyard of the Thorn”), is a 400-year-old walled village. It is situated just a street away from the UNESCO World Heritage-listed Na Tcha Temple – one of Macau's two temples dedicated to the tutelary deity known in Mandarin as Nezha – and close to the UNESCO World Heritage-listed Ruins of St Paul's.

The statement noted that the government is currently carrying out the Pátio do Espinho Urban Space Study and Preliminary Conceptual Plan for Neighbourhood Planning, with the aim of achieving positive interaction between cultural heritage conservation and urban renewal through the optimisation and improvement of environmental space and the streetscape.

Lawmaker-cum-vice-president of the think tank, Leong Hong Sai, expressed his support for the initiative, the statement said, adding that he hopes the authorities will adopt the principles of “micro-renewal, prioritising conservation, and preserving individuality” as the direction for revitalisation, focusing on preserving the area's traditional character.

Leong also advocated a people-orientated approach, with continued improvements to basic livelihood facilities within the village to achieve both community revitalisation and harmonious development of residents' livelihoods, according to the statement.



This photo taken on Sunday shows a corner of Chi Lam Vai. – Photo: Armindo Neves

The statement quoted Leong as saying that the village is one of the last remaining traditional walled villages in Macau.

Its enclosed layout, narrow alley proportions, the fabric of its old buildings, and the traces of neighbourhood life are all irreplaceable community memories and cultural assets, according to the statement. Any renovation must respect the original spatial context: the direction and width of alleys and lanes should be kept as they are, and buildings should primarily be reinforced, repaired, and partially replaced, with necessary interventions made only where structures are genuinely dangerous, the statement said, adding that wholesale demolition must be avoided so as not to damage the character of the World Heritage buffer zone or disrupt the

community network. While preserving the fundamental character of the walled village, environmental quality can be enhanced through detailed improvements.

Meanwhile, Leong also pointed out that the village currently suffers from ageing water, electricity, and sewage networks, haphazardly laid water pipes, dilapidated meters and cables, and chaotic overhead antennas, the statement said.

The long-standing insufficient power supply means that air conditioners and rice cookers cannot be used at the same time during hot weather. Leong recommended that the government promptly conduct studies and planning to upgrade cables, replace wiring, and reduce safety hazards. He also urged improvements to fire rescue facilities and

barrier-free access, with fire hydrants installed at appropriate locations to address the district's shortcomings in fire safety. Livelihood-related work in the area – such as cleaning, mosquito control, and water and electricity provision – also urgently needs improvement, and disaster prevention measures must be properly planned, according to the statement.

As Chi Lam Vai has a relatively large elderly population, age-friendly facilities should be added, and vacant plots within the area should be put to good use to create community green spaces and small public cultural venues. He expressed hope that the village could serve as a starting point for resolving water and electricity problems in Macau's other old quarters.

In addition, Leong urged the government to take the lead in cross-departmental improvements, tackling electricity, fire safety, and sanitation issues in the short term while promoting network replacement and disaster prevention infrastructure in the medium to long term – so that the village can continue as a safe and liveable traditional community.

Leong likewise recommended coordinating planning for the surrounding areas and organically linking the development of Chi Lam Vai with nearby districts such as the Ruins of St Paul's. He suggested using the memories of walled-village life as a core IP (intellectual property) and regularly organising small-scale cultural activities – such as guided tours telling the stories of the walled village, handicraft markets, and community photography exhibitions. Through low-frequency but high-quality content, the aim would be to sustain the space's ongoing appeal, avoiding a situation where, after a one-off renovation, the area is left to fall into silence. ■

文創裡的



澳門展

“Encounter Ancient China through Cultural and Creative Products” Exhibition in Macao

Organizers
Government of the Macao Special Administrative Region
Ministry of Culture and Tourism of the People's Republic of China

Period:
15 Sep 2026 - 28 Feb 2027

文化局
INSTITUTO CULTURAL

Coordinators
中國國家博物館
NATIONAL MUSEUM OF CHINA

Address:
Main Foyer of Macao Forum



Supported by
澳門特別行政區政府旅遊局
DIRECÇÃO DOS SERVIÇOS DE TURISMO
MACAO GOVERNMENT TOURISM OFFICE

Opening hours:
10:00-18:00
Closed on Mondays (open on public holidays)

Strategic Partner
中國銀行
BANK OF CHINA

SJM showcases Macau's MICHELIN-starred restaurants in MasterChef Asia

Khalel Vallo

SJM Resorts is showcasing Macau's culinary scene to international audiences through the newly premiered 10-episode reality competition MasterChef Asia, filmed entirely in Macau and featuring chefs from two of its MICHELIN-Starred restaurants, according to a statement by the integrated resort operator yesterday.

The first show was broadcast on September 22 and is shown every Tuesday until around November 24.

Produced by Warner Bros. Discovery, CreAsia Studio and Banijay Rights in partnership with the Macao Government Tourism Office (MGTO), the series follows 10 contestants competing in a series of culinary challenges for the title of MasterChef Asia.

The competition is judged by chefs Edward Lee (Lee Kyun), Pichaya "Pam" Soontornyanakij and Kelvin Cheung, the statement said.

SJM's culinary offerings are also represented by guest judges Ken Chong (莊嘉輝), head chef of One-MICHELIN-Starred Palace Garden at Grand Lisboa Palace Resort Macau, and Julien Tongourian, executive chef of Three-MICHELIN-Starred Robuchon au Dôme at Grand Lisboa Macau, the statement added.



These photos provided by SJM Resorts yesterday show chefs from two of its MICHELIN-starred restaurants – Ken Chong (莊嘉輝), head chef of One-MICHELIN-Starred Palace Garden at Grand Lisboa Palace Resort Macau (left), and Julien Tongourian, executive chef of Three-MICHELIN-Starred Robuchon au Dôme at Grand Lisboa Macau.

Palace Garden also serves as the backdrop for one episode, showcasing its contemporary interpretations of Taishi cuisine* and interiors inspired by imperial China.

SJM Managing Director Daisy Ho Chiu-fung said that the programme gives



audiences an introduction to Macau's culinary identity, shaped by centuries of cultural exchange: "MasterChef Asia gives audiences a vivid taste of that character and, importantly, another reason to experience it for themselves."

SJM will extend the television experience through two chef-led dining events, pairing episode screenings with specially designed tasting menus, the statement said, adding that from October 22 to 24, Chong will host a six-course Cantonese dinner at Palace Garden, featuring dishes including Premium Partridge Soup and Peony King Tiger Prawns. The dinner is priced at 1,588 patacas per person.

On October 30-31, Tongourian will host a five-course dinner at Robuchon au Dôme, featuring dishes such as Le Caviar de Sologne, combining Royal Sologne caviar, king crab and crustacean jelly, and Les Cuisses de Grenouille, featuring pan-fried frog legs with parsley and shallot cream and matsutake mushrooms, the statement noted, underlining that the dinner is priced at 2,488 patacas per person.

The partnership aims to raise Macau's international profile as a UNESCO Creative City of Gastronomy and encourage visitors to experience its dining offerings firsthand, the statement said.

**Taishi cuisine is a refined, high-end branch of Cantonese cuisine originating from the private household of Jiang Kongyin (also known as Jiang Taishi) during the late Qing Dynasty. - Gemini*

Melco's Mid-Autumn Festival community events benefit 650

Rui Pastorin

Integrated resort operator Melco Resorts & Entertainment said in a statement on Monday that it recently held a series of community engagement events celebrating the Mid-Autumn Festival, having around 650 community beneficiaries through a series of 16 activities.

The statement said that over 260 Melco volunteers and their families, along with community volunteers, came together to dedicate a total of 730 hours of care to local seniors, families, youths, and special needs students. The statement also noted that the activities highlighted the intergenerational volunteering approach of Melco's Teaching Children Values programme.

Among the activities were a handicraft workshop joined by nearly 170 participants ranging from Melco staff through community members; pastry workshops to help seniors "recall fond memories of past traditions"; inviting around 40 primary school students to Studio City's Spotlight for a buffet lunch; and charity mooncake fundraising.

The statement added that the activities were organised in conjunction with Asilo Vila Madalena; Escola de S. Jose; FAOM Ka Ao Nursery Home; Macao Gaming Practitioners Volunteers Association; Oxfam; Pou Tai Integrated Service Center for Elderly; The Salvation Army; Women's General Association of Macau; UGAMM – Cheng I Elderly Integrated Service Center - Cheng Chong Building; and UGAMM Elderly Caring Service Network.

Executive Vice President and Chief of Staff to Melco Chairman & CEO Akiko Takahashi was quoted by the statement as saying: "Through Simple Acts of Kindness and Teaching Children Values, we hope to continue to foster deeper connections within our community and ensure that everyone feels the warmth and joy of the festive season."

The statement also quoted Senior Vice President, Marketing Strategy & Analytics, Sun Young Yi as encouraging participation as "this is a great way of setting a good example, and demonstrates the benefits of supporting and being kind to one another."



This undated handout photo provided by Melco Resorts & Entertainment on Wednesday shows a Melco volunteer teaching participants during a recent workshop held as part of the recent activities of the Mid-Autumn Festival.

3 days left to view Au Chon Hin's exhibition 'ROAM IN PLAY and WE CAN FLY' at Artyzen Grand Lapa



This photo recently provided by Artyzen Grand Lapa shows some of the exhibits displayed at its Amagao Gallery in Zape for the ongoing solo exhibition "ROAM IN PLAY and WE CAN FLY".

Rui Pastorin

There are only three days left to enjoy Macau designer and artist Au Chon Hin's solo exhibition "ROAM IN PLAY and WE CAN FLY" exhibition taking place at the free-admission Amagao Gallery in Artyzen Grand Lapa Macau in Zape.

Using play as its starting point and gathering over 50 artworks on display in an exhibition that encourages interaction, a recent statement from the Macau hotel operator noted that the colourful exhibition explores "the relationship between play, design and the way people experience their surroundings, creating an open environment that encourages visitors to engage with the works and interpret them in their own way".

The exhibition, co-curated by 1844 Macau Photography Art Space Association President and Curator Ieong Man Pan and Amagao Gallery Director and Curator Victor Marreiros, features paintings,

prints and sculptures, alongside blocks both in miniature and oversized forms, installations, and photo spots for families and children to explore, the statement said.

The exhibition also highlights the idea of "returning to the innocence of childhood, when creativity was driven by curiosity rather than rule", noting that through Au and his creations, a fantasy scene is created where "imagination is free to move and creativity has no fixed boundaries".

The statement quoted Au as saying: "I hope that when you enter this space, you can step away from the rules of everyday life and rediscover a little imagination, a little curiosity and the pure joy we once had."

Members of the public can continue to visit the showcase until Sunday, being open from 11:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. The exhibition-themed afternoon delights at Café Bela Vista also continue to be on offer from 3:00 p.m. to 5:30 p.m. until the exhibition ends.

Customs seizes 42 kg of food and drink from 2 drivers

Armindo Neves

Macao Customs Services officers seized 42 kg of food that was not declared and inspected at Hengqin Port (checkpoint) in separate cases from two drivers on Monday and Tuesday, respectively.

According to a statement on Wednesday, customs officers at the checkpoint intercepted a cross-border vehicle through the risk management system on Monday. Upon inspection, customs officers discovered the driver had attempted to smuggle yogurt, cooked food rolls, sandwiches, fruit, and other food items into Macau without declaring them. All the food items are subject to health quarantine, the statement noted.

On Tuesday, through the risk



These two undated handout photos provided by the Macao Customs Service on Wednesday shows around 42 kg of food and drink seized by its officers at Hengqin Port (checkpoint) in separate cases from two drivers on Monday and Tuesday, respectively.

management system, customs officers intercepted another cross-border vehicle, the statement said, adding they

discovered that the driver attempted to smuggle large quantities of fruit juices and frozen foods into Macau, some

of which were subject to health and quarantine inspections.

In the statement, the Customs

Service identified the two smugglers as a 39-year-old male from the Chinese mainland and a 67-year-old local resident.

The Customs Service has initiated proceedings against the smugglers under the provisions of the External Trade Law. If the offences are confirmed, the offenders may be subject to a maximum fine of 100,000 patacas and the seized goods will be declared forfeited to the local government. The drivers are also suspected of violating the relevant provisions of the Sanitary and Phytosanitary Control Regulation, adding that the case involving non-quarantined cooked food has been transferred to the Municipal Affairs Bureau (IAM) for follow-up. ■

3 major fairs attract 1,000 int'l exhibitors

Ida Cheong

The "31st Macao International Trade & Investment Fair" (MIF), the "2026 Portuguese Speaking Countries Products and Services Exhibition (Macao)" (PLPEX), and the "Macao Franchise Expo 2026" (MFE) will be held simultaneously from next Wednesday through Saturday (October 21-24) at The Venetian Macao's Cotai Expo, attracting around 1,000 exhibitors from over 30 countries and regions worldwide. Commerce and Investment Promotion Institute (IPIM) President Che Weng Keong announced at a press conference yesterday.

