THE 澳門郵報 Macau POST DAILY

DIRECTOR: Harald Brüning | YEAR 22 | NO.5418 | WEDNESDAY October 28, 2026 | https://www.macaupostdaily.com | MOP 6.00

Sam hopes conference drives Chinese newspaper growth

Armindo Neves

Chief Executive Sam Hou Fai said yesterday in his address at the annual conference of the Chinese Language Press Institute (CLPI)* he hopes that the event will drive the growth of Chinese-language newspapers.

The 2026 Annual Conference in Macau is themed: "How Chinese-language newspapers can expand their influence amidst momentous changes in the world unseen in a century?".

The four-day conference, held in collaboration with the Macau Media Workers Association, colloquially known in Cantonese as "kei hip" and *Macao Daily News*, started with a dinner at Banyan Tree Macau hotel in Cotai on Monday, while its official opening ceremony was held yesterday.

Macao Daily News is the city's top-selling Chinese-language newspaper.

The ceremony was also attended by Secretary for Social Affairs and Culture Wallis O Lam; Bai Bing, deputy director of the Department of Publicity and Culture of the Liaison Office of the Central People's Government in the Macao Special Administrative Region (MSAR), Macao Foundation (FM) President Wu Zhiliang, Cultural Affairs Bureau (IC) and Sports Bureau (ID) President Deland Leong Wai Man Government Information Bureau (GCS) Director Louie Wong Lok I and other officials and representatives.

Macao SAR Chief Executive Sam Hou Fai (left) and Macao Daily News Director-cum-Macau Media Workers Association (Kei Hip) Chairman Lok Po address yesterday's opening ceremony of the Chinese Language Press Institute's (CLPI) annual conference at Banyan Tree Macau hotel at Galaxy Macau in Cotai.

– Photos: MPDG

According to Sam, the CLPI has deep ties with Macau, having held its annual conferences in the city twice before, in 1996 and 2006. Its return after a 20-year gap is of great significance for promoting the development of the industry and for publicising Macau, he noted.

He emphasised that since its return to the motherland in 1999, Macau has achieved remarkable development, safeguards press and publication freedom in accordance with the law, and actively supports the healthy development of the media sector. At present, Macau is aligning itself with the national 15th Five-Year Plan, advancing its own 3rd Five-Year Plan, and accelerating the appropriate diversification of its economy and Macau–Hengqin integration, he added.

Sam expressed his hope that the conference participants would explore the city further, help publicise Macau, and fully leverage the media's role in telling Macau's story well and amplifying China's voice.

In his speech, *Macao Daily News* Director-cum-Kei Hip Chairman Lok Po reviewed the evolution of Chinese-language newspaper industry, noting that artificial intelligence is profoundly reshaping the media and communications landscape.

The Chinese-language press faces both challenges and opportunities, Lok said, expressing hope that delegates at the conference would explore these issues alongside industry peers to open up new horizons for the sector.

According to GCS data released early this year, Macau's media landscape included 13 Chinese-language dailies and 18 Chinese-language weeklies at that time. ■

** The Chinese Language Press Institute (CLPI – 世界中文報業協會) is an international organisation connecting Chinese-language newspaper industries worldwide. It was founded in Hong Kong in 1968 and is one of the oldest and most representative global Chinese-language press organisations. Headquartered in Hong Kong, it has over 100 member organisations, covering more than 30 countries and regions globally. – Deepseek, MPDG*

Merchants visit the 22nd International Bicycles, Baby Strollers and Toys Fair in Pingxiang County, Hebei Province, yesterday. With more than 1,700 booths, the fair opened yesterday, attracting businesspeople from over 50 countries and regions.

– Xinhua

Lula turns 81, vows to work '24 hours a day'

BRASÍLIA – Brazilian President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva turned 81 yesterday, promising to work "24 hours a day" following his historic re-election for a fourth term.

Lula won Sunday's runoff against Flávio Bolsonaro with 51.8 percent of the vote to the right-wing senator's 48.2 percent.

He is one of the world's oldest leaders. US President Donald Trump, who turned 80 in June, is only a few months younger.

"I'm going to deliver the best term any president has ever served in the history of this country," the leftist leader said in a video posted on Instagram.

"I will dedicate 24 hours a day to making this country into the country everyone dreams of," he added.

Amid questions over his age, he boasted while campaigning that he was "fitter than ever", jogging during events and posting videos on social media of his gym workouts.

Following his shock first-round defeat to Flávio Bolsonaro, the son of jailed ex-leader Jair Bolsonaro, Lula's campaign had a social media makeover.

The president bought his first-ever cellphone and declared himself "king of the selfie."

In a speech after his dramatic victory on Sunday, he thanked the "rebellious youth" of Brazil for campaigning on his behalf. *– (More on pages 7 &12)* *– AFP*

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

Why the CPC puts people's well-being at the heart of self-governance

In Heilongjiang Province, eligible residents can receive certain forms of medical assistance and other support without submitting an application.

– Story on p. 7

'Cruel' jail conditions caused dozens of Nigerian miners to suffocate: probe

Poor jail conditions led to the deaths of more than 30 miners arrested on suspicion of illegal gold mining in central Nigeria last month, investigators said yesterday, describing their treatment as "cruel and inhuman". *– Story on p. 10*

UK man offered drugged wife to strangers online for sex: court

A British man who drugged and raped his then-wife over 13 years had advertised on sites like Craigslist and Grindr for strangers to have sex with her without her consent, a UK court heard yesterday. *– Story on p. 12*

Published by Macau Cultural Box Ltd. Printed by Welfare Printing Ltd. Head office: 39 Rua dos Mercadores, Centro Comercial Ou Chong, 5/F, A-B, Macau.
Tel.: 2833 1050 E-mail: macaupost@macau.ctm.net Fax: 2833 1104 GCS Registry Nº. 223 ISSN 1813-2898

Who Decides When Sport Is in Dispute?

Commentary byy Manuel Silvério

Independent Public Policy and Regional Development Analyst

(Former senior public official with international experience and a long-standing commitment to public policy and sports development)

Sport depends on trust in rules, selection, opportunities and the right to be heard when a decision is challenged. A sound system establishes the facts, hears the parties and resolves disputes independently and in time to make a difference.

The public consultation on amendments to the Administrative Procedure Code, running from October 9 to November 9, 2026, makes this reflection timely. Hearing interested parties, ensuring impartiality, coordinating public bodies and responding promptly to requests also matter to sport. A specialised mediation and arbitration institution would have its own remit, but could complement this effort to improve institutional processes.

Time matters too

Sanctions, eligibility, selection, association matters, contracts and decisions on funding and facilities can all give rise to disputes.

These matters fall within different frameworks, involving association rules, contracts or administrative law. Each case requires identification of the appropriate route for challenging a decision.

Macau has administrative and judicial remedies, the intervention of the Commission Against Corruption (CCAC) and internal procedures within sports organisations. The question is whether, together, they provide the expertise, accessibility and speed that sport requires.

A competition has a fixed date. Registration may close. An athlete's career is finite. Redress after the event matters, but it cannot always restore a lost opportunity.

The CCAC and administrative justice

The CCAC does not intervene only when corruption is suspected. It also performs ombudsman functions, examining complaints about unlawful, irregular or unfair administrative conduct.

Approaching the CCAC without alleging corruption is therefore not, in itself, an abuse of its role. An administrative complaint should not automatically be interpreted as a criminal accusation.

Its 2022 annual report provides an example: a complaint concerning the Macau Youth Tennis School led to the identification of gaps in oversight rules and the absence of recusal provisions for selecting team members.

A specialised response could complement this intervention while preserving the responsibilities of the CCAC and the courts.

Supporting and adjudicating are different functions

The public body responsible for sport provides support and funding, coordinates activities and exercises oversight. Sports associations organise competitions, develop their disciplines and make decisions affecting athletes and clubs.

The function of supporting, funding or participating in a decision is distinct from that of independently adjudicating a dispute.

A credible process protects both those challenging a decision and those who made it: it can correct errors or confirm compliance with the rules.

Independence must be reflected in appointment procedures, disclosure of interests, disqualification and challenge mechanisms, and freedom to decide without pressure.

Nearby experience and a local legal foundation

In December 2025, Hong Kong launched a pilot scheme for sports dispute resolution, administered by the Hong Kong Regional Arbitration Centre of the Asian-African Legal Consultative Organization (AALCO). Its platform began accepting applications on February 13, 2026.

The scheme prioritises mediation, followed by arbitration where necessary. It covers commercial and sporting disputes under its rules, with financial assistance for eligible cases.

The Chinese mainland has had a specific sports arbitration framework since 2023. The China Commission of Arbitration for Sport, established by the General Administration of Sport of China and publicly funded, brings together representatives of the sports sector and experts in sport and law. It hears certain disputes concerning sanctions, athlete registration and participation in competitions. Its rules expressly provide that arbitration must operate independently, without interference from administrative bodies, social organisations or individuals.

For Macau, this experience offers a useful reference for specialist expertise and independent adjudication, to be studied and adapted to the SAR's legal system, local scale and existing mechanisms for challenging decisions.

Law No. 19/2019, the Arbitration Law, and Administrative Regulation No. 36/2019, governing the establishment and operation of arbitration institutions, provide a basis for considering a specialised institution.

The legislation also permits arbitration of certain categories of administrative disputes. This does not mean that every public decision can be arbitrated: eligible matters, authority to agree to arbitration and the relationship with existing mechanisms must be clearly defined.

Mediation seeks an agreement. Arbitration produces a decision by an arbitral tribunal, provided the matter is arbitrable and there is a valid basis for referring it, such as an agreement between the parties.

A response for Macau

I propose studying the establishment of an Independent Centre for Sports Mediation and Arbitration, with its own rules and a structure proportionate to local needs.

Administrative support is essential, but adjudicating disputes requires specific expertise. The institution should bring together administrative, sporting and legal competence: knowledge of public procedures, an understanding of sports disciplines and the ability to uphold the law and the rights of the parties.

It should offer services in Portuguese and Chinese, affordable fees and urgent procedures that respect the right to be heard and to defend one's position. Anyone involved in the contested decision or with an interest in the case should be excluded from adjudicating it.

Initial guidance could help identify the appropriate route and deadlines, without mediation jeopardising other rights.

The institution should report on its work, response times and outcomes, while respecting applicable requirements concerning publication, confidentiality and data protection.

Local capacity could benefit from cooperation with experienced institutions, including the Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS), through training, exchanges and possible support for hearings. Such cooperation should reflect Macau's needs and its feasibility; it would not automatically confer jurisdiction over local disputes.

Harmony is built on trust

Macau values social harmony. In sport, harmony is built through respect, clear rules and confidence that everyone can be heard. Disagreement does not undermine that balance; leaving questions unanswered or confusing silence with consent can erode it.

Listening to an organisation, athlete or volunteer expressing dissatisfaction can help prevent disengagement and loss of trust. An independent institution could help resolve disputes, preserve relationships and prevent questions from being left unanswered.

It is in this spirit of cooperation, without targeting individuals or institutions, that I put forward this proposal.

Macau has invested heavily in infrastructure and major events. It is also worth investing in the trust of the people who bring sport to life.

Those who feel wronged should know where they can be heard. Decision-makers should be able to explain and substantiate their decisions. Both should trust the independence of those reviewing the dispute.

That is the trust a specialised institution could help build.

End

Fire call-outs rise 9.5 pct in Jan-Sept: Fire Services Bureau

Ida Cheong

The Fire Services Bureau (CB) announced at a press conference yesterday that 680 fire call-outs were recorded between January and September, marking an increase of 59 cases (9.5 percent) compared to the same nine-month period last year.

The press conference regarding the bureau's operational data for the first three quarters of this year was held at the CB headquarters in Nam Van.

According to official statistics, 547 of these incidents (80.44 percent of total fire call-outs) were handled in their initial stages without requiring hose pipes to extinguish the flames, Seong said.

According to Seong, unattended stoves, unattended open flames, burning of incense or joss paper, electrical short circuits, and mechanical or equipment failures accounted for 441 of the cases, representing 64.85 percent of all fire call-outs during the nine-month period.

CB senior officer Seong Wa pointed out that ambulance dispatch cases reached 35,895 between January and September this year, representing a 6.33 percent year-on-year increase (up by 2,137 cases), mainly involving dizziness, abdominal pain, shortness of breath, vomiting, fever, and various physical injuries.

In light of the figures, the bureau appealed to the public to use ambulance services prudently, ensuring that emergency medical resources remain available for those in critical need, Seong added.

Fire Services Bureau (CB) senior officer Seong Wa (centre) and other officers look on during a press conference about the bureau's operational data for Q1-Q3 of this year held at the CB headquarters in Nam Van. – Photo: Ida Cheong

The bureau continued its ongoing fire safety inspections across various premises, carrying out 7,595 inspections from January to September, Seong pointed out, adding that during inspections, officers issued verbal warnings or official notices to those responsible when non-fixed objects were found obstructing evacuation routes.

Seong noted that for repeat offenders or severe violations, administrative penalty procedures were initiated. Over the nine months, 102 administrative penalties were imposed, primarily involving motorcycles parked on or clutter being stored along evacuation routes, while an additional 37 penalty procedures are currently underway.

Under the relevant regulation for the supervision of dangerous goods, the bureau conducted 5,584 regulatory inspections between January and September 2026, Seong said, adding that a total of four administrative penalties were finalised during this period, all involving the storage of excessive quantities of Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG). ■

Macau Weather

CLOUDY APART FROM SUNNY PERIODS.
LIGHT RAIN AT FIRST.
FORCE 4 TO 5 EAST TO NORTHEASTERLY WINDS WITH GUSTS.
RELATIVE HUMIDITY WILL RANGE BETWEEN 60% AND 95%.

23ºC~28ºC

Source: SMG

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, Armindo 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

MacauPOST

Mónica Coteriano explores Macau's identity through monochrome photography, collage

Khalel Vallo

Local artist Mónica Coteriano presented "monochrome" last night, an installation combining black-and-white mobile photography and collage, at the Portuguese Bookshop (Livraria Portuguesa) in the city centre, reflecting on Macau's cultural identity, collective memory and connections with Portuguese-speaking communities.

According to the exhibition's information board, "monochrome" also considers Macau as a place of cultural exchange, where connections with Portuguese-speaking countries (PSCs) emerge through encounters, inherited histories and shared experiences rather than a single linear narrative.

According to the information board, Coteriano, who trained in contemporary dance in Lisbon, draws on photographs taken during her 12 years in Macau to explore how personal experiences and shared histories intersect through images, words and everyday fragments.

