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CPC plenum concludes, adopting resolution on persevering with full, rigorous Party self-governance

BEIJING – The 20th Central Committee of the Communist Party of China (CPC) held its fifth plenary session from Monday to yesterday in Beijing, adopting a resolution on persevering with full and rigorous Party self-governance.

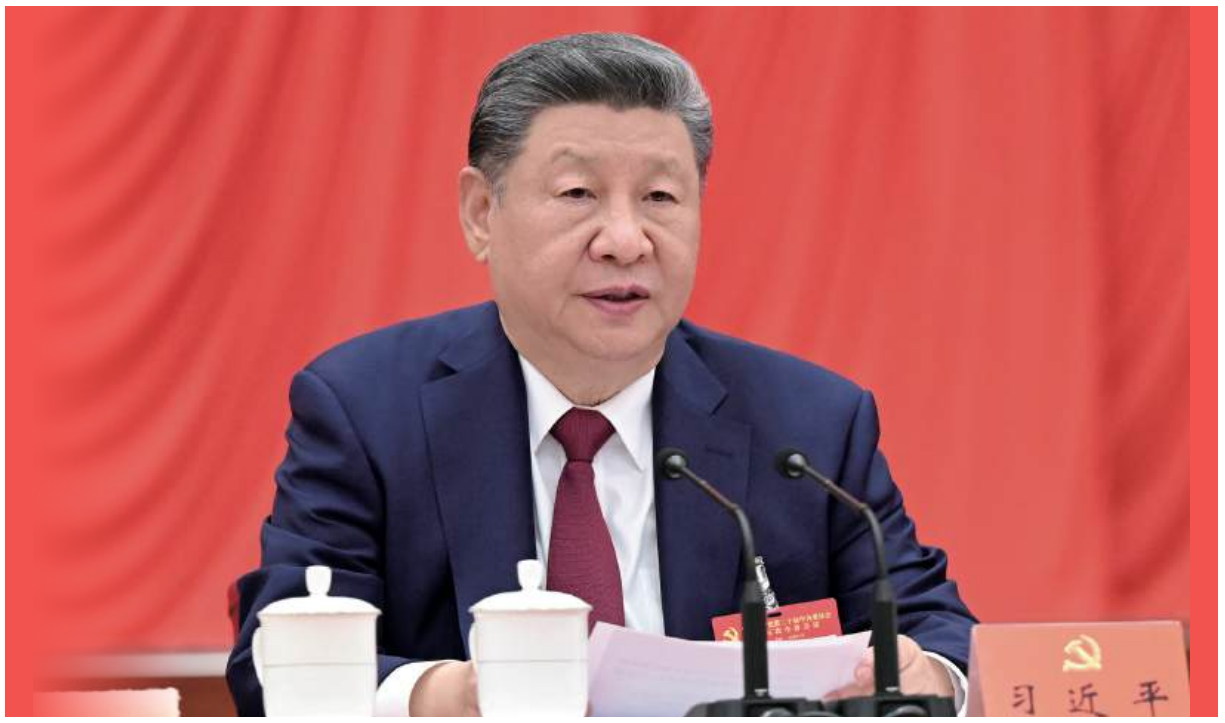
The Political Bureau of the CPC Central Committee presided over the meeting. Xi Jinping, general secretary of the CPC Central Committee, delivered an important address, said a communique issued after the session.

At the session, participants heard and discussed a report on the work of the Political Bureau presented by Xi.

They also considered and adopted the Resolution of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China on Certain Major Issues concerning Persevering with Full and Rigorous Party Self-Governance. Xi delivered explanatory remarks on the draft of the resolution.

The CPC Central Committee fully affirmed the work of the Political Bureau since the committee's fourth plenary session, the communique said.

Looking back on the Party's journey since its founding, the CPC Central Committee pointed out that the key to the success of the CPC in winning one victory after another lies in its pursuit of the high ideal of communism, its dedication to achieving lasting greatness for the Chinese nation, and its commitment to seeking happiness for the Chinese people and rejuvenation for the Chinese nation.