The press conference for the three events was held at the Complex of Commerce and Trade Cooperation Platform for China and Portuguese-speaking Countries, aka Forum Macao Complex, in Sai Van yesterday.

Che noted that this year's events themed "Macao: The Global Hub of Business Convergence" will run across all three exhibitions, with the aim of deepening practical cooperation between China and Portuguese- and Spanish-speaking countries and expanding into Latin American and Spanish-speaking markets.

Che pointed out that covering a total area of 30,000 square metres, the three exhibitions will bring together more than 1,500 buyers from around the world that have

been invited to participate.

According to an IPIM statement, the exhibition content will comprehensively cover Macau's key "1+4" industries, consisting of (1) the further upgrading of integrated tourism and leisure businesses, and (4) high-tech innovation, Big Health including Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM), modern finance, MICE, culture, and sport.

Meanwhile, more than 90 activities will be held during the four-day event, including 10 themed business matching sessions, on-site visits, and industry forums, the statement said.

The statement underscored that several artificial intelligence (AI) technology enterprises will showcase innovative products, including an open platform for humanoid robots, an AI scent generator, exoskeleton robots, an AI management assistant, and an instant glasses-free 3D photo printing tool.

The first day of the three exhibitions (October 21) will be designated as Trade Visitors Day, while admission will be free to the public over the following three days (October 22-24). More than 20,000 gifts have been prepared by the organisers, the statement said.

Four shuttle bus routes will be provided to and from the venue. ■



Commerce and Investment Promotion Institute (IPIM) President Che Weng Keong (centre) and other representatives pose during yesterday's press conference about the "31st Macao International Trade & Investment Fair" (MIF), the "2026 Portuguese Speaking Countries Products and Services Exhibition (Macao)" (PLPEX), and the "Macao Franchise Expo 2026" (MFE) at the Complex of Commerce and Trade Co-operation Platform for China and Portuguese-speaking Countries in Sai Van. – Photo: Ida Cheong

SJM Macao Open 2026 tees off

Khalel Vallo

The SJM Macao Open 2026 teed off in Coloane yesterday at the Macau Golf & Country Club with a US\$1 million (8 million patacas) prize purse, featuring 2016 major champion Sweden's Henrik Stenson and two-time PGA Tour* winner South Korea's Sungjae Im among a star-studded field.

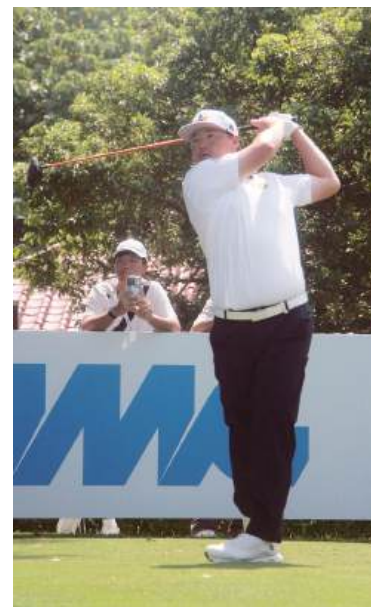
The tournament is jointly organised by SJM, the Sports Bureau (ID) and IMG (International Management Group), and co-sanctioned by the Asian Tour and the Macau Golf Association. Running through Sunday, the tournament features a 144-player field comprising established champions and rising talents.

The 23rd edition of the tournament will feature seven of the top 10 players in the 2026 Asian Tour Order of Merit.

Im, who finished among the top 10 last year, said in a press conference on Tuesday: "I'm very pleased to be back again after last year. I had a very good performance last year and now I know the course better. I'm hoping for a good result this week."

Returning to defend his title is Germany's Dominic Foos, who staged a comeback from six shots behind to win last year's tournament in a sudden-death playoff.

Meanwhile, local golfer Ma Kaijun, who earned an invitation as the top Macau finisher at last year's event, is also taking part in the tournament. Oscar Hung Chi Che, another local golfer, said in a statement on Tuesday: "My



Two-time PGA Tour winner Sungjae Im swings his club at the course yesterday. – Photos: Khalel Vallo

goal this week is to make the cut. I hope to become the first Macau amateur golfer to achieve that at the SJM Macao Open."

Moreover, the Chinese mainland's golfing legend Zhang Lianwei, a two-time Macao Open champion, also praised the tournament's significance back in July's press conference. Zhang shared his ambitions to secure a third Macao Open title and expressed his desire to continue competing past the age of 60. Alongside his personal competitive goals, he highlighted his long-standing financial commitment to youth golf development and urged young golfers to build independence and self-motivation to navigate the inherently "lonely" nature of the sport.

According to an SJM statement on Tuesday, the tournament aims



This photo taken at the Macau Golf & Country Club in Coloane on Tuesday shows the SJM Macao Open 2026 trophy.

to bring golf into the community through outreach programmes designed to introduce more people to the sport and encourage wider participation. Admission to the SJM Macao Open 2026 will once again be free to the public. Fans can register for complimentary tickets at www.sjm-macaoopen.com, with each person able to request up to four tickets. ■

* The Professional Golfers' Association Tour (PGA Tour) is the main professional golf tour for men in the United States – and one of the major tours worldwide. It organises and runs a schedule of golf tournaments where professional golfers compete for prize money, ranking points, and titles. – DeepSeek

Chong Yeong Festival holiday notice

Due to Sunday's Chong Yeong Festival (重陽節), also known as the Double Ninth Festival, a statutory public holiday, *The Macau Post Daily's* print editorial staff will be off, returning to work on Monday.

As a result, the print edition of your favourite newspaper will be available on newsstands and delivered to your homes and offices on Tuesday.

Our administration staff will be off on Monday.

On this holiday, residents visit the graves of their ancestors to pay their respects.

However, our website, <https://www.macaupostdaily.com/>, will continue to be updated round the clock by our online news team.

We wish all our readers, advertisers, distributors, and contributors a restful break.

All government offices and banks will be closed on Monday, reopening for business on Tuesday.

Sam urges Judiciary to align with overall national & local interests

Continued from p.1

Mid-term review

Sam, who took office as the MSAR's sixth-term and fourth Chief Executive on December 20, 2024, said in his speech yesterday that next year will mark the mid-term review of the current government's performance, bringing tight deadlines, heavy tasks, and high standards across all areas of governance. Concurrently, Sam said, Macau's internal and external environments are undergoing profound and complex changes, requiring the MSAR's organs of political power and governance to maintain high risk awareness, crisis alertness, and a bottom-line mindset at all times.

The MSAR's three organs of political power and governance consist of executive, legislative, and judicial organs.

The MSAR's judicial organs comprise the Public Prosecutions Office (MP) and the courts, which consist of the Court of First Instance (TPI), the Court of Second Instance (TSI), and the Court of Final Appeal (TUI).

In addition, Sam underlined the need to accurately identify issues, formulate scientific responses, and proactively seek solutions, so as to better overcome various internal and external risks and challenges, with the aim of building a sustainably developed, more dynamic, and more competitive Macau that better ensures the well-being of its residents.

Sam said that in the face of new opportunities and challenges, the judicial organs, as an important integral part of Macau's governance, must adopt a holistic perspective, address issues from the country's fundamental interests and Macau's overall interests, and jointly uphold and improve Macau's executive-led system, thereby contributing to enhancing Macau's governance effectiveness.

Sam raises 7 requirements for Judiciary

To this end, Sam raised seven requirements

for Macau's judicial organs in his speech.

First, Sam said, the judicial organs should firmly uphold the MSAR's constitutional order established by the nation's Constitution and the MSAR Basic Law.

Sam underlined the need for the judicial organs to strictly fulfil the duties and functions conferred by the Constitution and the Basic Law, exercise judicial power and prosecutorial functions independently and in accordance with the law, create a fair, efficient, and predictable judicial environment, resolutely safeguard the sound order of the rule of law in Macau, and better meet the public's expectations regarding fairness and justice.

Second, Sam said, the judicial organs should enhance awareness of anti-corruption prevention and enforcement, firmly establishing the bottom lines and red lines of integrity and impartiality.

Sam said that the Judiciary is the last line of defence for social justice and fairness, and judicial integrity is the prerequisite and foundation of judicial justice; any behaviour that harms the image of the Judiciary will undermine civil society's confidence in the rule of law, Sam said.

Sam noted that judicial personnel must be honest and impartial, and strengthen their ability to prevent and combat corruption so as to earn the trust of society and the public, allowing the parties involved to truly feel the fairness and justice of the legal and judicial system. He urged judicial personnel to uphold the dignity of the rule of law with a stronger sense of responsibility.

Third, Sam said, the judicial organs should optimise personnel management and accelerate the formation of a more professional and efficient judicial team.

Sam noted that since Macau's return to the motherland, the number of judicial personnel has expanded. From the time shortly after the establishment of the MSAR, the number of judges across the three levels of courts has increased from 23 to 50, while the number

of prosecutors has increased from 20 to 40. The total number of other judicial officers at the assistant level across the three levels of courts and the Public Prosecutions Office has increased from 146 to 390 during this period.

Sam said that judicial statistics over the past decade show that the issue of "many cases and few staff" has undergone a substantial change. Macau's socioeconomic development in this new phase will inevitably place new and higher demands on judicial work, Sam said, urging the judicial organs to strengthen their administrative management, intensify personnel training, improve staff professionalism and competencies, and fully utilise existing human resources to meet the needs arising from socioeconomic development with high-quality judicial services.

Fourth, Sam said, the judicial organs should continue to improve the judicial system and effectively enhance judicial efficiency.

Sam underlined the need for the judicial organs to conduct studies on new systems and mechanisms, innovate with courage, draw on successful experiences from the Chinese mainland and other countries and regions, keep pace with the trends and demands of the new era, explore e-justice according to Macau's situation, and introduce and enhance the application of new technologies – such as AI – in stages like case management and document drafting.

Fifth, Sam said, the judicial organs should serve the mission of Macau's development through judicial work.

Sam underlined the need for the judicial organs to handle all illegal and criminal acts that endanger national security and the MSAR's public security in accordance with the law, ensuring Macau's stability and providing an environment conducive to development.

Through adjudication, the judicial organs should strengthen the protection of the legitimate rights and interests of market

entities of all types, improve Macau's business environment, and make greater contributions to Macau's appropriate economic diversification, he said.

Sam also underlined the need for Macau's judicial organs to step up exploration and innovation regarding rule alignment and mechanism integration at the judicial level in the development of the Guangdong-Macao In-Depth Cooperation Zone in Hengqin.

Sixth, Sam said, the judicial organs should vigorously participate in the construction of the rule of law in Macau by leveraging their expertise and practical experience.

Sam underlined that the local government is steadily advancing the drafting of improvements to Macau's major laws, including five major codes. He said he expects judicial personnel to leverage their expertise and rich practical experience to provide more professional and intellectual support for drafting new legislation and amendments to existing legislation, with the aim of jointly building a modern legal system more closely aligned with the needs of Macau's socioeconomic development.

Seventh, Sam urged the judicial organs to strengthen judicial exchange and cooperation at regional and international levels, leveraging Macau's unique status and advantages as a bridge between the Chinese mainland and the rest of the world, as well as its role as a bridge in cross-jurisdictional collaboration, expanding external judicial cooperation networks and enhancing judicial and law enforcement efficiency in cases involving foreign countries.

Meanwhile, in his speech, Sam also urged the Macau Lawyers Association to accelerate institutional reform and strengthen sector governance, promoting greater standardisation and modernisation in the legal profession. He also called for the association to study amendments to the Statute of Lawyers so as to remove bottlenecks hindering the sector's development. ■

'Luminous Brilliance' officially kicks off, nearly 180 exhibits on display

Rui Pastorin

The official opening ceremony for the latest exhibition at POLY MGM MUSEUM, "Luminous Brilliance: The Artistry of Zibo Liuli", was held yesterday at MGM MACAU, with the three-chapter showcase continuing its run until March 31.

Among the attending guests were Edmund Ho Hau Wah, vice-chairman of the National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference; Yang Wei-qun, deputy director of the Liaison Office of the Central People's Government in the Macao SAR; and Cultural Affairs Bureau (IC) President Deland Leong Wai Man.

The museum, which opened back in November 2024, started showcasing its latest exhibits earlier this month, showcasing nearly 3,000 years of Zibo liuli's* history and development through around 180 exhibits, all the while incorporating multimedia technology to tell its story.

The latest exhibition is held in conjunction with the National Museum of China and the Zibo Ceramics and Glass Museum.