Speaking to the *Post*, Coteriano said that the exhibition developed from her interest in combining mobile photography with collage, a practice she had begun exploring some time ago. "I wanted to take out the colour, because Macau is very colourful, because of the lights, the neon lights and all of that," she noted, elaborating on her decision to present the photographs in black and white.

Coteriano said she wanted to explore how viewers would perceive Macau without its familiar colours, adding that she found the images beautiful and meaningful both with and without colour.

The installation also uses small photographs alongside boxes that display titles associated with the images' stories. Coteriano said she wanted the titles to become part of the overall objects rather than remain small captions beneath the photographs.

The project began last year, when Coteriano decided to bring together photographs she had taken over the years, focusing specifically on images of Macau. The creative process involved selecting from a large collection of photographs, developing titles and arranging the images into collages.

Coteriano also said the process also involved reading newspapers and encountering words or phrases that reminded her of particular photographs, as well as finding images that suggested ideas for the wider installation.

With free admission, the exhibition remains open to the public in the bookshop's basement until November 15, daily from 11:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. ■

Stay tuned for an upcoming Page 4

Local artist Mónica Coteriano poses with one of her exhibits during last night's "monochrome" exhibition at the Portuguese Bookshop in the city centre.
– Photo: Khalel Vallo

Mozambican singer Stewart Sukuma to join Macao Chinese Orchestra for Nov gig

Khalel Vallo

Mozambican singer Stewart Sukuma will perform with the Macao Chinese Orchestra (OM) on November 14 at the Macao Cultural Centre (CCM) in Nape, combining African rhythms with traditional Chinese instruments as part of the 8th Encounter in Macao – Arts and Cultural Festival between China and the Portuguese-speaking Countries (PSCs), according to a recent statement by the Cultural Affairs Bureau (IC).

Organised by the bureau, the "Stewart Sukuma Concert with the Macao Chinese Orchestra" will begin at 8:00 p.m. at CCM's Grand Auditorium, with tickets available through Enjoy Macao Ticketing *https://ticketing.enjoymacao.mo/en/programme/P-660208*, the statement said.

Sukuma is a figure in Mozambique's music scene, with a career spanning more than 40 years and performances across Africa, Europe and the Americas, the statement said, adding that his music is rooted in Marrabenta, a popular Mozambican musical style, and incorporates elements of Afropop, contemporary fusion and jazz.

For his first collaboration with the orchestra, Sukuma will perform alongside Music Director and Principal Conductor Zhang Lie, bringing together African rhythms and the sounds of traditional Chinese instruments, the statement noted.

The programme will also feature Sukuma performing with the Nkhuvu Band, showcasing the timbila, a traditional Mozambican percussion instrument inscribed on UNESCO's Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity, the statement underlined.

Banda Nkhuvu is an 8-piece Afropop and jazz band from Mozambique that frequently performs and collaborates with Sukuma.

This poster provided by the Cultural Affairs Bureau (IC) last week promotes next month's "Stewart Sukuma Concert with the Macao Chinese Orchestra".

Made from resonant wood and gourd resonators sealed with beeswax for tuning, the timbila produces distinctive sounds and complex rhythmic patterns, the statement noted, adding that Sukuma will also perform pieces with the band using percussion instruments and the mbira, a traditional instrument played with the thumbs.

The concert is one of the highlights of the Macao Chinese Orchestra's 2026–27 concert season, according to the statement. The statement added that its collaborations with musicians from different cultural backgrounds aim to broaden the artistic possibilities of Chinese music and bring new vitality to traditional instruments through intercultural exchange.

Ticket holders for the concert will also be eligible for special offers on selected activities under the festival. Further information is available at the Cultural Affairs Bureau website, www.icm.gov.mo/FCP, and the Macao Chinese Orchestra website www.ochm-macau.org. ■

FSS credits 2nd batch of 2026 Provident Fund payouts

社會保障基金
FUNDO DE SEGURANÇA SOCIAL

This screenshot taken last night shows the logo of the Social Security Fund (FSS).

Rui Pastorin

Residents in the second batch of approved beneficiaries for the Non-Mandatory Central Provident Fund System 2026 received their funds yesterday.

The approved applicants entail those who submitted paper forms in August or applied in September for the 2026 Special Allocation from Budget Surplus, according to a statement from the Social Security Fund (FSS) yesterday.

The approved 2026 special allocation, along with any remaining balance in the applicant's government-managed sub-account, was deposited directly into their designated bank account, the statement said.

Meanwhile, the fund urged members of the public to stay alert against scams, adding that it will not send SMS messages containing hyperlinks. For more details, visit: https://www.fss.gov.mo/en/sites/allocation. ■

Peggy Chan performs at her graduation concert at the Concert Hall of the Central Conservatory of Music in Beijing on April 24, 2025.

Cover of Peggy Chan Pui Ian's Universe at the Fingertips *music scores.*

Local guzheng player Peggy Chan living the musical dream

Interview by Lesley Wells
Critique by William Chan

Peggy Chan Pui Ian has been playing the guzheng from a very young age after she heard it being played on television and fell in love with the sound. She has played for President Xi Jinping on three occasions, as well as former chief executive Fernando Chui Sai On and various other dignitaries over the years.

Now Chan has graduated from university, she is teaching music, and has published scores of some of her compositions, so life is good.

Chan graduated from the Central Conservatory of Music (CCOM) in Beijing with bachelor's and master's degrees in guzheng while also studying composition.

Chan sat down with the *Post* earlier this month near Don Bosco school to discuss what has been happening with her since she graduated in July this year.

Chan said, "I always wanted to be a teacher and I am now teaching music at Guangdong University of Foreign Studies (GDUFS). It is great as I can arrange my schedule to fit me, which gives me time to perform and write music."

Chan went on to say that she has actually published some of her compositions in a book, *Universe at the Fingertips*, which features eight pieces of music, five of which were composed by Chan and the other three arranged by her.

It all started when she was experimenting with different styles – jazz, traditional, tango, folk songs – and put them on the internet for fun.

"I didn't think to publish any of my music, but so many people contacted me for the scores of some of them that my teacher encouraged me to publish them," Chan said.

She said that she went into a recording studio and then wrote everything down: "It was a magical moment, and when I got a draft of the book, it was the first time I had seen my music in a book. It was really weird, and I kept thinking – I've done it!"

She added, "Some of the pieces I probably wouldn't write like that now, because I was younger and that was the place I was in; it is a personal journey."

Currently, Chan is trying to organise a concert for next year. "I am still negotiating that," she said. She went on to add, "I am writing an opera about the mental health of students which they [the students] will perform in December, and then we shall take it on the road."

So, all in all, Chan is living the dream and doing exactly what she wants to do – play her music.

Critique of Peggy Chan's music by William Chan

My previous review described Peggy Chan as an artist determined to demonstrate the guzheng's contemporaneity.* Her new score collection, *Universe at the Fingertips*, confirms that this ambition extends beyond the concert stage. Bringing together compositions and arrangements in styles ranging from traditional music and jazz to folk songs, tango, and contemporary music, the collection presents the guzheng not as a museum piece, but as a living instrument capable of speaking to the present.

Chan's most distinctive achievement is the way she connects musical experimentation with Macau's cultural memory. *Falling Bead Curtain*, adapted from a classic Cantonese instrumental work and rewritten for a guzheng duet, gives familiar material a new texture and a sense of dialogue. *Tomorrow's Moonlight*, based on a classic Cantonese nursery rhyme, approaches heritage through childhood memory and local feeling.

Preface of Nanyin, as she mentioned in a previous interview, is particularly significant. Inspired by Macau's intangible cultural heritage of *Dei Seoi Naamyam***, the work transforms a local vocal and narrative tradition into contemporary guzheng language. It demonstrates that cultural preservation need not mean simply reproducing the past; it can also involve translating tradition into a new artistic form.

While there is no doubt of her technical mastery of the instrument, as well as her in-depth knowledge of Chinese music, other aspects, in my opinion, require more refinement – especially in style and imagination. *Walking in Paris* first reimagines Erik Satie's *Gymnopédies*, a beautiful take, but it falls short of capturing the wistful and tender sentiment of the original. The same piece then includes a short section with a 12-bar blues progression. Exceptional technique again on Chan's instrument, but it appears to lack interaction with the rhythm section and lacks the blues inflection that makes the style signature. It missed a great opportunity to present the "singability" side of the guzheng.

Overall, the collection is a worthwhile achievement. *Tango: Dance of Strings* brings the instrument into a sharply rhythmic and dramatic setting, matching the passionate spirit of the tango. *Mirror Flower*, *Water Moon* and *Imagery of the Tang Dynasty* further explore the guzheng's relationship with other instruments and really blend well together. We look forward to a live performance from Chan featuring her new pieces.

Chan's music can be heard on Spotify - Listen to 指間萬象 Universe at the Fingertips - Album by 陳佩欣 Pui Ian Chan | Spotify

*www.macaupostdaily.com/news/20291

** 地水南音. *The direct meaning of "Dei Seoi Nam Yam" is "Earth and Water Southern Sound", but its cultural meaning is "Naamyam performed by blind artists"* – 地水 *("Earth and Water") being an old, respectful term in Guangdong for blind people. In Mandarin, "naamyam" is pronounced "nanyin". – Gemini/DeepSeek*

Graduation photo of Peggy Chan (right) with her supervisor, Prof. Su Chang (蘇暢), at the Central Conservatory of Music on June 24, 2025.

Peggy Chan performs at Galaxy Macau on October 12, 2025. – All photos supplied by Peggy Chan

Peggy Chan performs at her graduation concert at the Concert Hall of the Central Conservatory of Music in Beijing on April 24, 2025.

Sports Bureau lacks supervision of fitness centres: CCAC

Ida Cheong

The Commission Against Corruption (CCAC) announced in a statement yesterday that for the past two years it has been receiving complaints from a number of residents indicating that many fitness centres are, in fact, run by sports or gymnastics associations, thereby illegally engaging in commercial activities. This, the statement said, has raised concerns about the sector's lack of supervision by the Sports Bureau (ID).

The statement pointed out that the situation violates the law concerning commercial activities that require prior approval by the authorities.

According to a CCAC investigation, the Sports Bureau has meanwhile launched a follow-up investigation into the matter and previously initiated sanctioning procedures against nine businesses suspected of violating the relevant regulations. However, after the sanctioning procedures were initiated in mid-July 2024, no fines were imposed on seven of the nine businesses involved, nor were any follow-up measures taken, the statement said.

According to the CCAC statement, the Sports Bureau insisted that since the Legal Affairs Bureau (DSAJ) was in the process of revising the relevant decree-law and drafting an amendment bill, the sanctioning procedures for those cases were suspended.

However, the Commission Against Corruption said in the statement that ongoing legal amendments cannot be considered as statutory grounds for suspending any sanctioning procedures, pointing out that the Sports Bureau had suspended its relevant sanctioning procedures for eight months, while the processing of new complaints and referral of individual cases to other official entities were also suspended.

Upon CCAC intervention and suggestions, the statement underlined, the Sports Bureau has already reviewed all cases comprehensively, carried out further inspections, and implemented corresponding measures to actively advance the progress of all cases under investigation.

The statement noted that the Commission Against Corruption has already archived the cases and listed them for "retrospective review" and for the Sports Bureau to continuously and regularly follow up on the supervisory work and the investigative progress regarding the respective complaints. ■

廉政公署 CCAC

This image downloaded from the Commission Against Corruption (CCAC) website yesterday shows its official logo.

10 residents lose over 513,000 patacas to fake 'Douyin customer service' scam: police

Sherwin Hng

Ten local residents have lost a total of 513,049 patacas in a scam involving fraudsters impersonating Douyin* customer service representatives, Judiciary Police (PJ) spokesman Cheong Un Hong said during a regular press conference yesterday.

Cheong added that the victims, four men and six women, separately reported the cases to the Judiciary Police between October 21 and 26, after receiving calls from people claiming to represent the Chinese short-video platform "Douyin."

According to Cheong, one of the female victims received a call last Thursday from a scammer who claimed she had activated a livestreaming service and would be charged a service fee. When she denied activating the service, the caller offered to help cancel it and instructed her to enable screen sharing on her phone and download several unfamiliar apps.

Believing the caller, the victim followed the instructions, logged into her online banking account, provided verification codes, and enabled password-free payments. Her phone screen subsequently went black and became unresponsive.

When she later accessed her online banking account again, she discovered that 152,000 patacas had been transferred out of her account. She then reported the suspected fraud to the police, Cheong said.

Cheong noted that the other nine victims received similar calls between October 20 and 26. The scammers used the same method to obtain their online banking information and transfer money from their accounts. Their individual losses ranged from 2,826 to 110,000 patacas.

The Judiciary Police are investigating all 10 cases. ■

**Douyin is the Chinese version of TikTok, which operates internationally under a separate name. – DeepSeek*

抖音

Official logo of Douyin. – Photo courtesy of ByteDance Ltd via Wikimedia Commons

Online romance scam costs elderly man 470,000 patacas: police

Sherwin Hng

An elderly local man lost 470,000 patacas after falling victim to an online romance scam in which a woman he met online tricked him into buying prepaid top-up cards, Judiciary Police (PJ) spokesman Cheong Un Hong said yesterday.

Cheong revealed neither the victim's age nor any other personal information.

According to Cheong, the victim met the woman on Facebook late last year, and they later switched to WhatsApp and developed an online relationship.

Cheong said that in May this year, the woman claimed she urgently needed investment funds for her business and asked the victim for financial assistance. Believing her claims, the elderly man bought top-up cards at convenience stores more than 20 times between May and this month, following her instructions, and sent her screenshots of the cards' barcodes.