Xi Jinping, general secretary of the Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Committee, delivers an important address at the fifth plenary session of the 20th CPC Central Committee in Beijing. The 20th CPC Central Committee held its fifth plenary session in Beijing from Monday through yesterday. – Xinhua

At the session, the CPC Central Committee gave a highly positive assessment of the great achievements the Party has made in exercising full and rigorous self-governance in the new era.

It was pointed out that as the Party endeavors to supervise, govern, develop, and strengthen itself in the new era, the CPC Central Committee with Comrade Xi Jinping at its core has put forward a series of new ideas, new thinking, and new strategies in response to the major questions of the times – what kind of long-term governing Marxist party the CPC should build and how to build it, thereby giving rise to Xi Jinping Thought on Party Building.

Continued on p.6



Sam vows commitment to spirit of 5th plenum of CPC 20th Central Committee

Tony Wong

Chief Executive Sam Hou Fai yesterday pledged the local government's commitment to earnestly studying and putting into practice the spirit of the four-day fifth plenary session of the 20th Central Committee of the Communist Party of China (CPC) – which concluded in Beijing yesterday – and taking concrete actions to make greater contributions to the nation's macro-strategies and high-quality development, according to a statement by the Macao Government Information Bureau (GCS) last night.

Extending warm congratulations on the successful conclusion of the session, Sam said that the important spirit and systematic deployment of full and rigorous Party self-governance provide crucial insights from a modern governance perspective for the Macao Special Administrative Region (MSAR) to advance the development of its civil service team and deepen public administration reform.

Sam noted that Xi Jinping, general secretary of the CPC Central Committee, delivered an important address during the fifth plenary session. The Central Committee deliberated and adopted the Resolution of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China (CPC) on Certain Major Issues concerning Persevering with Full and Rigorous Party Self-Governance.

According to the statement, Sam said that thoroughly studying and putting into practice the spirit of the fifth plenary session is a major political task for Macau.

Sam noted that Xi Jinping Thought on Party Building provides fundamental guidelines and an action blueprint for further advancing the great new project of Party building in the new era. The vast number of Macau compatriots deeply recognise that only through rigorous Party self-governance can solid political, ideological, and organisational guarantees be provided for the sound development of the nation's cause, securing historical initiative amid changing international dynamics and offering strong political guarantees for fully advancing the building of a strong nation and national rejuvenation through Chinese modernisation, Sam said.

Sam said that the MSAR governance team should align with the nation's high governance standards, strengthen their sense of responsibility and accountability, adhere to the principle of "patriots governing Macao", and ensure that the central authorities' policies and measures concerning Macau are all effectively implemented here.

Sam also pledged the MSAR Government's commitment to deepening public administration reform, breaking away from conventional and conservative thinking, streamlining administrative procedures, enhancing cross-departmental collaboration efficiency, and building a high-calibre talent team.

Sam also said that key efforts will be made to strengthen clean governance, maintain a high-pressure stance against corruption, refine civil service integrity management and oversight mechanisms, and foster a clean and upright administrative environment. ■

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Afghanistan opium poppy cultivation surges despite Taliban govt ban: UN

Opium poppy cultivation in Afghanistan more than quadrupled in 2026 despite a Taliban government ban, the United Nations said yesterday, urging that impoverished farmers needed alternatives to the lucrative crop. *– Story on p. 10*

ECB chief Lagarde to step down early, triggering succession race

European Central Bank (ECB) President Christine Lagarde will step down in February, months before her term ends, officials said yesterday, kicking off a race to succeed her against a turbulent backdrop in the eurozone and further afield. *– Story on p. 11*

Bolsonaro claims he is Brazil's true leader after fleeing to US

Brazil's defeated right-wing presidential candidate Flávio Bolsonaro insisted on Wednesday he is his country's rightful leader, after fleeing to the United States to start a self-imposed exile. *– Story on p. 12*

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Age for exemption from 'Peng On Tung' fee may be lowered in future: Kai Fong



Kai Fong President John Chan Ka Leong (centre, right) and CTM Director of Corporate Communications Eliza Chan (centre, left) visit a Peng On Tung user in Toi San district yesterday. – Photos: Armindo Neves

Armindo Neves

Macau General Union of Neighbourhood Associations' (Kai Fong) Macau Peng On Tung Tele-Assistance Service Centre Manager Pun Ka Lon said yesterday that the age for fee exemption for the service may be lowered in the future.