Delivering a speech at yesterday's ceremony, MGM China Holdings Limited Chairperson and Executive Director Pansy Ho Chiu King said: "The POLY MGM MUSEUM provides a platform where diverse cultures along the Silk Road can meet, engage and learn from one another in Macau, a city where East and West converge. MGM will continue to serve as both a 'connector' and a 'partner' in cultural exchange. We look



Officials, guests and representatives including Vice Chairman of the National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC) Edmund Ho Hau Wah (centre), Deputy Director of the Liaison Office of the Central People's Government in the Macao SAR Yang Wei-qun (fifth from left), MGM China Holdings Limited Chairperson and Executive Director Pansy Ho (second from left), and Cultural Affairs Bureau (IC) President Deland Leong Wai Man (third from right) pose for a group photo during the opening ceremony at MGM MACAU in Nape for POLY MGM MUSEUM's "Luminous Brilliance: The Artistry of Zibo Liuli".

– Photo: Rui Pastorin

forward to working with more collaborators to write a new chapter in the high-quality development of cultural tourism and contribute to the preservation and promotion of Chinese culture".

China Poly Group Corporation Limited Chairman Zu Bin noted in his speech that the exhibition serves as "a vivid example of the museum's efforts to promote the creative transformation and innovative development of intangible cultural heritage. Looking

ahead, the museum will continue to present world-class exhibitions that reflect cultural confidence, bringing the finest traditions of Chinese culture into modern life, into public view and onto the global stage."

Moreover, during her speech, National Museum of China Deputy Director Chen Li said that through its chapters, the exhibition traces "the development of Chinese liuli art and highlight its distinctive craftsmanship, fully demonstrating the enduring heritage and

contemporary transformation of traditional Chinese glassmaking", hoping that visitors will experience its charm.

The event also saw the presentation of the UNESCO-listed Ruins of St. Paul's-inspired "Lotus Blossoms in Prosperity, Good Fortune Upon Macau" to the museum. ■

*Liuli (琉璃) is the traditional Chinese art of coloured glass and glassmaking, created using ancient techniques like lost-wax casting. - Gemini

Wang Yi meets Palestinian counterpart

BAKU – Foreign Minister Wang Yi met with Palestinian Foreign Minister Varsen Aghabekian Shahin on the sidelines of the Seventh Summit of the Conference on Interaction and Confidence Building Measures in Asia (CICA) in Baku yesterday.

Wang, also a member of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Committee, noted China was among the first countries to recognize the State of Palestine. China and Palestine are good friends and good brothers, and the two sides have enjoyed a friendship spanning decades.

No matter how the international situation evolves, the Chinese people will always stand with the Palestinian people and firmly support their just cause of restoring their legitimate national rights, Wang said.

Wang said the China-Palestine strategic partnership has maintained its growth momentum, and China stands ready to work with Palestine to further enhance strategic mutual trust and advance bilateral relations.

The Palestinian question is the longest-standing hotspot issue and the greatest historical injustice in the world since World War II, Wang said, adding that without a just settlement of the question, there can be no lasting peace and stability in the Middle East.

Tensions in the Middle East remain high, creating new difficulties for resolving the Palestinian question, Wang said. The Palestinian question must not be marginalized, and the world must not forget the two million

Palestinians in Gaza struggling on the brink of death, he noted.

Justice may be delayed, but it will not be denied, Wang said.

As a responsible major country, China will continue to stand on the side of international justice and oppressed peoples, and speak out actively in support of the just cause of the Palestinian people on multilateral platforms, he said.

China will also call on all peace-loving countries to firmly support a two-state solution and work together to promote a comprehensive, just and lasting settlement of the Palestinian question as soon as possible, Wang said.

Shahin briefed Wang on the latest developments concerning the Palestinian question, stressing that the international community must not apply double standards to it. She highly commended China's consistent and just position on the Palestinian question.

Shahin said Palestine appreciates China's longstanding strong support for the Palestinian people's efforts to restore their legitimate national rights, its consistent efforts to speak up for Palestine at international multilateral occasions, and its selfless assistance in providing humanitarian aid to Gaza.

Noting that Palestine and China have enjoyed a long-standing friendship and sound cooperation, she said Palestine hopes to further strengthen bilateral relations and looks forward to China continuing to uphold justice for Palestine and playing a more important role in realizing the two-state solution.

– Xinhua

Commerce Minister Wang meets Apple Executive Chairman Tim Cook

BEIJING – Commerce Minister Wang Wentao yesterday met with Tim Cook, executive chairman of the board of directors of Apple Inc., exchanging views on topics including China-US economic and trade relations, artificial intelligence (AI) development and Apple's business in China, according to a statement released by the Ministry of Commerce (MOC).

Guided by the consensus reached by the two heads of state on building a constructive bilateral relationship of strategic stability based on respect, fairness and reciprocity, China-US economic and trade consultations have yielded positive results, Wang said.

China advocates the safe and controllable development of AI, its inclusive and beneficial use, and cooperation in AI governance, Wang said, expressing the hope that Apple would serve as a bridge of communication and contribute to the sustained, stable and

sound development of China-US economic and trade relations.

China remains firmly committed to expanding high-standard opening up and improving its business environment, while its consumer market continues to expand and upgrade and its green supply chains are growing, Wang said. These developments will create greater scope for multinational companies to invest in China in smarter, greener and more innovative areas, he added.

He also expressed the hope that Apple would continue to deepen its presence in the Chinese market and share in opportunities arising from Chinese modernization.

Apple is optimistic about China's development prospects and will further expand its business in the country, and the company is willing to play a positive role in promoting stable and healthy US-China economic and trade relations, Cook said.

– Xinhua

Caritas Macau to open 2 'Delightful Kitchens'

Staff Reporter

Caritas Macau will open two community canteens in the near future – one in the Praia do Manduco (known as Ha Van in Cantonese) neighbourhood and the other in the Areia Preta district.

Caritas Macau Secretary-General Paul Pun Chi Meng made the remarks while speaking to reporters on Wednesday on the sidelines of an arts exhibition held in the activity room of Flower City Park in Taipa.

The one on Rua da Praia do Manduco (下環街) is now ready for operation and can open in a few days, Pun said.

The preparations for the one in the Areia Preta district are still underway, Pun said, adding that it is expected to open about a fortnight after the one in the Ha Van district opens.

The local Catholic social service organisation opened a community canteen – known as Delightful Kitchen – on Rua Nova à Guia – the street running from Hotel Royal to S. Francisco Garden – in 2021. This eatery has recently stopped



This photo taken yesterday shows Caritas Macau's Delightful Kitchen on Rua Nova à Guia that recently stopped operating. The eatery will be relocated to Areia Preta district.

– Photo: MPDG

operating. Earlier this year, Caritas indicated its decision to relocate its Delightful Kitchen on Rua Nova à Guia to the Areia Preta district before the end of this year.

Pun said on Wednesday that the two new community canteens – despite primarily catering to the dietary needs of senior citizens – will be open to everyone, with seniors enjoying a discount.

The two new “Delightful Kitchens” will be open from

lunchtime through dinner time. The Ha Van one can accommodate 20 patrons, while the Areia Preta one will be larger, with a capacity of 30 diners, according to Pun.

Meanwhile, Pun also said that Caritas is planning to build a care home for senior citizens near Kun Iam Temple on Avenida do Coronel Mesquita (美副將大馬路). The project is expected to be completed around the middle of 2028 “if everything goes well”, he said. ■

Chinese sand-control pioneer Yin Yuzhen named among FAO's 100 women heroes

Analysis

ROME – Chinese sand-control pioneer Yin Yuzhen has been named among the FAO's 100 Women Heroes in Agrifood Systems and Rural Development, a global recognition initiative launched by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO).

The honorees were celebrated at a ceremony yesterday at the FAO headquarters in Rome as part of this year's World Food Forum.

Yin has spent more than four decades combating desertification in the Maowusu Sandy Land in north China's Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region. After decades of persistent tree planting, she and her family have transformed stretches of the once-barren landscape into a green expanse, overcoming harsh conditions and shifting sands.

Her story also forged an enduring friendship with retired US teacher Ronald Sakolsky, who raised US\$5,000 decades ago to support her afforestation work.

Yin told Xinhua that the recognition had strengthened her resolve to continue her work. “Like a Mongolian horse, I will keep pressing forward with perseverance and determination, doing my work well and giving back to nature,” she said.

Sitting in the audience, Sakolsky's eyes grew moist as he applauded Yin's achievement. “Yin deserves everything that she gets. She is the heroine,” he told Xinhua.

Addressing the ceremony, FAO Director-General Qu Dongyu hailed women farmers' roles. He said women are a driving force in agrifood systems, playing an



Yin Yuzhen attends a ceremony for Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations' (FAO) 100 Women Heroes in Agrifood Systems and Rural Development, in Rome, yesterday.

– AFP

indispensable role in food security, natural resource management, rural development and community resilience.

Qu then invited Sakolsky to join Yin on stage. The two friends embraced once again and held up a trophy together. Qu said that although Sakolsky was not among the women heroes, his “passion” and “solidarity” should be recognized.

Sakolsky expressed his gratitude, saying he was deeply moved by Yin's remarkable achievement. He called on everyone to plant a tree and work together to make a difference to the environment.

Launched by the FAO to mark the International Year of the Woman Farmer 2026, the global initiative recognizes 100 women for their outstanding contributions to agriculture, food systems and rural development.

The FAO said it received 609 nominations from 131 members.

The selection process involved an eligibility review, an assessment, and ranking by senior management, and two rounds of deliberations.

Besides Yin, Yu Jinxiu and Dong Minfang were also among the FAO 100 Women Heroes. Yu is a moxibustion therapist from Qichun County in central China's Hubei Province, and Dong is president of the Fengrui Agricultural Machinery Professional Cooperative in Yueyang County, central China's Hunan Province. They have spent years sharing their expertise to help thousands of people secure jobs and start businesses, raising incomes for rural residents.

The United Nations designated 2026 as the International Year of the Woman Farmer to highlight women's contribution to agrifood systems and promote policies and investments that improve their access to finance, knowledge and services.

– Xinhua

Indonesia rescues starved orangutan from fires: officials



Natural Resources Conservation Agency (BKSDA) and Orangutan Foundation International (OFI) officials examine an orangutan after she was evacuated from a forest and land fire in the Baamang area of East Kotawaringin, Central Kalimantan on Wednesday. — AFP

INDONESIA — A female orangutan who was likely starving was evacuated Wednesday from an area razed by fire on the Indonesian island of Borneo, officials said, as the country rescues hundreds of animals affected by the blazes.

Indonesia has for weeks struggled to control fires that have razed parts of Sumatra, Borneo and Papua islands, sending choking smog wafting across the border to Malaysia and Singapore.

The orangutan was spotted in a burned forest area in Central Kalimantan province on the Indonesian side of Borneo, local natural resources agency chief Muriansyah told reporters Wednesday.

“We strongly suspect that the

orangutan was looking for food and then it was seen by residents, who then reported it to officials,” said Muriansyah, who like many Indonesians goes by one name.

The animal, estimated to be around 20 years old, was transferred to an agency facility.

The great ape was anaesthetized so she could be safely captured, with rescuers using a net to collect the sleepy animal from atop a tree, according to an AFP reporter on the scene.

Preliminary examinations showed the female orangutan was not injured and did not appear to be suffering from respiratory problems, said Ichlasul Khaerul, a medical staffer with Orangutan Foundation International (OFI).

However, “seen from her abdominal circumference, probably the orangutan, Ira, was in the state of starvation,” Ichlasul said.

Indonesia has rescued 232 wild animals as of October 8, including 76 proboscis monkeys and 71 orangutans on Borneo, a forestry ministry spokesman said Wednesday.

Orangutans are critically endangered. Around 104,000 remain in Borneo and Sumatra, down from more than 230,000 a century ago, according to conservation group WWF.

Last month, the International Union for Conservation of Nature warned fires were burning in habitats containing 52 percent of Borneo’s orangutan population. — AFP

N Korea test-fires cruise missiles from submarine: KCNA

Kang Jin-kyu

SEOUL — Pyongyang test-fired two types of cruise missile from a submarine, its state news agency said yesterday, after weeks of friction with Seoul over a landmine explosion along their border.

The missiles were fired into the East Sea, also known as the Sea of Japan, on Wednesday without “any adverse impact on the security of neighbouring countries”, the official Korean Central News Agency (KCNA) said.

Relations between Pyongyang and Seoul have been further strained since the landmine blast on September 21 in the Seoul-controlled area of the Demilitarised Zone (DMZ), which injured three South Korean soldiers.

Both countries tested upgraded missile technology in the aftermath.

The latest test “aimed to examine the current mobilised posture of the underwater combat systems” and served as a navy training exercise, KCNA said.

The launches showed the “high reliability, trustworthiness and ability of the war deterrents of the DPRK,” the agency reported, referring to North Korea by the abbreviation of the country’s official name.

North Korea has carried out several missile launches from submarines in recent years, although its sea-based launch capabilities remain unclear.

Cruise missiles tend to be jet-propelled and fly at a lower altitude than more sophisticated ballistic missiles, making them harder to detect and intercept.

Proven submarine-launched ballistic missile capability would take North Korea’s arsenal to a new level, allowing deployment

far beyond the Korean peninsula and a second-strike capability in the event of an attack.