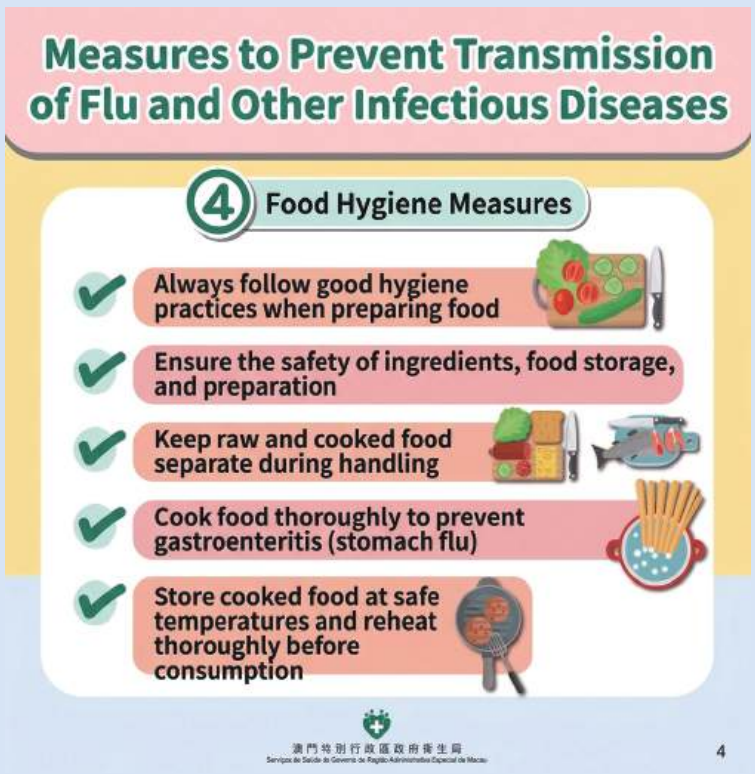
The total value of the cards amounted to 470,000 patacas, Cheong said.

On October 20, the woman told the victim that she would repay the money and instructed him to click a link and enter his banking details.

As the elderly man did not know how to complete the process, he sought assistance from staff at a bank in the northern district. The bank staff suspected that he was being scammed, stopped him from proceeding, and alerted the Judiciary Police, Cheong said.

According to Cheong, the case remains under investigation. ■

Salmonella infections in Sept rise 1.7-fold MoM: SSM



This image provided by the Health Bureau on Monday urges members of the public to pay attention to food safety. Translation from Chinese arranged by the Post.

Armindo Neves

The Health Bureau (SSM) announced in a statement on Monday its data on notifiable diseases, pointing out that Salmonella infections in September increased 1.7-fold month-on-month.

According to the statement, the bureau recorded a total of 2,679 reported notifiable disease cases in September. Among these, the three most common conditions were influenza (2,098 cases), enterovirus infection (427 cases), and chickenpox (49 cases).

The diseases showing the most significant month-on-month increases were Salmonella infection (up 1.7-fold), chickenpox (up 1.5-fold), and enterovirus infection (up by 74.3 per cent).

The bureau pointed out that a total of 40 Salmonella infection cases were reported in September. This represents double the 20 cases recorded in the same month last year, and approximately 1.7 times the 15 cases recorded in August.

A total of 49 chickenpox cases were reported during the month, representing a 36.1 per cent increase compared to the 36 cases recorded in September last year, and around 1.5 times the 20 cases reported in the previous month.

Furthermore, 427 cases of enterovirus infection were reported in September – roughly 3.1 times the 105 cases recorded in the same month last year, and a 74.3 per cent rise compared to the 245 cases in August.

Meanwhile, the statement noted that one imported case of dengue fever was reported, while no cases of chikungunya fever were recorded during the month. ■

USJ, Caritas launch community-wide 'Mental Health Survey'

Rui Pastorin

The private Catholic University of Saint Joseph (USJ) and Caritas Macau on Sunday launched a community-wide Mental Health Survey that aims to understand the mental health status of Macau residents, identify their needs, and provide support accordingly, a statement from the tertiary education institution noted that day.

The statement pointed out that the project was themed "Brighter • Wellbeing • Together" and saw 10 survey stations set up across Macau to conduct professional mental health evaluations and raise awareness, the statement said, adding that the campaign saw psychological counsellors and social workers from Caritas Macau. They were also joined by academic staff from the Department of Psychology and the Department of Social Work under USJ's Faculty of Health Sciences and Environmental Sciences, the statement said.

The project was led by USJ Department of Psychology Assistant Prof. Angus Kuok (郭展謙), who was quoted by the statement as saying: "This survey aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the mental health status of Macau residents and identify their specific needs to offer tailored support"

This handout photo provided by the University of Saint Joseph (USJ) on Sunday shows participants at one of the stations for the community-wide Mental Health Survey.

Kuok, who is also a Chartered Psychologist with the British Psychological Society, added: "Emotional acceptance is a vital first step to psychological well-being, and we hope the public recognises that emotions are an authentic part of the human experience rather than a burden." ■

Intergenerational 5th 'Rummikub Competition' proves popular

Rui Pastorin

The 5th edition of the annual "Rummikub Competition" was hosted at the Macau Fisherman's Wharf Convention and Exhibition Centre on Sunday, this year gathering 78 teams from 48 schools in the "School Group", while the "Open Group" drew more than 800 individual sign-ups, power utility CEM said in a statement.

The event saw a record high of 1,100 participants spanning those aged six to 97 years old, the statement said, adding that the competition tables were meanwhile expanded from 40 to 44, with a total of 352 contestants selected for both groups by lucky draw.

Among the two categories, Kuok Ngan Kei, a Form 6 student from Fong Chong School in Taipa, was crowned champion, receiving a cash prize of 2,000 patacas and a trophy in the "Student Group", while the "Open Group" was won by Ho Hang Sam, taking home 3,000 patacas and a trophy. Each category also had cash prizes and trophies for their second, third and fourth place winners, along with "Merit Award" and the "Most Games Won Award" recipients, as noted in the statement.

The recent event was organised by power utility CEM in conjunction with the Macao Federation of Trade Unions, commonly known as Gung Luen, and the Macao Volunteers Association. The venue also featured charity sale and fundraising zones, with registration fees and proceeds donated to this year's beneficiary "Cradle of Hope Association", which the statement said is dedicated to providing safe and welcoming residential care and daily life support for children and adolescents from birth to eighteen who are unable to grow up in their biological families due to family crises.

These handout photos taken and provided by power utility CEM on Sunday show the awardees from both the Student Group (top) and the Open Group of the power utility's annual "Rummikub Competition", at Fisherman's Wharf.

CEM's Regulatory Affairs and Corporate Communications Office Director Cecília Nip Lai Peng said, as summarised in the statement, that it was inspiring to see residents of different generations and backgrounds form connections through Rummikub, adding that, moving forward, "CEM will continue working alongside all sectors of society to host diverse, meaningful initiatives that build a better, more cohesive Macau community".

Cradle of Hope Association representative Leong Soi Chi pointed out, as summarised in the statement, that the "significance of this competition goes far beyond the funds raised; more importantly, it conveys the care of enterprises and the general public for vulnerable youth, using warm, practical actions to guide the children to thrive and grow". ■

Desert brine from former 'sea of death' feeds fields across China

Analysis

URUMQI – Four hours south of Hami, after a long drive across the barren Gobi Desert of northwest China's Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region, a sweep of blue-green water appears on the horizon.

It is not a lake. These are evaporation ponds, stretching across more than 160 square kilometers at a sprawling potash operation in Lop Nur, once known as the "sea of death" for its extreme aridity and forbidding terrain.

The desert is also home to Lop Nur Town. There are no families who have lived there for generations – nearly everyone went there in the new century because of the potash resources beneath Lop Nur's salt crust.

POTASH BENEATH DESERT

Potassium is a key plant nutrient, helping crops develop stronger stalks and fuller grain. For years, China had relied heavily on overseas potash, with domestic self-sufficiency long below 30 percent.

Exploration in the 20th century uncovered a world-class sulfate-type potassium-rich brine deposit in northern Lop Nur. But finding the resource was one thing, and producing fertilizer from it on an industrial scale was another.

There was no established industrial process elsewhere to copy. The location also posed its own problems. Two decades ago, there were no roads, little fresh water and no settled population.

"When I first came to Lop Nur, the wind blew sand straight into the face. You could go through all four seasons without seeing any green," said Liu Qinyong, who has worked at SDIC Xinjiang Luobupo Potash Co. Ltd. for more than 20 years. "Everything had to be brought in from outside." SDIC is short for the State Development and Investment Corporation.

The first batch of Lop Nur-brand potassium sulfate was produced in 2003. The company later built a production complex with an annual capacity of 1.2 million tonnes, which reached designed capacity by the end of 2011.

The company has so far produced over 27 million tonnes of potassium sulfate, with its products accounting for nearly half of China's potassium sulfate market.

TURNING HARDSHIP INTO ADVANTAGE

Production in Lop Nur relies heavily on both evaporation and time.

Brine pumped from underground moves through a four-stage evaporation system, where different salts crystallize as the concentration increases. It takes nearly two years before potassium-bearing minerals are ready for processing. These minerals then undergo further processing, including purification, crystallization and drying, to produce potassium sulfate.

The extreme evaporation that makes Lop Nur so inhospitable does much of the concentrating naturally.

Water scarcity has also shaped the production system. Fresh water has to be piped in from Ruoqiang, about 240 kilometers away, while liquids left from processing are recycled within the system and brine is not discharged outside it.

Inside the plant, progress has often been measured in fractions of a percentage point.

Dong Guangfeng, head of the potassium sulfate plant, arrived in 2005, when there was only an industrial pilot facility. Over the following two decades, he and his colleagues worked to raise potassium content and develop a wider range of products.

The potassium oxide content of the company's potassium sulfate has risen from 51 percent to a stable 52.5 percent, while a high-end product reaches 53.8 percent. Its product range has also expanded to include granular and water-soluble fertilizers.

China's potash self-sufficiency has now risen to around 50 percent, Dong said, with Lop Nur contributing an important share of domestic supply.

The brine is also yielding another product. In 2023, the company put into operation a line that extracts lithium from residual brine after potash production. The facility can produce 5,000 tonnes of lithium carbonate a year, mainly for use in power batteries for new energy vehicles.

A TOWN TAKES ROOT

The industry has also drawn people.

Chen Liangzhi, from southwest China's Sichuan Province, was among the early arrivals. When he came to Lop Nur in 2000, there were no roads, electricity or running water.

He lived in a semi-underground shelter and ran a restaurant from a prefabricated metal room. At midday in summer, when surface temperatures could reach 50 to 60 degrees Celsius, the room became too hot for cooking. Chen would retreat underground and wait until late afternoon before lighting the stove again.

Today, his restaurant covers more than 100 square meters and serves business travelers.

Lop Nur Town was formally established in 2002. Its water, electricity and heating are largely supplied via facilities operated by the potash company, while garbage and sewage are handled through shared facilities. Medical workers from the People's Hospital of Bayingolin Mongolian Autonomous Prefecture are stationed at the local clinic.

"If you want people to stay, you first have to make them feel secure about living here," said Liu Xiangyu, deputy Party secretary of Lop Nur Town. Over 3,000 people now live in the settlement that grew around the potash industry.

Notably, far beyond Lop Nur, potassium from beneath its salt crust is reaching and nourishing farmlands across China. – *Xinhua*

Why the CPC puts people's well-being at the heart of self-governance

Analysis

BEIJING – In northeast China's Heilongjiang Province, eligible residents can receive certain forms of medical assistance and other support without submitting an application. Government departments share the information needed to provide the benefits.

The provincial bodies responsible for disciplinary inspection helped drive the change. They prompted civil affairs departments to build a data-sharing network connecting 33 departments and institutions, enabling 12 frequently used assistance services to be provided without applications.

The initiative offers a concrete example of how the self-supervision of the Communist Party of China (CPC) improve public services and help ensure that benefits reach those who most need them.

Earning public trust through tangible improvements in people's lives is a defining feature of the CPC's full and rigorous self-governance, which is high on the agenda of the fifth plenary session of its 20th Central Committee. The key meeting, which opened Monday in Beijing, is considering a draft decision of the CPC Central Committee on major issues concerning strengthening full and rigorous Party self-governance with perseverance.

COMMITMENT TO THE PEOPLE

The CPC constitution commits the Party to serving the people, and states that it has no special interests of its own apart from those of the working class and the broadest possible majority of the people.

Without seeking self-interest, the CPC can keep its spirit of thorough self-reform, and by swiftly detecting and resolving its own problems, the Party can prevent any interest group, power group or privileged stratum from preying on or corrupting its members.

President Xi Jinping, also general secretary of the CPC Central Committee, has led an unprecedented anti-corruption campaign since 2012, driven by a determination to "offend a few thousand rather than fail 1.4 billion." The campaign has targeted corrupt officials at both high and low levels.

Gyula Thurmer, president of the Hungarian Workers' Party, said serving the interests of the people is a central principle of the CPC.

He added that the Party's anti-corruption efforts have achieved significant results, strengthening internal discipline and helping implement major economic and social development programs.

SAFEGUARDING PEOPLE'S INTERESTS

Xi has called on Party members to bear in mind that "benefiting the people is their greatest political achievement."

An official review of work in 2025 reported that disciplinary and supervisory bodies nationwide investigated 967,000 cases of misconduct and corruption affecting people's daily lives, returning or helping recover about 77.6 billion yuan in money and property to the public.

Faruk Boric, president of the Association of Friendship between China and Bosnia and Herzegovina, said China's efforts to pursue corrupt officials at both senior and lower levels send "a clear message that no official is above the rules, regardless of their position."

He said China's experience offers important lessons in linking clean governance with people's well-being. Protecting public funds, he added, helps direct more resources toward health care, education and other public services.

BUILDING BETTER GOVERNANCE

On several occasions, Xi has called for taking simultaneous, coordinated, and comprehensive steps to ensure that officials do not have the audacity, opportunity or desire to become corrupt.

In his article on the Party's self-reform, Xi urged efforts to improve Party conduct, enforce discipline, and fight corruption, while integrating Party self-supervision with public oversight to deeply advance the Party's self-reform.

Lyazid Benhami, a member of the Paris Association of French-Chinese Friendship, said rigorous Party self-governance can clarify officials' responsibilities, improve coordination and help sustain development programs.

He highlighted China's emphasis on long-term planning, infrastructure, education and research, adding that the country has achieved a profound transformation regarding such priority areas and improved the well-being of its people.

Those administrative strengths matter as China implements its 15th Five-Year Plan (2026-2030). In January, Xi urged efforts to confine power to an institutional cage in a more well-conceived and effective manner, and press ahead with the anti-corruption fight with a clearer understanding and stronger resolve, thus providing a strong guarantee for achieving the goals and tasks of the 15th Five-Year Plan period.

Volker Tschapke, honorary president of Germany's Prussian Society, said the CPC's courage to "turn the blade inward" demonstrated a "moral strength that I truly admire." He stressed that rigorous Party self-governance ultimately serves the fundamental interests of the people.

"I have seen with my own eyes what that has achieved: how villages have blossomed through targeted poverty alleviation, how rural areas have found new hope, how high-speed rail connects people and hearts," he said. *– Xinhua*

Xi congratulates Lula on re-election as Brazilian president

BEIJING – President Xi Jinping yesterday extended congratulations to Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva on his re-election as president of Brazil.