Tactical significance

Photos released by KCNA showed one missile blasting vertically out of the sea, trailed by a thick plume of smoke. Another photo appeared to show a projectile erupting from the water at a 45-degree angle.

Other images showed a missile flying horizontally over the sea, as well as a submarine travelling on the water’s surface.

The North’s ability to launch missiles from submarines at two different angles carries “tactical significance”, Hong Min of the Korea Institute for National Unification told AFP, as the two launch methods serve different purposes.

“Vertical launches allow missiles to climb steeply before descending towards their targets, potentially extending their range,” he said.

“Angled launches, on the other hand, allow missiles to fly at lower altitudes from the outset, making them harder for missile defence systems to detect and intercept.”

North Korea has carried out multiple ballistic missile tests in October, most recently on Monday.

The two Koreas have engaged in a tit-for-tat series of missile tests this month, with both sides test-firing hypersonic weapons.

South Korea test-fired its first homegrown hypersonic glide vehicle last week, days after Pyongyang said it had launched an AI-assisted intermediate-range hypersonic missile.

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



Demonstrators take part in a protest against the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank Group in Bangkok yesterday, as the IMF Annual Meetings take place in the Thai capital. — AFP

‘No place to breathe’: life in Indonesia’s fire epicentre

PALANGKARAYA, Indonesia — Irvan Maulana has struggled with shortness of breath and a cough as wildfire smoke cloaks the Indonesian city of Palangkaraya. But he is a doctor, and patients keep arriving.

“I’ve been sick, I’ve been short of breath, I’ve had a cough too, but because I must provide care... I just carry on,” the 28-year-old told AFP yesterday at a public clinic.

Palangkaraya in Indonesia’s Kalimantan is one of the epicentres of the country’s wildfire crisis, which has seen blazes burn through hundreds of thousands of hectares and cause regional air pollution.

For month, Irvan has seen patients arrive suffering the consequences.

“There’s been a tendency for an increase in adults and the elderly coming to the general clinic,” he said.

“Elderly patients or children, they’re more sensitive, so they’re more easily affected by coughing, colds, mucus in the nose and throat, and even a sore throat.

Dea Otavia, a 30-year-old security guard, arrived at the clinic with her daughter.

“She says it hurts when she breathes,” Dea told AFP.

“It’s so suffocating, especially on days like these,” she added.

“It reaches inside the house too. There’s no place to breathe freely.”

Indonesia is afflicted by wildfires regularly during its dry season, but this year the blazes have been turbocharged by a powerful El Niño cycle, which typically brings drought.

Experts say years of deforestation and the drying out of naturally water-logged peatlands

for cultivation has also transformed formerly fire-resistant landscapes.

The wildfire haze has drifted into nearby Singapore, Malaysia, East Timor and even the Philippines, prompting periodic school closures and health warnings.

But in Palangkaraya, residents have no choice but to continue trying to get by, said Zikri Yanto, who had taken his baby to the clinic.

“While I’m working, I’m also on alert. Sometimes my wife suddenly calls, saying we need to take the child to the ER.”

His four-year-old is sick too, complaining of headaches and general weakness.

“We’re extremely anxious, disturbed,” said Zikri, urging the government to “pay more attention.”

“Here in Palangkaraya City, we should be assisted not only in the form of rice or basic food supplies... there should be safe houses from haze.”

“Our hope is that they would be equipped with oxygen, nurses, and everything needed. So, if there are children who fall ill, they can be treated there. That’s what we really want.”

More than 280,000 people were recorded with respiratory problems between August 18 and October 13, Indonesia’s health ministry said Wednesday, though many more are likely to have suffered without seeking treatment.

Indonesia’s government says tens of thousands of personnel are fighting the fires, but the air in Palangkaraya remains poisonous, with the haze turning the sky apocalyptic orange in the late afternoon.

“I miss seeing the sun,” said Dea.

“There’s this sense of worry: how long is it going to be like this?” — AFP

Philippine peso hits fresh record low

MANILA — The Philippine peso closed at 63.06 pesos per US\$1.00 yesterday, surpassing the previous record low of 62.90 on October 8 and hitting a record low for the 27th time this year, according to data from the Bankers Association of the Philippines.

The Philippine peso weakened to a new all-time low of 63.15 pesos to US\$1.00 in early trading yesterday, surpassing its previous intraday record of 62.925 pesos to US\$1.00.

Ruben Asuncion, chief economist at Union Bank of the Philippines, attributed the peso’s depreciation to stronger US inflation, which has fueled expectations that the US Federal Reserve will sustain elevated borrowing costs.

He said such expectations bolster the US dollar and push up US Treasury yields, dampening investor appetite for emerging-market currencies such as the Philippine peso.

The consumer price index (CPI) of the United States rose 0.6 percent from August and 3.7 percent from a year earlier, according to the US Labor Department on Wednesday. Economists had forecast an annual increase of 3.6 percent.

The report added pressure on the US Federal Reserve ahead of its October 27-28 policy meeting, with investors raising bets on another interest rate hike. — Xinhua

After latest Nepal flood, survivors fear for future

Anup Ojha

GORKHA, Nepal – Standing beside his house half-buried in thick sludge, Nepali flash flood survivor Ajay Gurung surveyed the wreckage of a life swept away in minutes.

The Budhi Gandaki river that once sustained his family tore through central Gorkha district on Sunday, leaving a trail of destruction along the way.

The flooding, which swept away 200 houses and five bridges, is the latest in a series of recent natural disasters in Nepal, renewing fears among vulnerable mountain communities.

In August, a catastrophic flood in northern Rasuwa district killed more than 1,400 people and left over 5,000 missing, highlighting the risks posed by Nepal's unstable mountain terrain.

Gurung, 33, said his shop and cattle were washed away by the swollen river as he looked on.

"Everything is gone now," Gurung told AFP. "I now need to look for an alternative place to live."

A trekking guide for nearly two decades, Gurung said he had never seen so many landslides along the Manaslu circuit where he had led countless tours.

"In the future, no settlements built along the banks of rivers flowing from the snowy mountains will survive," he said.

Along the Budhi Gandaki, the scale of Sunday's flood is emerging as residents pick through the mud in search of whatever can be salvaged.

No deaths have been confirmed, but at least six people are missing and three hydropower plants were damaged, according to disaster officials.

"I had a banana farm. That is also gone," said Lal Kurmari Thapa. "We are left with nothing but a small hut, which was spared."

Others, she said, lost even more. "Some don't even have a sheet of roofing left. Budhi Gandaki is flowing over it. They don't even have clothes."

Minimising risks

Nepal's rugged geography has long made it vulnerable to floods

and landslides.

But recurring disasters have heightened anxieties in communities living close to rivers descending from the Himalayas, where scientists warn warming temperatures are increasing risks.

The Budhi Gandaki flood came less than two months after the devastating ice-and-rock collapse in Rasuwa district unleashed a torrent of water and debris.

Scientists said climate change played a significant role in that disaster.

Last month, heavy monsoon rains triggered floods and landslides that killed at least 21 people across the country.

Researchers say the disasters underscore the complex dangers facing Himalayan river systems.

"Understanding what triggered this flood will be critical for reducing future risks and strengthening resilience," said Pema Gyamtsho, director general of the Kathmandu-based International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development.

Preliminary findings by Nepal's disaster authority suggest the latest flood was also triggered by an avalanche of rock and ice.

"This year there have been back-to-back disasters, and climate change plays a role," disaster authority chief Dharam Raj Uprety said.

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

Authorities said work is underway to strengthen monitoring and adaptation measures so that risks will be minimised when the next disaster strikes.

For survivors such as Dil Kumari Thapa Magar, however, the threat no longer feels distant.

Weeks ago, she watched the Rasuwa disaster unfold on her phone screen.

It has now arrived at her doorstep. "We had closely observed the flooding in Rasuwa. It was quite far away, but we were very worried when we saw it," she said.

"Now, we have become victims of the flood ourselves." – AFP

School roof collapse kills teacher, 33 children in NW Pakistan

PESHAWAR, Pakistan – The roof of a school collapsed in Pakistan's northwestern city of Peshawar, killing a teacher and 33 students, mostly aged under 14, health officials yesterday, as residents and rescuers scrambled to pull children from the rubble.

Twenty more students were taken to hospital after the collapse, which authorities blamed on "weak infrastructure". Others in the densely populated neighbourhood described a close call.

Resident Sohail told AFP "Everyone began screaming in panic" after his niece managed to find her way home after escaping the building to inform them of the collapse.

"When I arrived at the scene, I saw around 10 to 15 children trapped beneath the rubble, with debris piled up to their necks. We quickly pulled them out," he said.

Asim Khan of Peshawar's Lady Reading Hospital said the death toll had risen to 33 by yesterday evening, with most of the victims aged between four and 14.

"A total of 20 injured children were brought to the hospital, most of whom have been discharged. Three severely injured children, who sustained head injuries, have been admitted to the hospital," Khan said.

The injured and deceased included 12 girls and a female teacher, Khan added.

A spokesman for the emergency rescue service in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province said schoolchildren were crushed and trapped after the roof gave way.

"When the Rescue 1122 emergency response teams arrived at the scene, they found that one roof had collapsed onto another, causing



A rescuer (centre) carries a child during a search operation after a roof collapsed at a school in Peshawar, Pakistan yesterday. – AFP

the classroom below to be crushed and trapping children inside," spokesman Bilal Ahmad Faizi said.

AFP journalists saw dozens of people at the scene.

Images released by the emergency services showed rescue workers in high-visibility vests scrambling to move debris, rubble and dirt.

A senior Peshawar-based official told AFP that initial reports suggested the roof collapse was due to "weak infrastructure".

"The school owner has been detained," the official said on condition of anonymity because he was not authorised to talk to the media.

'Deep sorrow'

Bodies wrapped in white cloths were seen being carried out of the hospital as volunteers arrived to help identify the victims.

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif expressed "deep sorrow and grief over the loss of precious lives", according to a statement.

"The Prime Minister extends his condolences to the bereaved families and prays for them to have

the strength and patience to bear this irreparable loss," the statement said.

President Asif Ali Zardari described the roof collapse as a "heartbreaking tragedy".

Resident Sher Ahmed blamed "substandard construction materials" for the tragedy and called for an investigation.

"With profound grief and sorrow, I urge the authorities to conduct a thorough investigation and take strict action against anyone found responsible so that such tragedies can be prevented in the future," he said.

Roof and building collapses are common in Pakistan, largely due to poor safety standards and substandard construction materials in the South Asian nation of more than 240 million people.

In June, more than a dozen children were killed when a roof collapsed at a tutoring centre in the eastern city of Lahore.

In 2025, 27 people were killed and 10 injured when a five-storey building collapsed in the impoverished Lyari area of the southern city of Karachi. – AFP

Australia says won't let big tech have 'unfettered' access to kids

SYDNEY – Australia said yesterday it refused to allow big tech to have "unfettered" access to its kids as it formally introduced new legislation that would give users choice over what they see on their feeds.

Under the centre-left Labor government's "Digital Duty of Care" bill, firms behind popular platforms such as Facebook, TikTok and Instagram will be required to give users the choice to opt out of the powerful algorithms that dictate what we see online.

They will also be held directly responsible for protecting under-18s from pornography, online bullying, content that glorifies crime, and content that encourages eating disorders.

"The problem today is that big tech has been allowed to live-test its products on Australians," Communications Minister Anika Wells told the National Press Club in Canberra.

"Today, I want to make a simple argument: if you build it, you are responsible for its risks."

"I wholeheartedly believe one day we will look back on Australia's minimum age for social media and think, 'I cannot believe we used to let big tech have unfettered access to our children'."

"We didn't abandon seatbelts because people didn't want to buckle up, and we will not flinch at holding tech companies to account when our littlest citizens are at stake."

Wells said she formally introduced the "Digital Duty of Care" bill to parliament yesterday morning.

But it faces an uphill battle - Labor will need support from the left-wing Greens to get it through the senate.

Australia's conservative opposition has vowed to "fight it every step of the way" and said it gives the government too much power to control speech.

Wells dismissed those fears yesterday and said a previous clause in the draft legislation that would have granted ministerial powers to define harmful content had been removed.

"We are not controlling free speech. We are not conducting covert surveillance," Wells insisted.

"This is not about what people say on the internet. It's about what platforms do on the internet," she said.

Australia rolled out world-first legislation last year, barring children under the age of 16 from accessing a number of social media apps.

Several countries have said they will seek to follow suit, including neighbouring New Zealand, the UK, France and Turkey.

Data from parental control app Qustodio in August showed that under-16s in Australia were increasing their use of social media apps such as Instagram and TikTok despite the ban. – AFP



Cockroach Janta Party (CJP) founder Abhijeet Dipke (centre, right) along with Neha Bora (centre, second right), president of All India Students' Association (AISA) addresses the media during a press conference in New Delhi yesterday amid ongoing protests against India's Chief Election Commissioner Gyanesh Kumar over alleged voter roll irregularities linked to the "special intensive revision" (SIR). CJP founder Dipke called on people to gather today in Connaught Place, close to Jantar Mantar. 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. – AFP

Pope's cancer operation reshaping papacy

Ella Ide

ROME – With Pope Leo XIV recovering in hospital yesterday following his lung cancer operation, questions are swirling about how the illness could change his papacy, fewer than two years after his election.

The 71-year-old leader of the world's 1.4 billion Catholics had a part of his lung removed on Tuesday and is undergoing further tests to determine if he is cancer-free or needs further treatment.

In the meantime, the Chicago-born pontiff is expected to spend at least a few days recovering at the Gemelli Hospital in Rome.

In a note published by the Vatican, his doctors yesterday said a chest X-ray "showed a good recovery of the operated lung".

"The post-operative course is progressing as expected," they said.

A Vatican source said the pope has been able to do some work in hospital and participated in Mass at a make-shift chapel on the hospital's 10th floor.

He also met with the Vatican's substitute secretary of state for general affairs, Paolo Rudelli, yesterday afternoon, the source said.

There were no faithful praying outside the hospital, but strung outside one of the windows, a banner read "Haematology greets the pope!"

Despite his progress, experts said the pope's unexpected diagnosis will nevertheless fundamentally change the papacy in some ways.

"Illness acts as a crossroads in a pontificate – it either accelerates its momentum or diminishes its power," Vatican watcher Giacomo Galeazzi wrote in *La Stampa* daily on Thursday.

Mikael Corre, Vatican correspondent for France's *La Croix* newspaper, told AFP the way Leo is perceived has shifted.

"No-one expected to be waiting for medical



The faithful pray outside 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

bulletins again so soon – certainly not with this particular pope, who was 69 at the time of the conclave" in which he was elected, he said.

When Leo's predecessor, Pope Francis, spent more than five weeks in hospital in early 2025, the Vatican began issuing regular medical bulletins detailing the pope's medical treatment and the critical episodes when his life was in danger.

In May 2025, tennis-mad Leo – a keen gym-goer – became the youngest man chosen to lead the Church since John Paul II almost 40 years earlier.

"He was the 'athletic pope' who also proved to be a great traveller," Corre said.

"He may remain both but he will now also be a pope whose health is constantly scrutinised."

'Prudent'

Leo has cancelled all his audiences until next Tuesday and his near-term travel plans are uncertain, including a demanding scheduled trip to Uruguay, Argentina and Peru from November 6 to 17.

He is expected initially to have a scaled-back schedule, with fewer public engagements.

"I think he is going to want to jump right back into things as much as he can. I think he'll push himself," said US Vatican expert Elise Ann Allen, who has written a biography of the pope.

"But he's also very prudent. Leo understands his limitations and he'll listen to them," she told AFP.

The world's first American pope has gradually imprinted his style on the Church

leadership, speaking out on some of the world's most pressing issues, from conflicts to artificial intelligence.

He has also proved unafraid to criticise world leaders or defend himself against US President Donald Trump's attacks.

"We're not going to see him change his style," Allen said.

"Scares like this have a way of crystallising things for you, of what's important," she said.

"He will be even more determined, I think."

'Eased frictions'

Some Vatican insiders think Leo's illness might "shift his priorities", meaning fewer trips and more appointments, Corre said.

Several appointments are expected soon, in any case.

Leo has yet to create any cardinals, the red-hatted Princes of the Church who will vote in the conclave to elect his successor.

Five heads of dicasteries – Vatican departments – have also reached retirement age but have yet to be replaced.

Leo inherited a divided Church, with liberal and conservative factions that bickered under his predecessor Francis.

While he has been tasked with overcoming such polarisation, there are those inside the Vatican who hope Leo's illness will spur him into replacing close allies of Francis in key dicasteries with more conservative figures, Corre said.

Others expect him to forge ahead instead with diplomatic efforts, which have already "brought great stability", Allen said.

"I think this health crisis has eased those frictions even further," she said.

"It's brought the Catholic Church together in support around Pope Leo in a very strong way," she said.

– AFP

Trump scraps plan to livestream execution after broad backlash

W.G. Dunlop

WASHINGTON, DC – The firing squad execution of a convicted military base shooter will not be livestreamed, US President Donald Trump announced yesterday, cancelling a contentious plan by Defence Secretary Pete Hegseth.

The move to livestream Nidal Hasan's execution was widely opposed at home and abroad, prompting outrage from both US Democratic and Republican politicians, the Catholic Church and the United Nations.

The cancellation is a blow to Hegseth, who is already under fire over the stalemated Iran war and its fallout, which are weighing on Trump's Republican Party ahead of November midterm elections.

Hasan "will die, as scheduled, by firing squad, but this event will not be streamed," Trump said in a post on his Truth Social platform.

The US president indicated he did not personally oppose the streaming plan, saying it "might have been a strong deterrent for the World to witness how America deals with Terrorists and SCUM like Hasan."

But "many very good and well meaning people would rather not watch him die," Trump said, adding that the execution could still be viewed in person by immediate family of the victims if they wanted to do so.

Hasan's execution – scheduled for December 3 at Fort Hood, Texas, where he gunned down 13 people in 2009 – is set to be the first by a US military firing squad since 1945.

Hegseth said last week that "we'll make sure that people are able to watch it, that it's

public," later confirming that the plan was to livestream the execution.

"People need to understand that...there's serious consequence for these types of things," he said.

Most Americans opposed

Backlash to the plan quickly grew following Hegseth's announcement.

The United Nations said streaming the execution would amount to "torture," while the president of the US Conference of Catholic Bishops said it was a "barbaric promotion of a culture of death," and both Australia and Britain's prime ministers described it as "abhorrent."

Vice President JD Vance, who recently released a memoir on his Catholic faith, said he would not watch the execution if the plan went forward.

A Washington Post-ABC News-Ipsos poll released Thursday found that eight in 10 Americans opposed the livestreaming of the execution.

Lawmakers from both main US parties have said they are against it, including top House Republican Mike Johnson, who said it could be a "recruiting tool for future terrorists."

Dozens of retired US military officers also warned in an open letter against broadcasting the execution.

It "will taint the honour of the military that employs it, and a nation that allows it," and "will ensure that Hasan becomes a martyr for attacking and killing his fellow soldiers," said the officers, including more than 40 generals and admirals.



US President Donald Trump speaks in the Rose Garden at the White House in Washington DC, yesterday.

– AFP

The last US military execution was carried out in 1961, when John Bennett was hanged for rape and attempted murder.

The Death Penalty Information Center says 135 troops have been executed by the US military since 1916.

According to rights group Amnesty International, at least 17 public executions are known to have been carried out in 2025 – six in Afghanistan and 11 in Iran.

Twelve of the 13 people Hasan killed and 30 of those he wounded were soldiers. He was shot by a civilian police officer who responded to the attack and is paralysed from

the waist down.

Hasan chose to conduct his own defence during the trial but called no witnesses and gave no testimony, and made no attempt to deny the charges.

He was sentenced to death by a military jury in 2013.

The court that convicted Hasan was told he was opposed to the US military's occupations of Iraq and Afghanistan, and that he had spoken online with an alleged Al-Qaeda figure, radical cleric Anwar al-Awlaki, an American citizen subsequently killed in a US drone strike in Yemen.

– AFP

Ukraine's Zelensky defies Trump with Russian refinery strikes

KYIV – Ukraine will no longer abide by US President Donald Trump's demands not to strike Russian oil refineries, President Volodymyr Zelensky said in remarks published yesterday, as tensions deepened between the two leaders over a US-Russia diesel agreement.

Relations between Kyiv and Washington have soured since last week, when Trump eased sanctions on Russia in exchange for Moscow releasing large amounts of diesel onto global markets.

Zelensky described the deal as a "weak decision", saying it would encourage Russia to prolong its four-and-a-half-year war with Ukraine, while several of Ukraine's European allies criticised the agreement.

Addressing the criticism on Saturday, Trump claimed Ukrainian attacks on Russian oil refineries were to blame for rising diesel prices and said it was "time for Ukraine to get a new president".

"The block [on attacking refineries] is out," Zelensky told the *Financial Times* in an interview published yesterday. "We're done."

Trump had announced on Sunday a surprise "energy ceasefire" between Russia and Ukraine, which Zelensky said he knew nothing about.

And earlier this week, Ukraine reported disruptions to a critical US satellite communications system

that its army uses on the battlefield.

"We need HONESTY from our partners about this war," Zelensky wrote on social media yesterday.

In an interview with British journalist Piers Morgan on Wednesday, Zelensky agreed that he felt "betrayed" by Trump's diesel-supply deal with Russia's Vladimir Putin.

He also questioned the advice that Trump was receiving, after senior Ukrainian officials in Kyiv openly accused the United States of helping Russia.

"It's painful when President Trump chooses one side, not our side," he said.

"I think his advisors are wrong. This is not [the] right side of history."

Since launching its "special military operation in Ukraine in 2022, Russia has systematically hit Ukrainian energy infrastructure, leading to energy and heating shortages – while Ukraine has hit back at Russian oil refineries it says fund the war.

More recently, Trump's war in Iran has led to oil shortages and ensuing price spikes, creating major headwinds for his Republican Party ahead of midterm elections early next month.

Zelensky in Brussels

Meeting Zelensky in Brussels yesterday, NATO chief Mark Rutte said he discussed the importance of



This handout photo, taken and released by the Ukrainian Presidential Press Service yesterday, shows Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelensky (left) and NATO Secretary General Mark Rutte shaking hands during their meeting on the sidelines of an EU summit in Brussels.

– AFP

"implementing an energy ceasefire as well as NATO allies' continuous support for Ukraine".

But Zelensky made no mention of a ceasefire in his post on X about the Rutte meeting.

The Kremlin accused Ukraine of derailing US peace efforts by resuming its strikes on refineries, with Russian authorities reporting a drone attack on an oil refinery south of Moscow that caused a fire.

Kyiv "continues to launch strikes against these facilities," Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told reporters.

"It is coming into serious conflict with the peace efforts of the United

States and American negotiators, who are making vigorous efforts to initiate the peace process," he added.

Russia has intensified its bombardment of Ukraine and its capital in recent months, leading to mounting civilian casualties and disrupting daily life for citizens.

Moscow currently occupies around a fifth of Ukraine, including Crimea, which it annexed in 2014.

Satellite row

Much of the outrage in Ukraine this week has been over restrictions to the Starshield satellite communications system

that its military relies upon to detect incoming Russian attacks and to coordinate its frontline response.

Defence officials confirmed that the United States had threatened to withdraw intelligence-sharing if Ukraine continued long-range strikes on Russian oil refineries.

Powerful ballistic missiles struck Kyiv and the surrounding region on Tuesday and Wednesday night, before air raid sirens could sound warning people to take cover.

But tech billionaire Elon Musk, who has also called for Zelensky to be replaced as leader, said his SpaceX company was not behind any disruption to the Starshield system.

"Starshield systems are owned and controlled by the US government," he said.

"Any limits on speed or usage are decided by the US military and ultimately POTUS [President of the United States]," he added, referring to Trump.

Ukraine uses the Starshield system from Musk's SpaceX for battlefield communications, mid-range strikes on Russian-occupied territory and interceptor drones.

It is separate from the parallel Starlink civilian satellite system, which Ukraine also uses but not for offensive operations.

Speeds were slower on Wednesday, affecting connectivity, officials said.

– AFP, MPD

Albanian PM condemns 'chaos' as violent unrest spreads

Briseida Mema

TIRANA – Violent protests spread from Albania's capital to smaller cities yesterday, as student-led demonstrators demand prime minister Edi Rama's resignation for a third straight day.

Protesters again clashed with police in Albania's capital in hours-long confrontations, with crowds targeting government buildings, banks and shopfronts.

Demonstrators, who had earlier gathered in the thousands, are demanding that Rama step down and that the government offer more support for students, citing poor university conditions and high tuition fees.

Protests spread yesterday to several smaller cities, as more students joined university boycotts.

In Shkodra, in Albania's northwest, protesters smashed city hall windows and pelted the ruling Socialist Party and opposition Democratic Party headquarters with stones, local media reported.

Broadcast images also showed protesters confronting police in southern coastal cities, with reports of Korce students smashing school windows and blocking streets.

In Tirana, AFP journalists saw repeated clashes with police across the city, with police using water cannons and tear gas as protesters



Protesters launch fireworks towards riot police during an anti-government demonstration in central Tirana yesterday, as protests continued for a third consecutive day over university conditions and demands for the resignation of Albanian Prime Minister Edi Rama.

– AFP

lobbed stones, barricaded roads and set fire to trash.

Streets remained shrouded in smoke and tear gas into the early evening, littered with debris and shattered glass from smashed shopfronts.

The escalation comes after months of anti-government demonstrations in the country originally sparked by a controversial resort development linked to US President Donald Trump's family.

"We demand real change, not empty promises. We want a government that works for its people, not against them,"

journalism student Teftalia Papa told AFP.