In his congratulatory message, Xi said that President Lula has made important contributions to advancing China-Brazil relations.

Xi said he and Lula have, in recent years, maintained close communication through various means and jointly guided the building of the China-Brazil community with a shared future for a more just world and a more sustainable planet to new progress.

The global, strategic and long-term significance of the bilateral relationship has become increasingly prominent, making it a model of solidarity and cooperation among Global South countries, he said.

Xi said that he attaches great importance to the development of China-Brazil relations and stands ready to work with President Lula to guide the building of a China-Brazil community with a shared future to new heights, open up broader prospects for all-round strategic coordination between the two countries, and continuously enhance the well-being of the two peoples.

Also yesterday, Vice President Han Zheng sent a congratulatory message to Geraldo Alckmin on his re-election as Brazil's vice president. *– Xinhua*

A staff member remotely operates an intelligent tower crane at the 2026 International (Wuhan) Intelligent Building Industry Expo in Wuhan, Hubei Province, yesterday. Themed "Intelligent Construction Leads, Combined Momentum Strengthens Industrial Chains," the expo kicked off yesterday. It features eight exhibition zones, drawing more than 200 exhibitors from over 10 countries and regions. – Xinhua

Xi extends condolences over death of Japan's former PM Yasuo Fukuda

BEIJING – President Xi Jinping yesterday extended condolences over the death of former Japanese Prime Minister Yasuo Fukuda to his family.

In his message, Xi also extended sympathy to the family.

Fukuda was a Japanese statesman known for his integrity and sense of responsibility, as well as a longtime friend of the Chinese people. He had long been committed to the China-Japan friendship and upheld a correct view of history, Xi said.

During his tenure as prime minister, he signed the fourth political document between China and Japan with the Chinese side, setting out important principles for the development of bilateral relations, Xi said.

Fukuda also served as chairman of the Boao Forum for Asia, playing an important role in promoting exchanges and cooperation in Asia, Xi said, noting that China will remember his contributions to China-Japan relations and Asia's development.

Xi also expressed the hope that Fukuda's family would carry on his legacy and continue to work for China-Japan friendship.

Xi expressed the hope that Japanese authorities would cherish the efforts of previous generations of statesmen, abide by the four political documents between China and Japan, and safeguard the political foundation of bilateral relations. *– AFP*

China strongly deplores, gravely concerned about UK police's arbitrary, excessive law enforcement actions: FM spokesperson

BEIJING – The Chinese side strongly deplores and is gravely concerned about the UK police's arbitrary and excessive law enforcement actions, a foreign ministry spokesperson said yesterday.

Spokesperson Guo Jiakun made the remarks at a daily media briefing in response to a related query about a recent security alert issued by the Chinese embassy in the UK, which advises Chinese citizens to be aware of recent practices in UK border checks.

Recently, the Foreign Ministry and the Chinese embassy in the UK have received multiple reports of Chinese citizens being held and examined for extended hours by the UK police when entering and exiting the country, with their electronic devices including mobile phones seized, Guo said.

He noted that China has lodged stern representations with the UK, and will take all necessary measures to keep Chinese citizens safe and protect their legitimate and lawful rights and interests. He also reminded Chinese citizens planning to travel to the UK to read carefully the embassy's alert to avoid any inconvenience or loss.

– Xinhua

Indonesian, Singaporean foreign ministers meet amid spat over haze, gas

JAKARTA – Jakarta and Singapore plan to set up a task force to hold businesses to account for involvement in Indonesian wildfires that have caused a regional haze crisis, the countries' foreign ministers said after meeting yesterday.

Singapore's top diplomat Vivian Balakrishnan visited the Indonesian capital to meet his counterpart, Arrmanatha Nasir, amid a diplomatic spat between the Southeast Asian nations over the pollution from the fires that have forced school closures and disrupted daily life in nearby countries.

They agreed that any companies found guilty over the fires must be brought to account.

"We discussed establishing a joint task force on strengthening business responsibility," said Arrmanatha as he and Balakrishnan addressed reporters after closed-door talks.

"It will link information sharing, financial intelligence and cross-border evidence gathering with, and where possible, hopefully, asset recovery."

They did not address Indonesia's surprise announcement just days earlier that it is cutting some gas exports to Singapore.

Indonesia has struggled for months to contain the fires, which deforestation monitor Nusantara Atlas says burned more than 1.9 million hectares in the nine months to September.

The haze has pushed air pollution to hazardous levels across parts of Indonesia and neighbouring Malaysia, Singapore and East Timor, prompting the ASEAN regional bloc to convene a meeting on the crisis.

Singapore has vowed to take legal action against companies found responsible for the fires that come at a time of severe drought worsened by the El Niño weather phenomenon.

Indonesian Foreign Minister Arrmanatha Nasir (right) and Singaporean Foreign Minister Vivian Balakrishnan shake hands during a photo session ahead of their bilateral meeting at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Jakarta yesterday. – AFP

Balakrishnan said "Singapore agrees" with the creation of a task force, and "we are in effect putting all the companies on notice."

Experts say Indonesia's wildfires can be blamed in large part on slash-and-burn land-clearing practices, often by timber, palm oil or mining companies, that drain peatlands and destroy fire-resistant forest cover.

Arrmanatha also used the opportunity to point out that Indonesians were heavily affected by the fires.

"On forest and land fires... let me be clear, the first victims of this fire are Indonesians," Arrmanatha said.

Balakrishnan agreed Indonesians were the "first and primary victims" but added that, unlike El Niño, "haze is not a natural phenomenon".

"The forest and land fires were caused by human action," he said.

'Necessary steps'

Indonesia's upstream oil and gas regulator SKK Migas announced on the weekend that it was reducing natural gas exports to Singapore by 31 million standard cubic feet per day.

The reason, it said, was to prioritise domestic demand.

Indonesia is one of Singapore's main sources of natural gas, supplying 145.3 billion cubic feet in 2024, according to data from the US Energy Information Administration.

Singapore's Energy Market Authority (EMA) said the reduction amounted to less than two percent of the city-state's total daily gas demand.

On Sunday, Singapore Prime Minister Lawrence Wong urged countries to honour commercial contracts, and said Singapore would "will take the necessary steps to protect its rights and interests."

Indonesia's Energy Minister Bahlil Lahadalia on Monday denied Jakarta had breached any contracts. *– AFP*

ASEAN envoy to visit Myanmar today: Thai FM

BANGKOK – ASEAN's special envoy to Myanmar will visit the war-torn country today and tomorrow, Thailand's foreign minister said, but there was no indication whether she would meet with detained democracy leader Aung San Suu Kyi

The envoy, Philippines Foreign Secretary Maria Theresa Lazaro, will visit the capital Naypyidaw, where Myanmar authorities say the 81-year-old Suu Kyi is being held under house arrest.

Thai Foreign Minister Sihasak Phuangketkeow – whose country is a member of the 11-nation Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) – said at a news conference in Bangkok yesterday the envoy's itinerary "is being worked out".

Myanmar's military held Suu Kyi in almost total seclusion for five years following the February 2021 coup, which ended a tentative decade-long experiment with democracy.

But in recent months authorities say they have loosened her detention and have published photographs of her taking private meetings, as supporters have demanded "proof of life".

Lazaro, who visited Myanmar in January, said in July she would visit again to try to expand access to humanitarian assistance in the country, which was plunged into civil war by the coup.

ASEAN chair the Philippines had earlier this year requested access for its envoy to Suu Kyi, but was rebuffed.

It repeated the request in August, after Suu Kyi met with a representative of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), her first publicised meeting with a foreign official since she was ousted.

Manila also called for the Nobel Peace Prize laureate's "complete and unconditional release".

The Thai foreign minister was speaking at a joint media appearance with Malaysian Foreign Mohamad Hasan, who also confirmed the special envoy's trip.

"We hope that there'll be good progress and some progress for her to report on when the ASEAN foreign ministers meet in Manila prior to the ASEAN Summit," Sihasak said.

Analysts say Myanmar leader Min Aung Hlaing – who as military chief ousted Suu Kyi in February 2021 – is seeking international legitimacy after being installed as the country's civilian president in April.

Despite criticism from democracy watchdogs that the election putting him in office was a charade, he has made significant headway into being welcomed onto the world stage.

He has gone on numerous diplomatic trips including to China, India, and several ASEAN nations.

Last Thursday, Suu Kyi's son Kim Aris was allowed to speak to her on the telephone for the first time in more than five years, in a call from Myanmar's London embassy.

The UK-based Aris told AFP afterwards that his mother had sounded "fairly healthy", but added: "I remain very concerned about her well-being." *– AFP*

A church tower is seen at the scene of a fire in the shanty village of Guryong on the outskirts of Gangnam district in Seoul yesterday. – AFP

High-profile rape trial of ex-prosecutor resumes in Japan

TOKYO – The trial of a Japanese former senior prosecutor accused of rape in one of the country's most high-profile cases of alleged sexual assault restarted yesterday after a two-year pause.

Few women in Japan speak out about sexual assault, but a former prosecutor, who uses the pseudonym Hikari, came forward in 2024 to accuse her boss of raping her six years earlier.

The trial first began in October 2024 but was halted after Kentaro Kitagawa – who served as head of the Osaka District Public Prosecutor's Office at the time of the alleged rape – withdrew his initial admission of guilt and said the sex was consensual.

Yesterday Kitagawa told the court that sex took place but repeated his not guilty plea and "denied that she was unable to resist", according to public broadcaster NHK.

Following his plea change, the court, prosecution and defence spent two years in closed-door proceedings clarifying the points at issue.

Hikari, who has been diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), has previously said she was not used to drinking strong alcohol and lost her memory halfway through an office gathering in 2018.

The next thing she knew, she said, she was in Kitagawa's home and was being raped.

"It was like I was having a terrible nightmare," Hikari said in a 2025 interview with AFP.

"I couldn't resist because I was terrified that I could be killed."

Hikari kept quiet after it happened as Kitagawa had pleaded with her not to go public, saying it would be a damaging scandal for the organisation and threatening to harm himself, she said.

Hikari said her condition worsened after she learned in 2024 that people close to Kitagawa, especially an assistant prosecutor – who Hikari says is his lover – had spread malicious rumours about her.

Hikari has repeatedly requested an independent probe into harassment within prosecutor's offices across the country.

Officials have rejected that request and instead announced the launch in June of their own internal investigation.

Her request for measures to ensure a safe working environment was also rejected, prompting her to officially resign in August. *– AFP*

Indonesia detains 17 foreigners over online lending operation in Bali

JAKARTA – Indonesian immigration authorities detained 17 foreigners suspected of operating an online lending business in violation of their residence permits in the resort island of Bali, officials said yesterday.

The detainees comprise 15 Malaysians and two Singaporeans, said Muhamad Novyandri, head of the local immigration office.

Preliminary findings indicated that the operation had three managers and 14 administrators who advertised loans on social media and directed potential borrowers to WhatsApp numbers. They collected personal information, including employment details, salary slips and emergency contact information, Novyandri said.

The targets were fellow foreigners, and no Indonesian customers had been identified so far, Novyandri said, adding that the suspects are being held in immigration detention for questioning. *– Xinhua*

India orders evacuations as Cyclone Arnab looms

Shubham Koul

KAKINADA, India – Indian authorities ordered nearly 100,000 people to evacuate homes in Andhra Pradesh and Odisha, ahead of a severe cyclone the national weather office expects to make landfall by today.

Neighbouring Nepal and Sri Lanka have also issued weather warnings.

Cyclone Arnab is forecast to hit India's southwestern Andhra Pradesh coast as a "very severe cyclonic storm", with gusts of up to 150 kilometres per hour this morning at 6:00 a.m. GMT (11.30 a.m. Indian Standard Time, [2:00 p.m. Macau time]), the India Meteorological Department (IMD) said in a bulletin.

Torrential rain lashed the coast in the port city of Kakinda as heavy waves crashed on shore.

"I've never seen anything like this before," Kotesh Kumar, 35, told AFP, adding the government warned people to stock up on groceries.

"There was a cyclone here three years ago, but the water didn't rise this much."

Cyclones, called hurricanes in the North Atlantic and typhoons in the Pacific, are a regular menace in the Bay of Bengal and northern Indian Ocean.

The storm season, however, has been turbocharged by the El Niño weather phenomenon that has caused unprecedented warming.

Neighbouring Sri Lanka, meanwhile, closed schools with warnings of torrential rain, with the island's Department of Meteorology warning storms could trigger flash floods and mudslides.

The military has been placed on alert, Colombo's Disaster Management Centre said.

Indian media reported that as many as 50,000 people have been told to move to safe areas in Andhra Pradesh, and 48,000 in Odisha.

'Damage'

Nepal's disaster authority issued a warning yesterday, saying that as the storm travels inland towards the Himalayas – likely overnight tomorrow – it will bring heavy rainfall as well as "a high risk of heavy snowfall, snowstorms and avalanches".

It called on tourists to avoid travelling to high mountain areas and advised those already there to remain in safe locations.

Nepal is still recovering from a catastrophic August 26 flood sparked by a glacial mountain collapse, which swept away more than 1,400 people and left over 5,000 missing.

India's weather bureau said it expects the cyclone to result in "total destruction" of thatched houses and create localised flooding, uprooting of power and communication poles, and "widespread damage" to standing crops.

In Kakinada, police barricaded roads leading to the sea.

Andhra Pradesh State Chief Minister Nara Chandrababu Naidu ordered the storm to be "constantly monitored and advance precautions taken", his office said in a statement on Monday.

"Adequate shelters and evacuation arrangements have been made," New Delhi's Cabinet Secretariat said in a statement.

The neighbouring Indian state of Odisha opened 1,735 cyclone shelters and imposed restrictions on movement in landslide-prone zone areas, the state's information office said.

Local media reported that Andhra Pradesh authorities ordered evacuations in key, low-lying areas and shut "all educational institutions" in some districts from yesterday until Saturday.

Over 4,700 pregnant women residing in potentially dangerous sites were moved to hospitals, according to The Indian Express newspaper. *– AFP*

Men use a plastic sheet to cover themselves during rainfall in Andhra Pradesh's Kakinada, India yesterday ahead of cyclone Arnab's expected landfall. – AFP

German climber dies in 1,500-metre fall on Nepal mountain

KATHMANDU – A German climber fell about 1,500 metres to his death on Monday, a day after reaching the summit of Ama Dablam mountain, according to a trekking company operator.

Wolfgang Waschiczek, 57, was reported missing from Camp 3, which lies at around 6,200 metres. He had been resting after reaching the 6,812-metre summit on Sunday, before his planned descent.