She said the people had many issues accessing basic services, but students were being particularly "crushed by rising costs".

Protesters in Tirana on Tuesday and Wednesday smashed their way into several government buildings and set at least one ablaze.

Rama earlier posted a video on his Facebook page of him touring the burnt-out remains of an office at a college campus in Tirana.

"Until yesterday, this was the office of the College of Europe, the school of a united Europe," he

said in the video – his first public comments since the protests began.

"Today this is the ruin left by hands that are not, and can never be, the hands of students," Rama said, blaming opposition figures for the violence at the demonstrations.

"Everyone who has had a hand in this chaos will certainly pay."

'Ruin' and 'chaos'

Meanwhile, protest groups circulated an "ultimatum" demanding the prime minister's resignation by 1:00 p.m. (local time) yesterday.

Rama's office did not respond to AFP's request for comment on the protests and the calls for his resignation.

For more than four months, anti-government protests in Albania have routinely drawn crowds in the thousands.

They were triggered by a luxury hotel project linked to Trump's daughter, Ivanka, and son-in-law, Jared Kushner, that became a symbol of alleged corruption and inequality in the country.

Protester and media analyst Altin Tufa said several factors fuelled the demonstrations, but the alleged clearing of land for the project in a protected coastal area was the "last straw, unleashing people's discontent and anger".

"It is the indifference, arrogance

and failure of the entire political class to listen to people's concerns about economic, political, social and healthcare issues," Tufa said as he marched with protesters.

The European Union's delegation in Tirana strongly condemned yesterday's "violent escalation".

"We call on protesters to exercise restraint and to refrain from any acts of violence," it said in a statement.

The EU had also previously urged prompt investigation into allegations of excessive police force.

Police said 65 people were arrested during Wednesday's protests, suspected of "attacking police officers, institutions, public and private property".

A total of 71 police officers had been injured in the unrest, some seriously, police chief Skender Hita told reporters on Thursday.

He urged the demonstrators to "immediately distance themselves from masked and violent individuals", pledging that police will not back down.

The health ministry said that hospitals in Tirana treated 89 people on Wednesday, including 61 police officers.

Four officers and two protesters remained hospitalised, with one officer in intensive care, according to the authorities.

– AFP

Brazil's Congress approves shorter workweek, a Lula pledge ahead of runoff



Supporters of Brazil's leftist President and presidential candidate Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva light red flares during a campaign rally on the Esplanada dos Ministérios in Brasília on Tuesday, ahead of the October 25 presidential runoff. – AFP

BRASÍLIA – Brazil's Senate approved a shorter workweek on Wednesday, a pledge President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva is counting on to close the gap with his rival ahead of next week's election runoff.

The measure, which the government had been pushing for months, provides for two paid days off a week instead of the current one and reduces the maximum workweek from 44 to 40 hours.

The bill targets working-class Brazilians, who have historically formed leftist Lula's electoral base. Millions of Brazilians currently work six days a week, a schedule known as "6x1."

The reduction will be phased in over the next 14 months.

The vote completes the legislative process for the measure, which had already been approved by the Chamber of Deputies.

The constitutional reform passed the Senate with 75 votes in favor and just one against.

"I'm certain this is the biggest gain for Brazilian workers since the 1988 Constitution," said Omar Aziz, the senator overseeing the bill.

After the vote, a group of

senators chanted in support of Lula.

Passage of the measure was one of the demands at recent mass demonstrations in support of Lula's re-election bid against the son of far-right former president Jair Bolsonaro.

Senator Flávio Bolsonaro, who had called the proposal "opportunistic," ultimately voted in favour.

"I'm travelling around Brazil. Most Brazilian workers want an end to the 6x1 schedule, so I'm going to vote to end it," he said on Tuesday.

Brazil's conservative bloc had advocated for an alternative proposal that would allow employees to negotiate their weekly working hours directly with their employers.

'Electoral opportunism'

Lula hailed the victory as a "breakthrough" that "will never be undone".

"It is a movement that began in the streets and stems from the long-standing aspirations of the working class," said the president, a former trade union leader, in a video posted online.

The 80-year-old politician seized on Bolsonaro's change of heart on the measure to direct

criticism back on his rival.

"It's important to bear in mind that our opponents decided yesterday that they would vote in favour," the president said in a video posted online shortly before the measure passed.

"They want to vote out of electoral opportunism."

Lula lost the October 4 first round with 45 percent of the vote to Bolsonaro's 47 percent.

The October 25 runoff is shaping up to be just as tight.

Pollster Quaest put Bolsonaro at 46 percent and Lula at 44 percent in a poll released on Wednesday, a statistical tie within the margin of error of two percentage points.

Senator Veneziano Vital do Rego warned that the success of the bill depending on the election winner.

"This proposal will only remain relevant next year if we have a government truly committed to progress and social causes," he said during the vote.

While Lula has made improved working conditions a key plank of his campaign, Bolsonaro has proposed a plan to cut public spending, inspired by Argentine President Javier Milei. – AFP

'Can't sleep': Spain's housing crunch upends lives

Daniel Silva

MADRID – At 38, Nadinne Fillol has a job, a partner and hopes of having children.

Yet Spain's housing crisis has left her sharing a flat in Madrid with three other people – and doubting whether she will ever be able to afford a home of her own to start a family.

"There's no realistic way for me to have a home and give them even a minimally good life. It simply isn't possible," Fillol, who works as a comedian, told AFP from her room in the flat in central Madrid.

She would like to set up home with her boyfriend, who lives in the eastern city of Valencia, but the couple says apartment prices are out of their reach.

Across Spain, soaring rents and a shortage of affordable homes are forcing people to delay starting families, putting pressure on households with children and leaving young people struggling to set up on their own.

The crisis has become a major political issue following the recent eviction of 87-year-old Maricarmen Abascal from her lifelong home and her subsequent death, which fuelled nationwide protests.

Hundreds of tents have occupied Madrid's central Puerta del Sol square since she was taken away on a stretcher last month after the real estate company that owned her flat drastically hiked the rent.

Socialist Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez called an early election for November 29 after his minority government failed to pass housing measures prompted by the protests.

'Infuriating'

"It's infuriating," said Fillol, who has slept at the protest camp, fighting back tears as she discussed the legislative defeat.

Damp patches and water damage mark the hallway ceiling of her flat, and the windows do not shut properly.

Fillol said her landlord refused to make repairs, telling her and the other tenants they would struggle to find affordable alternatives.

She earns nearly 2,000 euros (US\$2,200) a month before taxes, just below Spain's average gross monthly salary of around 2,460 euros.

Fillol pays 350 euros a month for a room barely big enough for a bed and a computer desk, allowing her to save towards a deposit on her own home.

But the deposit she needs keeps rising faster than she can save.

"It delays every major life milestone," she said.

'What's going to happen?'

Homeownership has long been the norm in Spain, where around three-quarters of households own their properties.

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

Renting a 50-square-metre apartment in Madrid cost an average of 1,170 euros a month in September – around half the average gross monthly salary.

For Manuel Navarro, 32, who earns around 800 euros a month doing odd jobs, renting on the open market is out of reach.

He lives with his wife and their three children, aged four, seven and eight, in a flat belonging to the Madrid regional government's social housing agency that they occupy without authorisation.

Authorities are seeking to evict the family.

"There are days when I can't sleep," Navarro told AFP at his flat, where a battered pram containing two well-worn dolls stood by the entrance.

"In front of my little ones, I try to lead a normal life, but when night comes I start thinking, 'My God, what's going to happen? What am I going to do with my children? Where am I going to go?'"

'Really hard'

Landlords complain that evicting tenants who stop paying rent can take months, leaving them to cover mortgage payments and other costs, and that changing rules on renting create legal uncertainty.

The Bank of Spain estimates the country faces a housing shortage of 700,000 homes.

Rising immigration and the growth of short-term tourist rentals have added to demand, while bureaucracy and labour shortages are slowing construction.

"There's hardly anything available," said Laura Alonso, 26, who scrambled to find a new home with her partner in August after their landlord gave them notice.

"It was a really hard time," she said, fearing she would have to move back in with her parents, into her childhood bedroom.

"As soon as a flat comes onto the market, 50 people are phoning," she told AFP at the couple's new flat in suburban Madrid, where boxes lay unpacked. – AFP

Spanish prosecutors back abuse probe into Julio Iglesias: sources

Madrid, Spain

MADRID – A possible investigation into veteran crooner Julio Iglesias for alleged abuse of two women ex-employees is a step closer after prosecutors said Spain could judge the case, legal sources said yesterday.

The women, a domestic worker and a physiotherapist, allege they suffered sexual abuse and forced labour while working at the Spanish singer's properties in the Dominican Republic and the Bahamas in 2021.

Iglesias, 83, a Grammy winner with more than 300 million records sold in a career spanning decades, has rejected the

accusations, saying he has never "abused, coerced or disrespected any woman".

Prosecutors shelved a first complaint in January, saying Spanish courts had no jurisdiction over events that allegedly happened in the Caribbean countries, which were "fully competent" to investigate.

But sources from the public prosecutor's office said its staff had submitted a report concluding that a second complaint filed in September could be handled by Madrid's Audiencia Nacional court.

The court, which specialises in complex cases and crimes committed by Spaniards abroad,

will now have to decide whether to begin an investigation.

The prosecution sources did not explain the reasons for the change of opinion.

Women's Link Worldwide, an advocacy group that represents the complainants, has said Spanish courts have jurisdiction in the case because of a law that "makes it possible to investigate and prosecute offences committed outside the country when relevant links with Spain exist".

Iglesias, who has sold more records worldwide than any other Latino artist, is the father of fellow superstar singer Enrique Iglesias.

– AFP



Manuel Navarro, 32, poses in the apartment he lives in with his wife and their three children while threatened with eviction, in Madrid last Wednesday. – AFP

Infantino offers apology but 'no answers' at FIFA meeting over World Cup plan

FIFA ZURICH — FIFA president Gianni Infantino gave “no satisfactory answers” when grilled yesterday during a meeting to discuss his attempts to sell stakes in the World Cup to private investors, senior members of football’s global governing body said, but he did offer an apology for the failed project.

“We asked a great many critical questions, but there were no satisfactory answers from my point of view,” said Bernd Neuendorf, the head of the German Football Association (DFB), who is also a member of the FIFA Council.

Neuendorf was speaking after the Council met behind closed doors at the body’s Zurich headquarters, where Infantino’s FIFA Forward Enterprise (FFE) proposal was one of the main topics on the agenda.

Infantino has been under severe pressure since his announcement in late July that he wanted to open FIFA’s premium competitions such as the World Cup to private investors.

That plan was ultimately abandoned in the face of widespread criticism, with a rebellion led by European governing body UEFA, the Asian Football Confederation (AFC) and CONCACAF, which runs the sport in North and Central America and the Caribbean.

“I think we had the opportunity to say what we felt, and we spoke a lot about the issues,” Debbie Hewitt, the chair of the English Football Association who is also a FIFA vice-president, told reporters, before adding that Infantino had said sorry.

“I think it is fair to say Gianni apologised at the beginning for what had happened, and he said that with some contrition, and then there were no holds barred in terms of what we felt about what happened.”

Hewitt and Neuendorf are among the 36 members of the FIFA Council, along with Infantino.

A statement issued by FIFA after the meeting said Infantino had apologised for “the mistakes made in terms of how the project was conducted and communicated”.

The FIFA chief also pledged that the FFE initiative “has been permanently withdrawn and will not reappear in any form”, the statement said.

Infantino has headed FIFA since 2016 and is running for re-election next March, despite calls for him to stand

down in the wake of the FFE plan.

For the moment, no heavyweight candidate has put themselves forward to run against him.

“We were asked to submit our questions” in relation to the plan which was not put to the FIFA Council before the July announcement,” Hewitt said.

“One of the disappointing things was we didn’t get answers. We didn’t get answers to anything we had specifically requested, for example getting the papers from FFE, and so we asked the question why and why not.”

‘Nothing has shifted’

Many leading European national associations have withdrawn their support for Infantino in the upcoming election because of the uproar caused by FFE and other controversies, including his relationship with US president Donald Trump.

Chief among those were Infantino’s decision to create a FIFA Peace Prize and award it to Trump at last December’s World Cup draw, and the decision to suspend a ban for United States striker Folarin Balogun following a red card during the World Cup after Trump intervened directly by phoning Infantino.

“I speak for myself as a Council member - from my position nothing has shifted,” Hewitt added. “I have no new information that makes me feel any differently to how I felt when I went in, other than we do have a president of FIFA who is apologetic about what has happened, and secondly a promise again that we will get the information that we have requested.”

FIFA confirmed its intention to set up a US\$6.35-billion development fund for the next four years, a plan which is expected to be finalised by the Council at its next meeting in December.

To finance the fund, which would allow money to be distributed to FIFA’s 211 federations as well as to the regional confederations, it would draw in part on its financial reserves after a commercially successful 2026 World Cup.