"After a successful summit, he spent a night at Camp 3 on Sunday, and on Monday morning, his guide found him missing," Gokul Thapa, head of the trekking company Real Himalaya, told AFP.

Thapa said Waschiczek's personal trekking guide, Sonam Lama, had left him in the tent for a few minutes to return borrowed equipment, telling him to stay inside. When he returned, Waschiczek was missing.

Waschiczek's body was spotted by another Sherpa at Camp 2 at around 8:00 a.m. on Monday at an altitude of about 4,600 metres, Thapa said.

The body was retrieved by helicopter during the afternoon and taken to Lukla, a town known as a gateway for mountaineers and trekkers heading to the Everest region.

It was then flown to the capital, Kathmandu, where a postmortem will be performed at Tribhuvan University Teaching Hospital.

"Once the postmortem is done, the body will be handed over to his family members through the embassy," Thapa told AFP.

He said this was Waschiczek's second visit to Nepal.

"He had come to Nepal in 2024 for a trek, and his passing saddened us," he added.

Ama Dablam lies in Nepal's Khumbu region and is considered a technically challenging mountain with steep faces.

This is the first fatality on the mountain this year.

Last October, two climbers, one French, aged 65, and the other South Korean, aged 66, died during expeditions there.

This climbing season, more than 300 climbers are attempting to scale Ama Dablam. *– AFP*

Indian media groups challenge new data privacy rules in top court

NEW DELHI – India's Supreme Court yesterday sought the government's response to a challenge by news publishers who say changes to data privacy rules threaten press freedom.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government introduced the rules last year to guide the law to strengthen personal data protection, but critics say their sweeping scope risks undermining public interest reporting.

The new rules "fail to provide any exemption in favour of journalistic activity" and "threaten the full spectrum of journalistic activity", according to the petition by the Digital News Publishers Association (DNPA), which represents some of India's biggest news organisations.

They include Network18, part of the Reliance conglomerate led by billionaire Mukesh Ambani, and NDTV, owned by the Adani Group, founded by Gautam Adani – two tycoons who are both close to Modi.

"We think it could have an impact on investigative journalism and compromise sources," Sujata Gupta of the DNPA told AFP.

Data privacy laws in several parts of the world, including the European Union, provide specific exemptions for journalism.

The law's requirement to disclose all personal data processed, without a public interest exemption, would "seriously hinder investigative reporting and could discourage whistleblowers from coming forward", international media watchdog Reporters Without Borders said in a statement.

Independent activists and smaller news organisations have also challenged provisions removing exemptions for personal information sought under India's Right To Information (RTI) transparency law.

"The removal of the public interest override... of the RTI Act now allows information offices of the government to withhold information that is deemed 'personal' even if it has significant connection to a public activity or public interest," argues a legal challenge filed by investigative news website, The Reporters' Collective.

Critics have long accused Modi's Hindu nationalist government of undermining press freedom, a charge it denies. The court will next hear the matter on November 17. *– AFP*

Afghan gov't seeks int'l support to fight illicit drugs

KABUL – Afghanistan's Foreign Minister Mawlawi Amir Khan Muttaqi yesterday described illicit drugs as an international problem, calling on the international community to help Afghanistan overcome the challenge.

Illicit crop cultivation and drug production are not confined to a specific geographical area, and the fight against this menace is a shared responsibility of Afghanistan and the international community, Muttaqi said at a gathering attended by Kabul-based diplomats and government officials.

As part of efforts to combat the drug menace in Afghanistan, Muttaqi urged the international community to help farmers switch to alternative crops, cooperate in providing treatment for drug addicts, and assist in combating drug trafficking networks.

Although Afghanistan has made significant progress in combating illicit drugs in the post-war period, sharply reducing poppy cultivation, drug production and processing, and trafficking, the country still needs more time to become drug-free. *– Xinhua*

An Afghan vendor (left) sells samosas at the Nadir Khan hilltop overlooking the city of Kabul on Monday. – AFP

Researchers in Australia find potential new treatment for rare genetic disorder

MELBOURNE – Researchers in Australia have discovered a way to release a genetic "brake" that silences healthy genes in Prader-Willi syndrome, opening a potential new path to treating the rare genetic disorder.

Researchers at Australia's Walter and Eliza Hall Institute of Medical Research (WEHI) found that removing a protein called SMCHD1 lifted the genetic "brake," allowing healthy but dormant genes to switch back on, according to a WEHI statement released yesterday.

In Prader-Willi syndrome, the protein switches off certain genes essential for development and brain function, contributing to developmental delays, intellectual disability and an insatiable appetite that can lead to obesity. About 400,000 people worldwide live with the condition, the statement said.

The study, published in *Science Advances*, used CRISPR gene-editing, stem-cell and genomic technologies to examine the effects of removing SMCHD1 in patient-derived cells and animal models.

Current treatments mainly address symptoms rather than the underlying cause, often relying on multiple medications, surgeries and specialist care, providing limited relief, the researchers said, adding that potential new therapies targeting the cause of Prader-Willi syndrome are now advancing through a WEHI spinout company. *– Xinhua*

‘They were innocent’: Syrian family mourns victims of Jordanian strike

Mourners pray over the bodies of those who were killed in airstrikes carried out by Jordan the night before on the village of Al-Taf in the Al-Lajat region, located in the northeastern countryside of Daraa, during their funeral yesterday. – AFP

Bakr Alkasem

SYRIA – In an ambulance carrying the bodies of relatives killed in a Jordanian strike on southern Syria, a young man sat in shock, having lost much of his family in an instant.

“We were asleep when the missile hit us. My mother, my older brother and his three children – two boys and a girl – were killed,” Nassouh al-Salim said, staring at a grey body bag.

Jordan launched the Monday strikes in response to a jihadist attack on a church last week that killed nine people.

Damascus says the raids killed seven people, including three children, but Jordan said they had killed more than 20 Islamic State (IS) group fighters, while expressing regret over civilian casualties.

In the remote village of Al-Taf in Daraa province, which borders Jordan, a missile tore through the living room of the Salim family home, leaving a huge crater and reducing much of the modest building to rubble.

Schoolbooks and children’s clothes lay scattered among chunks of concrete and twisted furniture.

“They were in the flower of their youth, innocent, blameless,” said Yassine al-Salim, 78, another relative.

“How can a government strike homes with no justification?”

In another ambulance, two men sat beside a wounded child who appeared unconscious.

Funerals for the dead were held yesterday.

Jordan said it had struck “terrorist organisations” including a “large” IS group weapons depot, adding the military had sought to avoid locations where civilians were believed to be present.

Hours before the strikes, Amman announced the arrest of three Jordanians – two brothers and another relative – accused of carrying out the deadly attack on the Greek Orthodox church in Karak governorate.

Grief

“A plane arrived in the night, they bombed randomly. Innocent people live here, they have no connection to any faction,” said Yasser al-Sardi, 46, a grocer from Al-Taf.

Once in control of swathes of Syria and Iraq, IS was territorially defeated in Syria in 2019, but remnants of the group are still present there, including in the country’s vast desert.

The group, which was also present in Daraa province during Syria’s civil war, still occasionally claims attacks, mainly against government security forces.

Outside a hospital in Daraa province where the victims were taken, grieving relatives gathered while a woman wept on another’s shoulder.

“We received the bodies of three children, aged eight to 10 years, as well as that of a woman aged around 60 believed to be their grandmother,” said Mohammad al-Fadel, head of nursing at the facility.

Two other children aged four and five were wounded, he added.

The strikes have sparked the biggest crisis between Jordan and Syria since Islamist authorities took power in Damascus after ousting longtime ruler Bashar al-Assad in December 2024.

Syria has condemned the strikes, saying they took place “without any prior coordination”.

It also closed its main border crossing with Jordan yesterday “due to the current circumstances”, suspending all passenger and commercial traffic.

Jordan has struck southern Syria in the past, saying it was targeting sites used by arms and drugs traffickers.

Under Syria’s new authorities, the two countries have pledged to fight drug smuggling along their porous border. – *AFP*

Duo charged with UK security offences over airbase plot: police

LONDON – UK anti-terrorism police said yesterday two men have been charged with national security offences after an incident last month at a British airbase used by the United States, linking the scare to Iran.

The head of National Counter Terrorism Policing, Laurence Taylor, said two British men aged 24 had been charged: one with assisting a foreign intelligence service, believed to be in Iran, and another with entering a prohibited place for a purpose “prejudicial” to the UK.

This is the first time that anyone has been charged over the incident at RAF Fairford, after police arrested seven suspects in the days afterwards, before releasing them on bail.

Police were called to the Royal Air Force’s Fairford base in southwest England in the early hours of September 27 after a local farmer reported a group of men with several white vans engaged in “suspicious” activity.

“While some of the circumstances remain unclear, we are confident that this activity was conducted on behalf of a foreign intelligence service,” Taylor told reporters yesterday outside Metropolitan Police headquarters in London.

Days after the incident the United States withdrew all its B-1 bombers from the base.

Suspects charged

A week ago police said they had re-arrested two of the suspects, one of whom has now been charged.

Police charged 24-year-old Nouman Essghir with entering or approaching a “prohibited place” for a purpose “prejudicial” to the interests of the United Kingdom.

Essghir was arrested at the scene in Gloucestershire and then released on bail, before police re-arrested him a week ago.

The police chief said the charge against Essghir related to “suspected activity” more than a month earlier, on Saturday, August 22, without giving any details.

The second man who has been charged, 24-year-old Mohmed Ahmad Abdulkarim, was arrested after being interviewed under caution over the last week, police said.

He has been charged with assisting a foreign intelligence service. “In this case, we believe that country to be Iran,” the police said.

Taylor said Counter Terrorism Policing had seen “a range of incidents in recent months that we believe have been directed by the Iranian state”.

“This is not a theoretical threat. This is something we are responding to every day,” he added.

Both of the charged men live in Westminster, a district in central London.

Six other men remain on bail, one of them a dual UK-Iranian national who had been re-arrested last week.

Taylor acknowledged that some of the police’s “decisions made during our investigations can sometimes appear illogical”.

“But I want to make it very clear that there will always be a good reason or rationale behind them,” he said. – *AFP*

Norwegian media take legal action to block Meta from using content

OSLO – Norway’s main media organisations said yesterday they had taken legal action to block Meta from enforcing new user terms which they claim threaten their rights to their journalistic content.

According to the 10 media groups, the new terms due to come into force on November 20 would give Meta – which owns Facebook and Instagram – the right to collect their articles, photos and videos, including those behind a paywall, and use them to develop artificial intelligence products, among other things.

“The fear is that the companies will use this power to secure rights over journalistic content,” the head of the Norwegian Media Businesses’ Association (MBL), Lene Eltvik Vindfeld, said in a statement.

“Meta uses media groups’ investments to develop artificial intelligence services that compete with them directly. This is both unacceptable and distorts competition,” she added.

According to the plaintiffs, Meta’s new terms of use would apply to all professional account holders – media outlets as well as companies and retailers – and would leave them no option to oppose them other than to delete their accounts.

They said they had filed a request with the Oslo district court for a provisional injunction against the entry into force of the terms of use, pending a ruling on the substance of the case.

The plaintiffs include public broadcaster NRK, media groups Schibsted, Amedia, Polaris and Aller, as well as Norwegian news agency NTB.

Contacted by AFP, Meta said it had delayed the implementation of the new user terms until November 20 “to allow more time for us to explain to our partners and stakeholders what’s changing and what’s not”.

On October 14, MBL and NRK had also threatened to sue Meta, accusing the American giant of profiting from fraudulent advertisements impersonating them in order to defraud internet users. – *AFP*

‘Cruel’ jail conditions caused dozens of Nigerian miners to suffocate: probe

ABUJA – Poor jail conditions led to the deaths of more than 30 miners arrested on suspicion of illegal gold mining in central Nigeria last month, investigators said yesterday, describing their treatment as “cruel and inhuman”.

Thirty-three young men were found dead after they were thrown inside a crowded cell in Minna, the capital of central Niger state, in September after their arrest by the Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps (NSCDC), a paramilitary government agency.

Survivors recounted being crammed in the cell with poor ventilation and some said a substance that stung their throats and noses was sprayed into the cell before the door was slammed shut.

Screams for help and banging the door yielded no response from guards on duty, according to survivors.

Medical and forensic evidence showed the deaths resulted from “environmental asphyxia, acute respiratory failure caused by prolonged confinement in a severely overcrowded and poorly ventilated detention cell aggravated by heat stress and dehydration”, the head of the investigating team, Jonathan Kure, said while presenting the report to the government.

“The committee concluded that these circumstances amounted to cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment,” he said.

Niger state authorities initially put the death toll at 37, but the investigating committee said it had established 33 deaths.

“The committee confirmed 33 as the verified casualty figure because higher numbers reported immediately after the incident could not be reconciled with available records and identified victims,” said Kure, adding that 14 of the dead were minors. – *AFP*

UK man offered drugged wife to strangers online for sex: court

Akshata Kapoor

WINCHESTER – A British man who drugged and raped his then-wife over 13 years had advertised on sites like Craigslist and Grindr for strangers to have sex with her without her consent, a UK court heard yesterday.

Philip Young earlier this year pleaded guilty to multiple sexual offences – including rape, voyeurism and administering a substance with intent to stupefy or overpower – against Joanne Young, who has waived her right to anonymity.

Four men, aged between 32 and 62, are on trial at a court in southern England, having denied sexual offences jointly committed with her husband against Joanne Young.

Two of them face charges of rape and two face lesser sexual assault charges.

The alleged offences occurred between 2016 and 2023.

"Mr Young had advertised her on Craigslist, Grindr and swinging websites – he sought strangers to come and sleep with his wife," prosecutor Sarah Jones told Winchester Crown Court.

Young presented the proposition as a "kink" for the couple and appeared to suggest she would be in "a state where anything could be done to her by whoever answered and she would be unaware or unable to remember", Jones said.

The court heard that since 2015 Young had sought drugs that could put his wife "into a deep sleep where she would be disorientated, unaware of her surroundings and unlikely to be able to recall what happened".

Police uncovered the case after Philip Young was flagged for uploading extreme images online, Jones said.

Searching his property and devices later, police found videos of Joanne Young restrained in bed "whilst other men engaged in sexual activity with her".

According to Jones, three of the defendants appear in the videos.

'Evidently asleep'

One of them, Richard Wilkins, 62, is accused of raping her while she was "not capable of giving" consent.

In a video taken the night of the alleged offence in 2016, the prosecutor said Joanne Young appears "shackled to the bed" where she can be "heard snoring".

"She is quite evidently asleep," Jones said.

In another count accusing 48-year-old Norman Macksoni of rape, the prosecutor said Joanne Young's participation is "wholly akin to what you might expect if someone were drugged".

Philip Young appeared to be "stage managing" strangers in the bedroom while his wife was in a drowsy or stupefied state, the prosecution said.

The prosecutor said that while the defendants may not have seen Young administer sedatives, the men "could patently see its effect".

Young, 50, who is reportedly a former Conservative party councillor, pleaded guilty in January to 48 charges including 11 counts of rape and 11 of administering a substance with intent.

A sixth defendant, Dean Hamilton, 47, also previously admitted to rape and sexual assault linked to this case.

He and Young will be sentenced at the end of the current trial.

Some protesters had gathered outside the court Tuesday for the trial – expected to last four weeks –holding signs condemning sexual violence.

There are multiple cases currently in UK courts of alleged drug-facilitated sexual assault, with awareness of the crime growing following the unrelated high-profile 2024 French trial of Dominique Pelicot.

He was found guilty of secretly drugging his wife, Gisele, for years and inviting scores of men to rape her while she was unconscious.

Gisèle Pelicot also waived her right to anonymity in that trial to raise awareness about sexual violence. *– AFP*

Europe needs to better prepare for warmer temperatures: EU

BRUSSELS – The European Union yesterday warned of the need to better prepare for a feared 3C rise in global warming as it unveiled new rules to force member states to act.

Fuelled by climate change, the world's fastest-warming continent experienced a relentless series of heatwaves that began unusually early in the spring, shattering temperature records and causing tens of thousands of excess deaths.

The EU pointed to scientific evidence that shows the world is on a path to warm by 1.5C above pre-industrial levels by 2030, 2C by 2050, and 3C by 2100.

The European Commission wants to build up climate risk preparedness by 2030.

The commission said the estimated economic losses from climate damages between 2022 and 2025 stood at around 200 billions euros (US$223 billion).

The EU has focused on cutting greenhouse gas emissions and has a target of climate neutrality – being an economy with net-zero emissions – by 2050.

But after warnings by independent advisors that adaptation was necessary and the extreme weather this summer, the EU knows it must also plan at a greater scale.

"Even as we work hard to reduce emissions, we must prepare for the impacts of climate change, which are neither fair nor equally distributed. Europe lacks preparedness" EU vice-president for the clean transition Teresa Ribera said.

"It is our responsibility to minimise the costs and suffering this entails."

The EU remains committed to limit global warming to 1.5C, but European climate chief Wopke Hoekstra warned "it would be unwise not to prepare for the scenarios" during a press conference.

The European Commission said the investment needed for climate resilience and adaptation is around 70 billion euros per year.

The European Investment Bank Group said this month it plans to double its overall climate resilience financing to at least 30 billion euros by 2030. *– AFP*

Dutch zookeeper dies after leopard mauling

THE HAGUE – A keeper at a Dutch zoo has died days after being mauled in a leopard enclosure, the safari park announced yesterday.

The woman was attacked while caring for two Persian leopards in an indoor facility at the Beekse Bergen park in the south of the Netherlands.

It is not clear exactly what happened in the enclosure as there are no cameras. The animals were inside due to bad weather and staff are usually kept away from the leopards.

She sustained serious injuries to her head and neck, according to local media. She underwent emergency surgery but died yesterday, the zoo said in a statement.

"The keeper started at the Beekse Bergen Safari Park at the age of 17 and worked here, with only a few short interruptions, for nearly 40 years," the statement said.

An independent investigation will be launched to establish the circumstances of the incident, the zoo added.

The leopards were behaving naturally, a park spokesperson told Omroep Brabant, a local media outlet.

"They are, and remain, predators." *– AFP*

EU pushes for more nations to pay to protect nature

Participants pose with a Greenpeace installation during the 17th meeting of the Conference of the Parties (COP 17) to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), in the Armenian capital of Yerevan yesterday. (Another photo on p.16) – AFP

YEREVAN, Armenia – The European Union vowed yesterday to maintain its push for more countries to fund global conservation, as a dispute over who should pay divides nations at key UN nature talks.

Around two dozen mostly Western nations are formally expected to provide biodiversity finance but the EU wants the list of donors expanded to include wealthy emerging economies like the Gulf states and China.

The push has met resistance at the COP17 biodiversity summit in Armenia, with disagreement over the donor list among the main issues unresolved in the final week of negotiations.

Nearly 200 nations are in Yerevan to take stock of limited progress towards a series of 2030 nature goals, including a pledge to protect swathes of the planet and its threatened species.

"Obviously if we want to finance nature restoration, saving species – adequately – we need to broaden that donor base," Ireland's Minister of State for Nature, Christopher O'Sullivan, told reporters.

"It's a position we will be holding," said O'Sullivan, whose country holds the rotating presidency of the EU Council.

The 27 EU member states felt "very strongly" about the issue, he added.

Negotiators have until Friday to resolve the donor dispute and other sticking points before the biodiversity summit closes.

Around 70 government ministers were in Yerevan to try to unblock some of the sticking points, according to the COP17 presidency.

'Crucial'

The UN biodiversity treaty was adopted in 1992, establishing an obligation for developed countries to help fund conservation efforts in developing nations.

The list of donor countries includes mostly European nations but also other developed industrialised countries such as Japan, Australia and Canada.

The United States is not a party to the convention and is therefore not on the list.

The EU argues that times have changed since the early 1990s and the global economic landscape shifted.

It was "crucial to find ways to enlarge the contributor base for this convention, in a way that is in line with evolving economic realities", EU environment commissioner Jessika Roswall told delegates in Yerevan, without naming any countries.

This was particularly urgent as the annual shortfall in funding needed for nature is estimated at around US$700 billion.

A lack of money is a major barrier to meeting the 2030 biodiversity goals and a key focus of the Yerevan summit, where governments are seeking ways to raise funding from public and private sources.

The EU has also pushed in international climate negotiations for China and other big emerging economies to join in contributing finance to help poorer countries tackle global warming. *– AFP*

Bolsonaro's party says it recognizes Lula's election win in Brazil

David Salazar and Fran Blandy

SÃO PAULO – Flavio Bolsonaro's Liberal Party (PL) on Monday recognised the outcome of Brazil's presidential runoff, despite its presidential candidate's objections to the poll won by leftist President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva.

Lula, who turned 81 yesterday, pulled off a dramatic comeback after trailing Bolsonaro in a first-round vote, a defeat which fired up the left on the streets and social media to secure him a fourth term in office.

In the end, Lula pulled around 4.4 million more votes than his rival on Sunday.

Bolsonaro, a right-wing senator and 45-year-old son of far-right former president Jair Bolsonaro, cried foul after polling was extended nationwide for two hours, at Lula's request, due to transport problems in some cities.

Though Bolsonaro maintained that he will seek annulment of the presidential election, his party later distanced itself from that position and opted to accept the official vote.

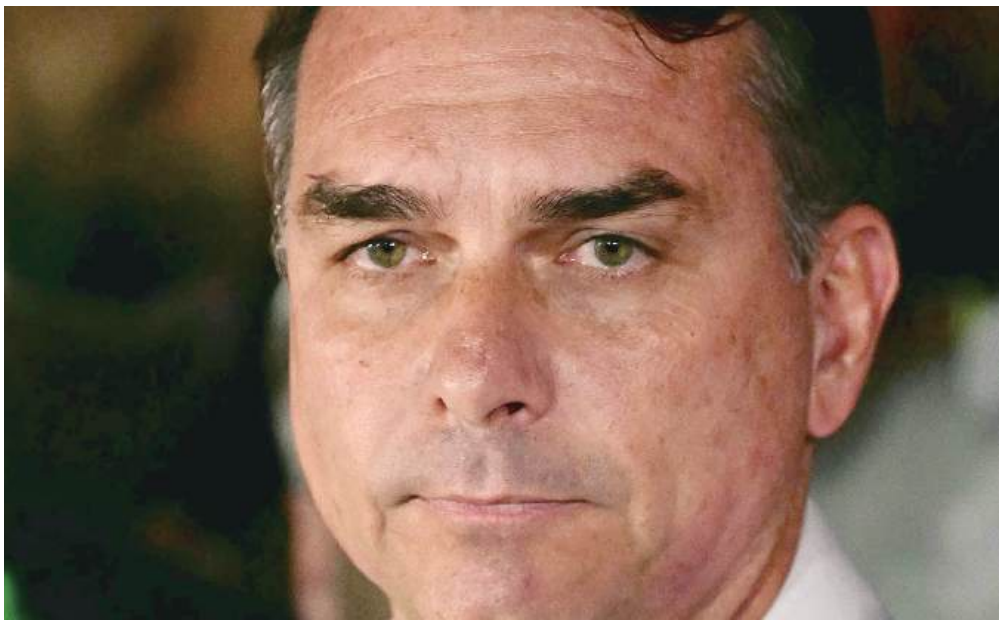
"We recognise the presidential election results, as proclaimed by the Superior Electoral Court (TSE), but we believe that the concerns raised need to be sufficiently addressed within a balanced and democratic political debate," the party said in a statement on Monday.

Flávio Bolsonaro had also requested polling stations stay open in some regions due to heavy rains, but he described the vote extension elsewhere as "unacceptable" and a "dirty trick."

While congratulations rolled in for Lula from world leaders on both sides of the political divide, Trump, an ally of the Bolsonaro family, said the election "looked terrible to me."

"I didn't take sides but it looked like another rigged election frankly," he told reporters in Washington. "It looked so corrupt."

In a video posted to social media on Monday afternoon, Flávio Bolsonaro said police had ordered he surrender his passports, adding: "I am now prohibited from leaving the country."



Brazil's right-wing senator and presidential candidate for the Liberal Party (PL) Flávio Bolsonaro reacts after knowing the first results in the presidential runoff election, in Brasília, on Sunday. – AFP

Leader of the opposition

He said the decision came from a Supreme Court justice, and was based on a comment by his US-based brother Eduardo Bolsonaro, who told a US podcast two days before the election that "if my brother does not win, I am in favour that he would leave the country."

Eduardo cited investigations against his brother.

Brazilian police are probing Flávio Bolsonaro for corruption over the financing of the biopic "Dark Horse" about his father.

"I never had any intention of leaving the country. I will surrender my passports and defend myself against this travesty," Flávio Bolsonaro said.

The right-wing candidate also took up the mantle as "leadership of the opposition" in a separate statement.

Brazil's markets tumbled nearly 17 percent and the US dollar surged against the real in response to leftist Lula's re-election, as investors worried about fiscal discipline.

Flávio slammed Lula for "an unprecedented abuse of both political and economic power," over a flurry of social spending announcements during the campaign.

'Rebellious youth'

The left was triumphant after securing a historic turnaround in the vote, with thousands pouring into the streets to celebrate Lula on Sunday night.

Lawyer Júlio Canelo, 42, hailed a victory for "the entire democratic spectrum."

"It was the result of the people mobilising, in the streets and online," he told AFP.

Lula's re-energised campaign to the cry of "Never Again Bolsonaro," urging people to go out and vote, saw the abstention rate fall from 21 percent to 19 percent in the runoff.

The proportion of spoiled and blank votes also decreased.

"I owe this victory to the rebellious youth who rose up to defend democracy," Lula told jubilant supporters on Sunday night.

European nations, Russia, China, India, South Africa and others congratulated Lula.

Several right-wing governments in Latin America – who are close with Trump – accepted the victory, with Colombia's President Abelardo de la Espriella saying even though he had backed Bolsonaro: "When the people speak at the ballot box, their will must be respected."

Echo of father's loss

Bolsonaro's rejection of the results echoed his father's refusal to acknowledge losing to Lula in the 2022 elections.

Tension over that result led to hundreds of Jair Bolsonaro's supporters storming government buildings a week after Lula's inauguration to demand military intervention.

Jair Bolsonaro is serving a 27-year sentence under house arrest for an attempted coup to stop Lula from taking office.

Electoral court chief Kassio Nunes Marques, a Bolsonaro appointee to the Supreme Court, hailed the "successful polls" and said there "were no changes" resulting from the decision to extend voting, even if it did create difficulties. *– AFP*

Flávio Bolsonaro's passports cancelled: Brazil police source

BRASÍLIA – Brazil's defeated presidential candidate, right-wing senator Flávio Bolsonaro, has had his passports cancelled, a police source told AFP on Tuesday on condition of anonymity, amid speculation over his whereabouts.

"Flávio Bolsonaro's passports have been cancelled," the source said, adding that "there is no formal record of Flavio Bolsonaro leaving the country."

Argentina's security ministry and migration authorities yesterday denied local media reports that Bolsonaro had entered the neighbouring country.

Flávio Bolsonaro last spoke in public on Monday afternoon in a video on social media saying he had been banned from leaving the country and ordered to surrender his passports.

The right-wing senator lost an election bid to President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, and has refused to concede defeat.

He said the order to surrender his passports was based on a comment by his US-based brother Eduardo Bolsonaro, who told a US podcast two days before the election that "if my brother does not win, I am in favour that he would leave the country."

Brazilian police are probing Flávio Bolsonaro for corruption over the financing of the biopic "Dark Horse" about his former president Jair Bolsonaro, who is under house arrest for plotting a coup.

Flávio Bolsonaro is set to lose his parliamentary immunity when his senatorial term ends in January.

– AFP

Priest reported missing in Mexico's Sinaloa state

MEXICO CITY – A Catholic priest was reported missing on Monday in the Mexican state of Sinaloa, which has been hit by a wave of drug-related violence, local and church authorities said.

Clemente Morales, 67, was last seen in an area of Culiacán, the state capital, which is rocked daily by robberies, kidnappings and murders linked to infighting within the Sinaloa cartel.

"We call on the relevant authorities to fulfill their duty and work together to swiftly locate Father Clemente," the Mexican Bishops' Conference said in a statement posted on social media.

Many members of the congregation at the church where Morales serves gathered outside the state government headquarters on Monday to pray and demand he be found alive, media images showed.

Sinaloa Governor Graciela Domínguez told reporters that security forces had launched a search operation.

"We remain in contact with church authorities to follow up on this case," she said.

Amid the drug-related violence plaguing Mexico, at least 14 priests have been murdered over the past seven years, according to a tally by the Catholic Multimedia Center.

The Sinaloa cartel is embroiled in an internal war between factions loyal to its longtime leaders and former partners Joaquín "El Chapo" Guzmán and Ismael "El Mayo" Zambada, both imprisoned in the United States.