The plan would allow for the payment of US\$25 million to all 211 member federations.

Infantino may hope the latest plan reinforces his position ahead of the election.

The deadline for submitting candidacies is November 18. —AFP

Italian football suffers new blow with Champions League misery

Jérôme Rasetti



ROME — Still reeling from the national team’s failure to qualify for a third consecutive World Cup, Italian football hit a new low this week when for the first time all four Serie A teams competing in the Champions League suffered defeats.

Roma collapsed against Real Madrid at the Stadio Olimpico, conceding three goals in the final seven minutes to lose 4-3 on Wednesday.

“We went from a moment of great euphoria to deep disappointment,” bemoaned Roma coach Gian Piero Gasperini.

In their first Champions League home match since 2018, Roma let a famous win slip from their grasp despite leading 3-1.

Inter Milan, runners-up in 2023 and 2025, fell to the most surprising loss for the Italian quartet, stunned by a hat-trick from Italian-German sensation Nicolò Trevisani in a 4-3 defeat by Club Brugge at the San Siro.

In their first-ever Champions League away match, ambitious Como took an early lead in Rotterdam only to ultimately go down 3-2 to Feyenoord.

A similar fate befell Napoli, who scored first at Villarreal before losing their footing in Spain and being beaten 3-1.

With the exception of Inter, every Serie A team led at some point, yet none managed to hold onto their advantage.

Defending narrow leads was long considered a hallmark of Italian clubs, who have won 12 European Cups and reached 30 finals between them.

Seven-time champions AC Milan and two-time winners Juventus failed to qualify for the competition this season.

‘Forgotten how to defend’

“Have they forgotten how to defend in Italian football?” asked former Milan and Real Madrid coach Fabio Capello.

With the notable exception of 15-time European champions Real Madrid, the Serie A teams’ conquerors on matchday two of the league phase were relatively modest opposition.

“Knowing how to defend has almost become something to be



AS Roma's Dutch forward Donyell Malen reacts after being defeated during the UEFA Champions League – 1st round day 2 football match against Real Madrid at the Olympic Stadium in Rome on Wednesday. — AFP

ashamed of,” said Napoli coach Massimiliano Allegri.

“In the Champions League, opponents make very few mistakes. You have to be patient and stay focused on the ball. All these goals conceded clearly show that much greater attention is required defensively.”

The recent European record of reigning Italian champions Inter has been disastrous, losing seven of their last eight Champions League matches.

Debate regarding the standard of the Italian top flight has reignited.

Serie A clubs spent heavily in the close season, but their financial might is still dwarfed by that of England’s Premier League giants and Champions League holders Paris Saint-Germain.

Compared to the golden days of the 1990s, when Italian clubs regularly broke the world-record transfer fee, the country struggles to attract the best players from abroad.

None of the four Serie A sides who competed in the Champions League last season, Inter Milan, Napoli, Juventus and Atalanta, made it past the last 16.

That was the fourth time in six seasons Italy was not represented in the quarter-finals, after a run of having at least one team in the last eight in 15 of the previous 18 years.

The national team failed to reach the World Cup earlier this

year, losing a qualifying play-off to Bosnia and Herzegovina as the four-time world champions missed out for a third straight edition.

The Azzurri have not even played a World Cup knockout match since beating France in the 2006 final on penalties.

Since the return of Roberto Mancini as coach in August, Italy have shown signs of a resurgence, holding France to a 1-1 draw at the Stade de France on October 2 and posting two Nations League wins over Turkey.

But in the Champions League, the four Italian clubs have mustered just four points - three for Cesc Fabregas’s Como and one for Roma - and are languishing towards the bottom of the standings.

Real Madrid coach Jose Mourinho, however, does not share the prevailing Italian pessimism, despite leading his side to wins over his former club Inter and Roma in recent weeks.

“Both Inter and Roma are truly at a very high level,” insisted Mourinho, the last coach to win the European Cup for a Serie A team with Inter in 2010.

Inter, Roma, Napoli and Como all have winnable home Champions League matches as they look to bounce back next week, against Shakhtar Donetsk, Slovan Bratislava, Bodo/Glimt and a floundering Manchester United respectively. — AFP

Martinez blames ‘anger’ for dig at Man Utd hierarchy



MANCHESTER — Manchester United defender Lisandro Martinez said “anger and frustration” at defeat to Atletico Madrid led to his swipe at the club’s board for a lack of investment in the transfer market.

The English giants lost 2-0 in Spain on Tuesday in the Champions League. They are also off to their worst start to a Premier League season for 40 years.

Martinez took aim at technical

director Jason Wilcox, saying he “100 percent” expected more investment in the squad during the transfer window after United finished third in the Premier League last season to return to Europe’s top competition.

United signed three midfielders — Carlos Baleba, Youri Tielemans and Andrey Santos - for around £150 million (US\$198 million), but their spending fell far short of some of their Premier League rivals.

“After the match, I spoke out of anger and frustration at not getting the result we all wanted,” Martinez posted on social media.

The Argentine international’s comments were backed by some fans, but Martinez has been criticised for his own part in United’s poor start to the season.

He scored an own goal in a 1-1 draw at bottom-of-the-table Fulham last month and was outmuscled by Dominic Solanke as 10-man

Tottenham salvaged a point at Old Trafford last weekend.

“When I talk about wanting more, I’m talking about the ambition we must all have as part of this club. To keep growing, to become stronger and to have everything we need to compete at the highest level.

“These are standards we must all hold ourselves to, starting with me.

“I believe in my team-mates, our manager and everyone working

to help this club move forward. I’m convinced that the way forward is to keep working together, with ambition and commitment.”

The pressure is rising on United boss Michael Carrick just months after he was handed the job on a permanent basis.

Carrick’s men travel to historic rivals Leeds on Sunday before another Champions League trip, to Italian side Como, on Wednesday.

— AFP

Zverev cruises past De Minaur to reach Shanghai semis

Tennis

SHANGHAI — Top seed Alexander Zverev took “a huge step up” to dismantle Alex de Minaur 6-4, 6-4 yesterday and roll into the Shanghai Masters semi-finals.

He will play Alejandro Davidovich Fokina, who advanced when France’s Arthur Gea retired injured from their quarter-final after 22 minutes.

Zverev, who will end the year at world number one, was tested by the Australian’s speed in the first set but sent down a string of dazzling forehands to convert a break point in the fifth game.

Despite a double-fault the German saved three break points in a row to hold serve and was rewarded in the 10th game, taking the first set with a buttery backhand at the net.

Zverev refused to relent in the second set, setting up another break point in the seventh game to go up 4-3 when De Minaur served into the net.

The 27-year-old Australian clung on for a bit longer but Zverev wasn’t sticking around, clinching victory on the first match point.

“Good match for me,” Zverev, 29, said.



Germany’s Alexander Zverev hits a return to Australia’s Alex de Minaur during their singles quarter-final match at the Shanghai Masters tennis tournament in Shanghai yesterday. — AFP

“Very satisfied with my level... it was a huge step up from the last couple matches.”

Zverev needed three sets to win his two previous matches.

France’s Gea was in the biggest match of his career when he quit his quarter-final with muscle issues.

The 21-year-old took a medical timeout for work on his lower right side when he was down 1-4 in the first set.

He returned to play but ended the match minutes later.

“I felt this morning, during a warm-up, pain in the psoas,” he said, referring to a muscle in the lower back.

He said he received “treatments” and decided to step on court despite being unsure about his fitness.

“I tried from the beginning, but it was not enough to play full and too dangerous for the end of the season.

“I’m really sad, but it’s the best choice I could do,” said 56th-ranked Gea, who was playing in his first tournament at the prestigious ATP 1000 level. — AFP

Swiatek avoids seed exodus to breeze into Wuhan last 8

Tennis

WUHAN — Iga Swiatek hit a new milestone yesterday as she stormed into a second consecutive Wuhan Open quarter-final with a 6-1, 6-4 win over American lucky loser Ashlyn Krueger.

The six-time Grand Slam champion recorded the 150th WTA 1000 victory of her career to continue her march towards a 13th title at this level.

Since the Tier I/WTA 1000 format’s introduction in 1990, Swiatek is just the third player to claim 150 wins from her first 50 main-draw appearances in such events, after Martina Hingis (162) and Serena Williams (153).

“I just wanted to focus on adjusting and being brave and, at the end, I’m happy that I was,” said the seventh-seeded Swiatek, who needs a title this week to strengthen her chances of qualifying for next month’s WTA Finals in Indian Wells.

“For sure I feel like I am playing better than at the beginning of the season, so I’m ready to push and I’m happy to be in the quarters for sure.”

The 25-year-old Pole, who awaits Ann Li in the quarter-finals, is one of just two top-10 seeds still

standing in a draw that has witnessed a slew of high-profile exits.

A day after the shocking departures of the top two seeds, Aryna Sabalenka and Jessica Pegula, sixth-seeded Karolina Muchova and 10th-seeded Iva Jovic also bid Wuhan farewell.

Maja Chwalinska, a finalist at the French Open this year, enjoyed a 6-4, 6-1 triumph over American world number 11 Jovic to set up a quarter-final with Greece’s Maria Sakkari.

Diana Shnaider’s 7-5, 6-3 victory against Muchova was the Russian’s fourth career triumph over a top-10 opponent.

The 22-year-old will next take on Jelena Ostapenko for a place in the final four.

British world number 170 Sonay Kartal sent another seed packing after knocking out ninth-seeded Belinda Bencic in the second round.

This time she delivered a crushing 6-2, 6-0 blow to last year’s Wuhan semi-finalist Jasmine Paolini, the number 15 seed.

World number six Elina Svitolina avoided the seed exodus as she eased into the quarter-finals by ending the inspired run of Chinese wild card Guo Hanyu 6-1, 6-4.

She plays Kartal next. — AFP

Dutch authorities say Russian gymnasts visa refusal unrelated to performance

Gymnastics

THE HAGUE — The Netherlands’ refusal to issue visas to three Russian gymnasts due to take part in the world championships in Rotterdam is unrelated to sporting performance, Dutch authorities said yesterday.

A spokesperson for the ministry of health, welfare and sport told AFP that the country’s position is to allow Russian athletes to “take part in sporting events (only) under a neutral banner”, but “that it is possible that, in certain specific cases, a visa may not be issued”.

“The Netherlands examines each application carefully, in accordance with the European Union Visa Code. This code stipulates that a visa may be refused if the applicant is considered a threat to public order, internal security or the international relations of any of the Member States,” the statement said.

The spokesperson added that “sporting performance is in no way taken into account in this assessment”.

The three athletes, listed by the Russian federation as reigning champion Angelina Melnikova, Viktoria Listunova and Anna Kalmykova, are set to miss out on the October 17-25 world artistic gymnastics championships.

The Russian Gymnastics Federation slammed the decision on Tuesday as “discrimination” and a “violation” of the principles of equal competition, accusing the Dutch authorities of deliberately trying to keep the “strongest gymnasts” out of the championships.

It said it would appeal the decision to the World Gymnastics governing body and the International Olympic Committee (IOC).

World Gymnastics, for their part, said in a press release on Wednesday that the “issuance of visas to all participants is a process determined solely by the Dutch authorities”.

In August, Melnikova — who won the world all-around and vault titles last year in Jakarta — was initially denied a visa to compete at the European Championships in Croatia.

The decision was reversed on appeal and she went on to win the all-around gold medal.

The latest visa refusal comes as Russia ups its push to be brought back into the world of sport, following years of restrictions after launching the war on Ukraine in 2022, and the uncovering of state-sponsored doping at the 2014 Winter Olympics in the southern Russian city of Sochi.

In May, World Gymnastics lifted restrictions imposed on Russians, allowing them to return to competition under their own flag and with their anthem rather than appearing as neutrals.

The stipulations that they should not have actively supported the war in Ukraine nor been under contract with the army or security service were furthermore dropped.

The IOC then in July also eased restrictions on Russian athletes, opening a pathway for them to compete in qualifying events for the 2028 Los Angeles Olympics. — AFP



Gold medalists Great Britain (centre), silver medalists Italy (left) and bronze medalists Germany celebrate on the podium after the women’s team pursuit during the 2026 UCI Track World Championships at the Shanghai Velodrome in Shanghai yesterday. — AFP

Paris 2024 officials praise Budapest’s 2036 Olympic hosting potential

BUDAPEST — Budapest has strong credentials to host the 2036 Summer Olympics, thanks to its experience staging major international sporting events, existing infrastructure and sporting culture, senior Paris 2024 officials said yesterday.

Sophie Lorant, international director of the Paris 2024 organizing committee, made the remarks to Hungarian public broadcaster M4 Sport during a visit to Budapest with the committee’s CEO, Etienne Thobois.

The two officials were invited by the Hungarian Olympic Committee to share their experience of organizing the Paris Games.

“Budapest has many strengths. It has organized numerous top sporting competitions, Hungarians love sport, and much of its sports

infrastructure sits along the Danube, similar to Paris,” Lorant said.