Culiacán is the main battleground in the conflict, which has left more than 2,000 people dead since 2024. *– AFP*

Brazil's top court orders probe into foreign funding of Bolsonaro campaign

BRASÍLIA – Brazil's Supreme Court yesterday ordered police to investigate alleged foreign funding of defeated right-wing senator Flavio Bolsonaro's election campaign, and other interference from abroad such as social media "manipulation."

President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, 81, on Sunday won re-election after a bitter campaign. Bolsonaro has yet to concede defeat, vowing to legally challenge Lula's victory.

Justice Flavio Dino ordered the investigation of "the possible origin, circulation and destination of foreign resources" during the campaign.

He also ordered the probe of "deliberate asymmetries and algorithmic manipulation by internet companies aimed at favouring or harming candidacies in Brazil's electoral process."

Dino cited press reports and allegations from political parties in his request for an investigation.

Lula's campaign complained about interference in the election by Meta, the parent company of WhatsApp, Facebook and Instagram, claiming "algorithmic manipulation."

Meta denies taking any actions to favour one side in the election, but previously said that some of Lula's campaign ads had been mistakenly deactivated due to technical errors.

Dino cited Meta's oversight board, which said in the run-up to the election that it had found failures in content moderation, including "over-enforcement that suppresses political speech, and under-enforcement that undermines electoral integrity." *– AFP*

Bayern 'risk' reaps huge reward for Ballon d'Or winner Kane

Kieran Canning

LONDON – The crowning moment of Harry Kane's career came back in his native city of London, but winning the Ballon d'Or would not have been possible without taking the "risk" of moving to German giants Bayern Munich.

A product of the Tottenham academy, Kane blossomed into the club's all-time record goalscorer, with 280 goals by the time he departed in 2023.

Yet even Kane's firepower could not end Spurs' long wait for silverware as he headed to Bavaria seeking trophies to add to a host of goalscoring records.

The England captain's decision to leave his homeland, with Alan Shearer's record for most Premier League goals in sight, was questioned at the time.

And some in Germany doubted the wisdom of paying a reported initial fee of 100 million euros (US$112 million) for a 30-year-old.

But the move has proved a spectacular success for both Kane and Bayern.

"Making the move to Bayern Munich was a big step in my career. Some people saw it as a risk, but for me it was always about improving," Kane told AFP at the glitzy London gala on Monday.

"Being around the teammates I am, the team, the club, has definitely pushed me on to another level."

Kane has plundered goals at an astonishing rate since moving to Germany, without sacrificing his ability to drop deep and also act as a playmaker.

In last week's 2-2 draw against Arsenal he scored for a 10th consecutive Champions League game and also provided one of the assists of the season for Alphonso Davies.

Overall, Kane has struck 156 times in 159 games for Bayern, picking up two Bundesliga titles and last season's German Cup in the process.

That trophy haul is still scant reward for an outstanding career built on hard work and consistency.

"Work hard in silence. Let success be your noise," Kane posted on social media late on Monday.

But the move to Bayern has given Kane the platform to be considered among the world's best.

"There's no way Harry Kane could have won the Ballon d'Or if he was playing for Tottenham," said former England defender turned pundit Jamie Carragher.

Bayern's domination – they have won 13 of the past 14 titles – means the Bundesliga is often demeaned outside of Germany.

But by playing for one of the biggest clubs in the world, Kane is guaranteed to play Champions League football every season, and Bayern often go deep into the competition.

'Lot to achieve'

The move has also paid dividends for England.

Tottenham's reliance on their talisman meant Kane was forced to push himself to the limit during the exhausting English football schedule, with two domestic cup competitions and no winter break.

By contrast, the Bundesliga takes a three-week break over the festive period and there are only 18 teams, resulting in four fewer league games than in the Premier League.

The added bonus for Kane is that Bayern often rest their star names later in the season to keep them fresh for the Champions League.

Kane has captained England in the past five major tournaments, which have ended in defeats in two finals, two semi-finals and a quarter-final.

At 33 he still believes he has unfinished business at international level and the extra rest afforded by the Bundesliga could prolong his career.

"To be winning awards like this just shows why I made the move in the first place," said Kane.

"There's always ambition, there's always dreams for new achievements, new things. I still have a lot to achieve in this game.

"The Champions League at club level and to win a major trophy with England is the number one priority for sure. There are so many great things I want to achieve."

Bayern have also been big winners from their investment in Kane.

The German club are often overshadowed by Barcelona and Real Madrid in the battle for individual honours but Kane has brought the Ballon d'Or back to Munich for the first time since Karl-Heinz Rummenigge won the award in 1981.

"The club and Harry Kane have got together, grown together and achieved the highest aims together. We are proud that this all-round outstanding sportsman and person is part of our FC Bayern family," said Bayern president Herbert Hainer. *– AFP*

Spain and London City Lionesses midfielder Alexia Putellas and England and Bayern Munich forward Harry Kane pose with their trophies on stage after receiving their Ballon d'Or awards for the best female and male footballer during the 2026 Ballon d'Or France Football award ceremony at the Palladium Theatre in London on Monday. – AFP

Carrick to remain Man Utd boss for Chelsea clash: reports

LONDON – Michael Carrick is set to remain in charge of Manchester United for this weekend's Premier League match away to Chelsea, according to media reports yesterday.

Carrick's future at Old Trafford has been the subject of intense speculation after a miserable run of eight games without a win.

Sunday's 3-0 humbling at home to Bournemouth left the English giants just one point above the Premier League relegation zone.

But the BBC, Sky Sports and Britain's Press Association all reported that former United and England midfielder Carrick would take the team to Stamford Bridge on Saturday.

Carrick arrived at United's Carrington training ground yesterday to oversee a routine training session.

The BBC cited "sources" as saying the 45-year-old would be given a chance by the United hierarchy to turn things around.

Carrick was handed a two-year deal in May after overseeing an impressive revival as caretaker boss following United's struggles under Ruben Amorim.

The club recovered to finish third in the Premier League, earning a return to the Champions League.

But United have won just two of 12 matches in all competitions so far this season, with a return of seven points from eight league games representing their worst start to a league season in 40 years.

Carrick avoided directly answering questions about his future following the Bournemouth loss.

The United boss acknowledged the crowd at full-time as fans chanted his name in a show of support for the beleaguered manager, but they vented their anger at the players and club hierarchy.

United great Wayne Rooney, who played alongside Carrick at Old Trafford, took aim at the players following a string of poor performances.

"The players haven't got a leg to stand on. What's not fair is the performances they are giving," he told the Stick to United podcast.

"I looked at the fans, you could see the pain and anger in their faces when those players are walking around the football pitch." *– AFP*

English footballer Bukayo Saka speaks after being awarded the Socrates Trophy for most involved player in societal and charitable projects during the 2026 Ballon d'Or France Football award ceremony at the Palladium Theatre in London on Monday. – AFP

Chelsea boss Alonso expects Palmer to avoid repeat of red card 'mistakes'

LONDON – Chelsea manager Xabi Alonso has backed a "mature" Cole Palmer to learn from the mistakes that led to the England forward's red card against Tottenham.

Palmer was sent off for two bookable offences during Chelsea's 2-0 loss to their London rivals on Saturday as Spurs won a Premier League match at Stamford Bridge for just the second time in 36 years.

He was initially booked for barging into Mateus Fernandes before, with the Blues 1-0 down, Palmer was sent off 10 minutes from full time following an ugly stamp on Conor Gallagher.

"We spoke, and for sure he (Palmer) knows the mistakes he made and things that you can avoid," Alonso told reporters yesterday on the eve of Chelsea's League Cup fourth-round tie away to top-flight rivals Liverpool.

"I hope that this is not going to be repeated and he's aware of that, he's mature and he knows what he's doing."

Palmer started the season in blistering form but has not scored for five games and will miss the trip to Anfield due to suspension.

Alonso, though, said the 24-year-old remains in high spirits.

The Spaniard added: "He's in a good space, he connects very well socially with his teammates.

"They like him, they want Cole smiling, they want Cole having fun, enjoying his game, because when we see that, we have a better day."

Alonso, meanwhile, said forward Joao Pedro will be sidelined for "a few weeks" due to a thigh injury.

The striker, who has scored five goals in the Premier League this season, did not feature against Spurs.

Alonso said the Brazilian felt something in training and had "a lot of fluid" in his thigh.

"He has an injury on his thigh," Alonso explained. "He's going to be a few weeks out. Let's see how many. We don't want to predict on that, but not ready for the next few games.

"He's a key player. We will miss him. But we have to be ready to deal with the injury and be competitive and win games with the players we have available, starting tomorrow.

"This is the situation. We're ready to fight for it and show a good level." *– AFP*

Sri Lanka end England hopes with crushing win over Pakistan

Cricket

LAHORE, Pakistan – Pace bowler Dilshan Madushanka grabbed a career best 5-34 as Sri Lanka cruised to a thumping eight-wicket win over Pakistan in Lahore yesterday which ends England's hopes of reaching the tri-series final.

The left-armer was well supported by spinner Sahan Arachchige, who took 2-24, to dismiss Pakistan for a paltry 110 in just 25.3 overs. The Sri Lankan batters reached the target in just 18.1 overs.

The victory is Sri Lanka's second in three games, enough to deprive the third team England of a spot in Sunday's final, for which Pakistan have already qualified with three wins.

The English, who have contrived to lose successive matches against Sri Lanka and Pakistan from winning positions, needed the hosts to win to have any hope of joining them in the final.

Consequently, tomorrow's match between Sri Lanka and England is a dead rubber.

Kamindu Mendis struck two sixes and eight fours in his 62 not out from 60 balls, reaching his fifth ODI half-century with a six off Shaheen Shah Afridi. Pavan Rathnayake was unbeaten on 23.

Avishka Fernando fell for 16 and skipper Kusal Mendis made eight, with wickets going to Shaheen and Arafat Minhas.

Mendis praised the efforts of his bowlers, particularly Madushanka.

"We executed our plans well and Dilshan bowled superbly, everyone is happy at the team's progress," said Mendis, whose team hunted down 430 against England last Thursday - the second highest successful chase in all ODIs.

Shaheen put on a brave face after an abject display by his team.

"We must forget this match and get ready for the final," said Shaheen. "We will come back in the final and bat stronger."

Earlier, it was Madushanka's demolition act that wrecked Pakistan, who were put in to bat. Their 110 was their second lowest ODI total at home behind the 75 they made against the same opposition and at the same venue in 2009.

Pakistan, who chased down 242 in a thrilling one-wicket win against England on Sunday, batted poorly on a flat Gaddafi Stadium pitch with token resistance from Babar Azam, top-scoring with 29, and Hasan Nawaz who made 17.

Madushanka dismissed out-of-form opener Fakhar Zaman for five in the fourth over to start the slide.

Azam and Saad Baig put on 23 for the third wicket before Madushanka had Baig caught at cover for five, while Arachchige removed Salman Agha for nine.

The next over saw Azam falling leg before to Eshan Malinga.

Madushanka ensured Pakistan fell way short of a decent total by taking the wickets of Shaheen (15) and Haris Rauf (one) to complete a five-wicket haul.

Madushanka's previous best figure of 5-80 came against India in Mumbai in the 2023 World Cup. – *AFP*

A South African cricket supporter shows a poster to Australia's supporters on day one of the third Test match between South Africa and Australia at Newlands stadium in Cape Town, South Africa yesterday. – *AFP*

Japan's Naomi Osaka walks onto the court, in a Crane outfit, ahead of her WTA Pan Pacific Open tennis match against Italy's Jasmine Paolini at Ariake Coliseum in Tokyo yesterday. Osaka won the match 6-3, 7-6⁴. – *AFP*

Rybakina looking to clinch year-end No 1 in Tokyo

Tennis

TOKYO – Elena Rybakina said Tuesday that she had "definitely got more attention" since becoming world number one as she looks to clinch the year-end top ranking this week in Japan.

The Moscow-born Kazakh player became world number one for the first time last month after winning the US Open, replacing Aryna Sabalenka at the summit.

The achievement punctuated Rybakina's rise in a year in which she also won the Australian Open in January and now has three Grand Slam career titles.

The 27-year-old said she was exhausted mentally and physically after her US Open win but she bounced back to claim her fourth title of the season last week at the Ningbo Open in China.

She has already secured her place at next month's season-ending WTA Finals at Indian Wells.

Rybakina can also clinch the year-end number one ranking if she beats fellow Kazakh Yulia Putintseva in her first match at the Pan Pacific Open in Tokyo.

"The earlier I can confirm it the better," she said.

"For me it's important just to get some matches and be prepared for the final eight.

"If I can make sure here after a win that I am going to stay number one then great, if not I will have another chance at the final eight."

Rybakina took some time off after the US Open and returned at the China Open, losing to 118th-ranked Alina Charaeva in the first round.

She missed the Wuhan Open with a foot injury before beating Leylah Fernandez in the Ningbo final.

Rybakina said being world number one was not enough to satisfy her.

"It was another goal which I achieved which is great, and now there is another one," she said.

"Definitely I got more attention, no matter where I go, which is nice."

Rybakina said she was still dealing with her foot issue but was "getting better every day".

"After the US Open I didn't do much and in Beijing I wasn't at my best at all," she said.

"Physically, mentally I was really tired so I feel like these tournaments now are really good practice for me." – *AFP*

Sport in brief

IOC President Coventry arrives in Senegal for Youth Olympics

DAKAR 2026

GENEVA – International Olympic Committee President Kirsty Coventry arrived in Senegal yesterday ahead of the Dakar 2026 Youth Olympic Games, the organization announced.

"It is time for Africa; it's time for Senegal!" Coventry was quoted as saying by the IOC.

"It's been a long time; we're very excited. We know it's going to be fabulous. The energy is really good. I know Senegal is going to do an incredible job of welcoming the world and the world's athletes to come and share in our African traditions and our excitement. We're very proud of that," Coventry said on her arrival in Senegal's capital.

The tournament begins on October 31, bringing 2,665 young athletes competing across 153 medal events in Dakar, as well as nearby Diamniadio and Saly.

"We're very proud of the team," Coventry said. "The volunteers make everything. It's such a warm welcome, and I think volunteers bring such a special aspect to a Youth Olympic Games.

"We're feeling that energy now, so thank you all for volunteering. Thank you for making these Games so special." – *Xinhua*

Venus Williams suffers 16th defeat in a row with loss to teenager

Tennis

SHANGHAI – Venus Williams suffered her 16th loss in a row in singles tennis as the 46-year-old American icon was defeated by teenager Lilli Tagger in straight sets at the Guangzhou Open yesterday.

Austria's Tagger, who is 28 years younger than the former world number one, eased through 6-2, 6-2 in southern China.

Williams, a seven-time Grand Slam singles champion, last won a singles match on the WTA Tour in July last year.

Now ranked 599 in the world, Williams last played at the US Open in August-September, when she lost in the first round in straight sets to Sofia Kenin.

Williams won in the doubles with Indonesia's Janice Tjen in Guangzhou on Monday.

They will play again today.

The 53rd-ranked Tagger faces Magda Linette of Poland in the next round. – *AFP*

Nadal returns for Vegas hardcourt event

Tennis

Rafael Nadal will return to hard-court competition for the first time since his retirement in November 2024 in a one-night Las Vegas exhibition event next February, organisers announced on Monday.

The 40-year-old Spanish left-hander who won 22 Grand Slam singles titles will compete in "The MGM Slam" on February 28, 2027, at T-Mobile Arena.

Other players and a format for the event will be disclosed later.

Nadal, winner of a record 14 French Open singles titles, makes a hardcourt return in Vegas after playing in an exhibition event at his academy in Spain earlier this month.

Nadal played a 2024 match in Las Vegas against countryman Carlos Alcaraz.

"I remember how impressive it was to feel the energy of a full arena in a city like Las Vegas," Nadal said.

"Now I return in a different stage of my life, without the pressure of the tour but with the same passion for this sport. I have always loved competing, and even if my professional career is finished, that feeling never really goes away."

Earlier this year, eight ATP Tour stars played in a Vegas event where players competed in a 10-point tie-breaker format - with Brazilian teen Joao Fonseca winning the title. – *AFP*

Sinner to play rescheduled Saudi Six Kings in Dec

Tennis

PARIS – Jannik Sinner has signalled he will return to action in the "Six Kings Slam" tournament in Riyadh, which has been rescheduled for late December due to the conflict with Yemen's Houthis.

The 25-year-old Italian currently ranked world No.1 has been out injured since winning Wimbledon in July.

He also looked set to miss the Riyadh event, originally scheduled for October which organisers hope will go ahead on December 27-30.

Sinner shared a poster for the event Monday on his Instagram account featuring his image and the event name and dates but without further comment.

Sinner's 94 percent winning record in 2026 is the best of his career, even beating his figures from the previous two seasons in each of which he won two Grand Slams and the ATP Finals.

The tournament is expected to feature 24-time major champion Novak Djokovic, world No.2 Alexander Zverev, winner of the French Open and the US Open this season, and possibly seven-time major winner Carlos Alcaraz.

The 2027 Dakar Rally is the latest sporting event scheduled to take place in Saudi Arabia to be cancelled, postponed or relocated due to Houthi attacks on the country and the wider US-Iran war that erupted in February. – *AFP*

Dutch broadcaster pulls out of Eurovision over Israel 'sensitivities'

Richard Carter

THE HAGUE – The Netherlands will not participate in next year's Eurovision Song Contest, its public broadcaster NPO said yesterday, citing "sensitivities" over Israel's participation.

The Dutch withdrawal is the latest in a series of boycotts from countries unhappy at Israel's inclusion in the annual music festival, given its military campaign in Gaza sparked by the October 7 Hamas attacks.

"We have known for some time that Israel's participation elicits various reactions in society and causes discussion and division," said Jurre Bosman, NPO's media director, in a statement.

"Therefore, after consultation with the Board of Broadcasters, the NPO has decided to forgo participation in 2027," added Bosman.

The Dutch decision brings to an end a series of flip-flops over its participation, highlighting the divisive nature of the debate in the country and more broadly.

In August, the AVROTROS broadcaster, which selects the Dutch entry and broadcasts the show, had pulled out, saying the event can "no longer be considered neutral" given divisions over the Gaza war.

But a month later, NPO stepped in to replace AVROTROS, saying it would take on the responsibility, only to reverse course with its decision on Tuesday.

Jet de Ranitz, NPO's executive chairman, acknowledged their decision would disappoint many Dutch Eurovision fans and stressed that the contest would still be aired on the public channels.

However, De Ranitz said: "We must conclude that it is currently too early to participate in the Eurovision Song Contest in 2027."

"Due to the sensitivities surrounding the themes currently at play, we have decided to take a step back for the time being," added De Ranitz.

'Bangaranga'

In August, organisers announced they were excluding any country involved in an armed conflict from hosting the competition.

But that has not prevented withdrawals, with Ireland already announcing they will not take part and the head of the Spanish public broadcaster also coming out in favour of a boycott.

Earlier this month, the Czech public broadcaster pulled out, but cited spending cuts as the reason.

Next year's contest, the world's biggest live televised music event, will take place on May 15 in Bulgaria's Black Sea city of Burgas.

It will be the first time the Balkan nation has hosted the contest, coming after Bulgarian singer Darina Yotova, known as Dara, won this year's contest in the Austrian capital Vienna with the catchy floor-filler "Bangaranga".

Since its launch in 1955, Eurovision has become the ultimate pop platform, catapulting Swedish icons ABBA to worldwide fame, as well as boosting the likes of Celine Dion, Cliff Richard and Olivia Newton-John.

The 2026 competition was watched by 131 million viewers, down 35 million from the year before after five countries boycotted it over Israel's participation.

The Netherlands, Iceland, Spain, Ireland and Slovenia all pulled out of the 2026 contest – with the latter three refusing to broadcast the show at all.

The Dutch took part in the very first Eurovision Song Contest back in 1956, and have won on five occasions.

Their most recent winner was Duncan Laurence, whose song Arcade won the contest in 2019, going on to top charts globally.

It became the first Eurovision entry to reach one billion streams on Spotify, according to the Eurovision website.

The head of the European Broadcasting Union (EBU), which organises the show, said he was "deeply sorry" that the Netherlands would not be taking part.

"We understand their decision, and we respect the strength of feeling behind it in the Netherlands," said Martin Green in a statement.

"At the same time, we believe the Eurovision Song Contest matters in a divided world."

NPO's Bosman said the broadcaster was still talking with the EBU about the future of the contest.

"We are convinced that the event can once again become a place of music and connection, where there is room to make societal themes open for discussion," said Bosman.

– AFP

World Weather

CHINA	ASIA-PACIFIC	WORLD	LUSOPHONE
Beijing 5°C~16°C	Manila 25°C~33°C	New York 11°C~18°C	Lisbon 12°C~25°C
Shanghai 15°C~21°C	Bangkok 24°C~34°C	London 7°C~16°C	Rio de Janeiro 19°C~24°C
Hong Kong 22°C~28°C	Tokyo 10°C~19°C	Frankfurt 2°C~15°C	Luanda 24°C~28°C
Taipei 19°C~24°C	Singapore 24°C~31°C	Vancouver 5°C~8°C	Maputo 17°C~27°C
Guangzhou 20°C~30°C	Kuala Lumpur 23°C~31°C	Paris 6°C~15°C	Dili 22°C~33°C
Nanjing 13°C~21°C	Jakarta 24°C~33°C	Moscow 2°C~11°C	São Tomé 25°C~32°C
Guilin 17°C~28°C	Seoul 5°C~13°C	Las Vegas 14°C~26°C	Praia 23°C~32°C
Xi'an 9°C~14°C	Sydney 12°C~24°C	Monte Carlo 14°C~20°C	Bissau 24°C~34°C

Walter Koenig, who played original Chekov on 'Star Trek,' dies at 90

Maggy Donaldson

LOS ANGELES – Walter Koenig, the actor best known for his role as Pavel Chekov on the groundbreaking television show "Star Trek" and in the franchise's first seven movies, has died at age 90, his representative said on Monday.

Koenig died overnight at his home in North Hollywood in Los Angeles, his agent Zachery McGinnis said in a statement, citing the cause of "old age" without further details.

The actor was known for playing the youthful Russian navigator Chekov in the original television series, as well as in several "Star Trek" feature films.

"Today we mourn the passing of Walter Koenig, whose talent, warmth, and unforgettable performances left a lasting mark on generations of fans around the world," read the statement. "Thank you, Walter, for the memories, the inspiration, and for boldly going where few have gone before."

The actor died surrounded by his daughter and niece, added the statement.

Ensign Pavel Chekov first appeared in the iconic series at the start of its second season, in 1967.

The character was meant to appeal to younger viewers. William Shatner, who played Captain James T Kirk and Leonard Nimoy (Mr. Spock) were both in their mid-thirties at the onset of the series, nearly over the hill by the era's standards.

Koenig was 30 when he was cast, and producers hoped he'd appeal to teens, with his mop-top hairstyle not unlike Davy Jones of the Monkees, the famed TV-produced pop band.

'Navigating a steady course'

Born in Chicago and raised in Manhattan, Koenig was the child of Lithuanian immigrants.

He earned a bachelor's degree in psychology and initially planned a career as a psychiatrist.

In this September 10, 2012 photo, US actor Walter Koenig attends his Walk of Fame ceremony in Hollywood, California. – AFP

But acting proved a good bet.

"Star Trek" was given a tepid reception when it debuted, but it eventually snowballed into a cultural phenomenon, spawning a universe of spinoff series along with the films, and a rabid fan following.

The original show ran from 1966 to 1969.

Koenig told *The Los Angeles Times* that when it was cancelled he was "totally at sea" with "no reason to get up in the morning."

But the series soon found massive cult fame, with "Trekkie" super fans who have kept it alive to this day.

Koenig signed on to a film franchise that followed, becoming a mainstay of "Star Trek" movies released between 1979 and 1994.

He also appeared in non-canon spin-offs, and was in the space drama TV series "Babylon 5."

Throughout his career he also posted a number of writing credits, and also worked on computer games.

Koenig married Judy Levitt, who also appeared in "Star Trek" films, in 1965. She died in 2022.

"My heart is heavy," wrote George Takei, Koenig's "Star Trek" co-star who played Sulu in the franchise.

"Walter was more than Chekov. He was a writer, a teacher, a thoughtful man, and a loyal friend. To the fans who loved him for so many years, thank you. He loved you too," Takei wrote on Facebook.

"Rest well, my dear friend. Keep navigating a steady course."

– AFP

Jay-Z to perform at Super Bowl LXI halftime show: NFL

LOS ANGELES – Rapper Jay-Z will perform at the Super Bowl LXI halftime show this February in Los Angeles, the NFL announced on Monday.

Jay-Z's Roc Nation entertainment company has produced the star-packed Super Bowl halftime show each year since 2020, selecting the headliners, but the hip-hop mogul has not previously performed himself at the event.

"When we first reached an agreement with Roc Nation to produce the show, I had just one request: that Jay-Z take the stage himself one day, whenever the moment felt right to him," NFL commissioner Roger Goodell said in a joint statement.

"I couldn't be more excited for fans around the world to experience the artistry, creativity and cultural impact he will bring to the Super Bowl stage."

The announcement did not specify whether Jay-Z would be the sole headliner.

It came after Jay-Z – who is married to pop megastar Beyoncé – performed two shows last weekend at Los Angeles' SoFi Stadium, which will serve as the venue for the Super Bowl on February 14.

Those gigs served as the culmination for a year-long tour celebrating the 30th anniversary of his debut album "Reasonable Doubt."

"From 'Reasonable Doubt' to standing on the Super Bowl halftime stage, this has been a journey," said Jay-Z, whose real name is Shawn Carter.

"Thirty years of music, work, and culture on the world's biggest stage. This run continues to be a dream come true."

In an indication of the level of star power Jay-Z could potentially bring with him to the halftime spectacular, he was joined on-stage in Los Angeles by John Legend, DJ Khaled, Dr Dre and Snoop Dogg.

– AFP

Hospitalisation of Earth

A Greenpeace installation sits outside the venue during the 17th meeting of the Conference of the Parties (COP 17) to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), in the Armenian capital of Yerevan yesterday. – *AFP*

Brightening up the street

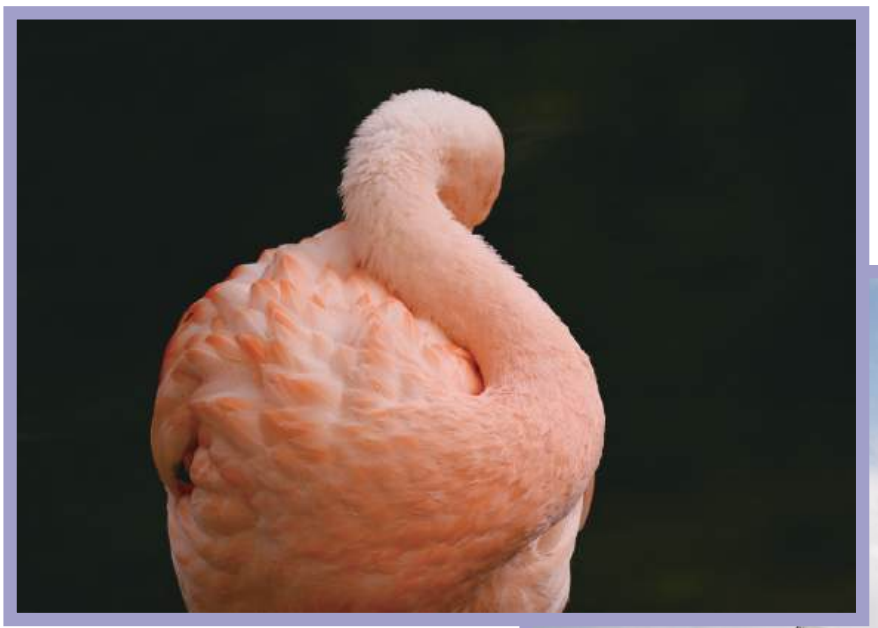
Salvadoran artist Marcela Alvarenga paints the mural "Identity" as a soldier and a police officer patrol the area nearby in the 10 de Octubre community in San Marcos, El Salvador, on October 2.
The artistic project aims to transform the identity of a community historically affected by gang violence. – *AFP*

Totally handmade

A potter colours traditional earthen oil lamps ahead of the Hindu festival of Diwali in Kolkata, India yesterday. – *AFP*

Spooky surfer

A person prepares to compete in the Haunted Heats Halloween surf contest in Santa Monica, California, on Saturday. – *AFP*



Lost his head

A flamingo sleeps at his enclosure at the Dortmund Zoo, western Germany, on Monday. – *AFP*

Mega skeleton

Workers prepare the massive Day of the Dead altar in Zocalo square in Mexico City on Monday, ahead of its unveiling on Friday.
On November 2, Mexicans celebrate the Day of the Dead, a tradition honouring deceased relatives and loved ones. – *AFP*