Budapest has staged several major international events, including the 2017 and 2022 World Aquatics Championships and the 2023 World Athletics Championships, but has never hosted the Olympics.

A survey released last week by Hungarian pollster Median found that nearly two-thirds of Hungarians supported a potential Budapest bid for the 2036 Games.

The visiting officials emphasized that hosting the Olympics should deliver lasting benefits for local communities rather than simply provide a showcase for elite sport.

“The Olympics cannot fix all urban problems, but properly defined goals can greatly boost a city’s long-

term development,” Thobois said.

He pointed to Paris 2024’s sustainability initiatives, including efforts to halve the Games’ carbon footprint, convert the Olympic Village into housing and improve public and sporting facilities.

Thobois also stressed the importance of securing support from stakeholders and maintaining public enthusiasm throughout preparations that can stretch over a decade.

Hungary is among seven countries to have expressed interest in hosting the 2036 Summer Olympics and Paralympics, alongside India, Qatar, South Africa, South Korea, Germany and Türkiye.

The International Olympic Committee is expected to select the 2036 host at its Session in 2029.

— Xinhua

UK prosecutor tells jury Russell Brand a ‘sexual predator’

Anna Malpas

LONDON – English comedian Russell Brand was a “sexual predator” who was “ruthless, calculated and manipulative” when targeting women for sex, a British prosecutor told a UK jury on Wednesday at the start of his rape and sexual assault trial.

The one-time left-wing personality, who shot to fame as a television and radio presenter, faces seven sexual offence charges involving six women. He denies all the allegations.

Prosecutor Riel Karmy-Jones said the alleged offences took place between 1999 and 2009, when Brand’s career was beginning to flourish.

Addressing the jury, she gave graphic details of accusations by women, saying the youngest was 21 at the time of the alleged offences.

They came forward to police after seeing media coverage about Brand in 2023 and after he was initially charged in 2025, the court heard.

Brand, now 51, was “not deterred” when some of the women said no, she said, adding his desire for sex was “indiscriminate and voracious”.

He used charm and comic talents when he wanted something but would then be “demanding and entitled... childlike in his expectation that his every desire should be met,”



British comedian and actor Russell Brand arrives for the start of his trial at Southwark Crown Court in south London on Monday, after pleading not guilty to three charges of rape, indecent assault, and three counts of sexual assault. – AFP

Karmy-Jones told the jury of eight men and four women.

Bragging

“He was ruthless, calculated and manipulative, and the prosecution say – a sexual predator,” she added.

Brand, dressed in a dark suit, black-and-white striped shirt and long white tie, arrived at London’s Southwark Crown Court in a black van accompanied by his wife Laura.

None of the women will be

identified in court. Brand gave police a prepared statement about each one, saying he did not remember the women and any sexual activity was consensual.

Brand’s acquaintance, Mark Pinheiro, a visual effects artist, testified on Wednesday that Brand said in 1999 he hoped “one day he would be able to have slept with over 5,000 girls”.

Brand “boasted all you need to do is tell the women what they want

to hear”, Pinheiro said.

Brand has in recent years reinvented himself as a conservative and faith-based guru for millions of social media followers.

He has pleaded not guilty to all seven of the charges – three counts of rape, three of sexual assault and one charge of indecent assault.

The first woman met Brand at a Labour Party conference in southern Bournemouth in 1999.

She invited him to her hotel room where he pushed her onto the bed before raping her without using a condom, the prosecutor said.

Pinheiro, who was performing with Brand in Bournemouth, testified the comedian had said he was “going out to get laid” and returned the next day, seeming “really flustered” and insisted on returning to London.

Brand later told him he “did get into an intimate scenario” and “said ‘I think I may have gone a little bit too far’,” Pinheiro said.

One woman said Brand in 2001 tried to drag her into a toilet cubicle at MTV’s office, but she resisted.

Another woman met Brand at a London bar in 2004 and said he grabbed her breasts and pulled her into a toilet cubicle, orally raping her, after telling her not to be a “spoilsport”.

One woman, who was then 21, said she had consensual oral and

then vaginal sex with Brand in 2009 at his house, but he then forced her into anal sex without her consent, the prosecutor said.

Massage

In the final charge, a woman employed by Channel 4 television said she was working with Brand in a recording studio in 2009, when members of his production team told her she must give him a massage and he pressed his face into her groin.

The trial, set to last weeks, is attracting intense media scrutiny, with numerous British outlets launching dedicated podcasts and US channels reporting from outside the court.

Born to working-class parents in Essex in eastern England, Brand launched a successful stand-up comedy career as a teenager.

He became a household name as a television presenter on MTV, Channel 4 and the BBC.

He then made a foray into Hollywood, starring in several hit films, and was in a brief but high-profile marriage to US pop star Katy Perry.

Now remarried and living in Florida with his young family, he has gained a new following as an influencer, with six million subscribers on YouTube, 10.1 million on X and 4.9 million on Instagram. – AFP

Apple unveils HomeView smart display in renewed home push

SAN FRANCISCO – Apple on Tuesday unveiled HomeView, a voice-driven smart display built around its revamped Siri AI assistant, as the iPhone maker makes a fresh bid for a place in living rooms and kitchens.

The device, which pairs a square seven-inch (17.78 cm) touchscreen with a speaker base, will sell for US\$299 in the United States starting November 13.

Apple has struggled for years to gain ground in the smart home, where its HomePod speakers have trailed Amazon’s Alexa and Google AI-amped devices.

Analysts see the new hardware as an effort to deepen customers’ ties to the Apple ecosystem as

AI rivals, including OpenAI, eye devices of their own.

The launch is one of the first under John Ternus, Apple’s former hardware engineering chief, who took over as chief executive from Tim Cook on September 1.

HomeView is meant to act as a family command centre, controlling connected features such as lights, locks, thermostats, and cameras.

It also handles FaceTime video calls, plays music and video and doubles as a digital picture frame when idle.

In addition, Apple has also formed partnerships with South Korea’s LG and France’s Schneider for door locks and thermostats.

The release’s centrepiece is

Siri AI, the overhauled version of Apple’s assistant powered by Apple Intelligence, which the company is pitching as a more conversational helper than the original Siri.

Siri AI is central to Apple’s effort to catch up with rivals in generative AI, and it is built on AI technology from Google Gemini.

The company said that HomeView would not be sold in the European Union for the time being as the company finds ways to make Siri AI compliant with Europe’s competition rules.

Apple stated that it is working constructively with the EU to find a way for these products to enter the European market. – AFP



Britain’s Prince Harry, Duke of Sussex and his wife Meghan, Duchess of Sussex, arrive to visit the Community Recording Studio (CRS) in Nottingham, central England, yesterday. Set up in 1991, the Community Recording Studio, based in St Anns, teaches film and video skills as well as music, giving youngsters access to professional equipment and key industry contacts, and musicians. Prince Harry and Meghan yesterday carried out their first joint engagement since their surprise move back to the UK in August. Both quit royal duties in 2020 amid a bitter royal feud. – AFP

‘Sinners’ director Ryan Coogler to reboot ‘X-Files’ for Disney

PARIS – “Sinners” director Ryan Coogler is set to make a new series of “The X-Files”, with British actor Himesh Patel and US actress Danielle Deadwyler playing agents Scully and Mulder, Disney announced on Wednesday.

Created by US TV and film producer and screenwriter Chris Carter, the original nine seasons of the show between 1993 and 2002 were a worldwide success with critics and audiences, winning numerous Emmy and Golden Globe awards.

Two follow-up seasons hit screens in 2016-2018.

The US filmmaker, known for “Creed”, the “Black Panther” films and the multi-Oscar winner “Sinners”, wrote, directed and produced a pilot for a new “X-Files” series which has been bought by Disney for its Disney+ streaming platform.

“What Chris Carter created is special, and we wanted to honour everything that made the original series connect with so many people while also finding our own way

into that world,” Coogler said in a statement provided by Disney.

Carter’s original X-Files starred Gillian Anderson and David Duchovny as FBI Special Agents Dana Scully and Fox Mulder who investigate mysterious cases blamed on paranormal phenomena.

The lead duo have been replaced by Himesh Patel, who appeared in Christopher Nolan’s blockbuster “The Odyssey” this summer, and Danielle Deadwyler who is set to appear in an upcoming adaptation of “The Bell Jar”. – AFP

World Weather

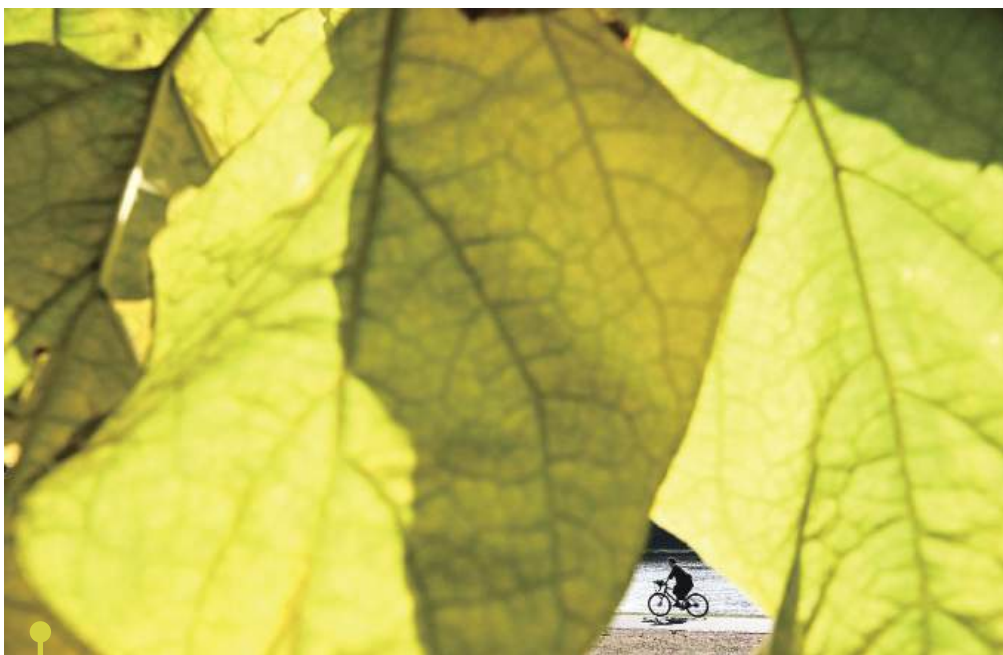
CHINA	ASIA-PACIFIC	WORLD	LUSOPHONE
Beijing 13°C~21°C	Manila 23°C~33°C	New York 13°C~25°C	Lisbon 17°C~29°C
Shanghai 20°C~26°C	Bangkok 25°C~34°C	London 6°C~16°C	Rio de Janeiro 22°C~28°C
Hong Kong 24°C~29°C	Tokyo 16°C~25°C	Frankfurt 11°C~19°C	Luanda 23°C~26°C
Taipei 24°C~31°C	Singapore 25°C~33°C	Vancouver 12°C~19°C	Maputo 19°C~34°C
Guangzhou 21°C~32°C	Kuala Lumpur 23°C~34°C	Paris 8°C~21°C	Dili 21°C~33°C
Nanjing 19°C~25°C	Jakarta 24°C~36°C	Moscow 6°C~15°C	São Tomé 25°C~32°C
Guilin 22°C~32°C	Seoul 11°C~24°C	Las Vegas 15°C~28°C	Praia 23°C~31°C
Xi'an 15°C~24°C	Sydney 15°C~20°C	Monte Carlo 17°C~23°C	Bissau 23°C~32°C



Save the environment

This aerial photograph shows a tree-cleared strip running through the forest during the controversial construction of the A412 motorway near Allinges, Haute-Savoie, France, on Wednesday.

— AFP



Late autumn

A person rides a bicycle behind the autumn leaves on the Main river embankment in Frankfurt am Main, western Germany, on Wednesday, as air temperatures reached 15 degrees Celsius.

— AFP



Feast for all

An aerial drone photo taken yesterday shows a view of a long-table banquet held for the elderly in Yanggang Village of Lanxi, Zhejiang Province. Funded by kind-hearted people, the banquet held yesterday was attended by more than 500 people aged 60 and above to mark the upcoming Double Ninth Festival. Celebrated on the ninth day of the ninth lunar month, it is an occasion to care for and send blessings to older people in China.

— Xinhua

Using all available space

A drone photo taken yesterday shows an autumn view of Longji terraced fields in Longsheng County of Guilin City, Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region.

— Xinhua

Nutrition needed

A Macaque monkey drinks milk from a baby bottle taken from a pedestrian climbing the steps towards Batu Caves Temple as haze shrouds Kuala Lumpur yesterday.

— AFP



Blue crew

Performers parade on the red carpet during the premiere of Amazon MGM Studio's "Ali G: Who Iz I?" at the Hollywood American Legion Post 43 in Los Angeles on Wednesday.

— AFP