Peng On Tung means "safe telecommunication".

Speaking to reporters at the Kai Fong headquarters in Toi San district, Pun noted that the government had waived monthly fees for the fixed-line Peng On Tung service in January and May this year for solo-dwelling senior and elderly couples aged 85 and over, and 75 and over, respectively.

According to Pun, around 2,200 new users were added between January and September this year, of whom approximately 1,800 were eligible for the monthly fee waiver. At present, around 160 to 250 new users are added each month.

The centre will carry out in-home trials of 10 wireless personal emergency alarms early next month, Pun said, adding that if progress goes smoothly, it will strive to launch a pilot scheme covering around 50 people in December. Priority will initially be given to newly built estates, such as those in Zone A and the social housing units on Rua de Francisco Xavier Pereira, before gradually extending the service to other districts.

Meanwhile, Peng On Tung and CTM held a gift-giving event at Kai Fong headquarters to hand home appliances, electric wheelchairs, and other equipment to individual Peng On Tung users in need.

In his address, Kai Fong President John Chan Ka Leong expressed his gratitude to CTM for providing high-quality telecom services to Peng On Tung over the past 17 years, as well as for offering users measures such as waivers of fixed-line installation and relocation fees, and monthly fee concessions.

He noted that the service has been in operation since 2009, with an outdoor version added in 2018. It currently has 7,198 users and provides a 24-hour emergency call service for solo-dwelling senior citizens, elderly couples, and people with chronic illnesses, Chan said. He added that Peng On Tung has completed testing of the wireless personal emergency alarm, and the new equipment is expected to be trialled by the end of this year.



Macau General Union of Neighbourhood Associations' (Kai Fong) Macau Peng On Tung Tele-Assistance Service Centre Manager Pun Ka Lon speaks to reporters at the Kai Fong headquarters in Toi San district yesterday.

CTM Director of Corporate Communications Eliza Chan (陳靜儀) also said that over its 45 years, CTM has offered dedicated caring telecommunications concessions to communities in need, and has built a community care network through charitable work. She expressed the hope of expanding cooperation with Kai Fong and other social welfare organisations to jointly build a harmonious "Digital-Intelligent Macau". ■

2 men lose 140,000 patacas in nude-chat scams: police

Sherwin Hng

A young and a middle-aged man have reported losing a combined total of about 140,000 patacas in two separate nude-chat extortion scams, Judiciary Police (PJ) spokesman Cheong Un Hong said yesterday.

According to Cheong, in the first case, the non-local victim met a woman on the social media platform X, previously branded Twitter, at around 3:00 p.m. on Tuesday before moving their conversation to Telegram. The woman offered sexual favours and sent him an unknown mobile application to install. After granting the app access to his phone, the victim engaged in a nude video chat with the woman for several seconds.



Judiciary Police (PJ) spokesman Cheong Un Hong looks on during yesterday's regular press conference. – Photo: Sherwin Hng

The woman then claimed to have secretly recorded the video and stolen the victim's contacts, text messages, and photos. She threatened to send the footage to his family and friends unless he paid her, Cheong said.

Fearing exposure, the victim transferred 50,000 yuan (60,620 patacas) to two mainland Chinese bank accounts provided by the woman and paid another 20,000 yuan via WeChat. She continued demanding money, and he transferred a further 30,000 yuan. Unable to pay more, he reported the case to the Judiciary Police at around 10:00 p.m. that day, reporting a total loss of 100,000 yuan, equivalent to about 120,000 patacas, Cheong said.

In the second case, a middle-aged local man met a woman on social media at around 10:00 p.m. on Monday and engaged in a nude video chat lasting about two minutes after midnight the following day, according to Cheong.

The woman subsequently sent him the video and his phone contacts, demanding 5,800 yuan to delete the material and threatening to share it with his family and friends if he refused. The victim transferred money using an Alipay QR code she provided, but she continued demanding payments. He eventually paid a total of 20,000 patacas before reporting the case to the Judiciary Police, after being unable to pay any more. ■

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Macau Weather

MAINLY FINE.
FORCE 2 TO 4 EAST TO NORTHEASTERLY WINDS.
RELATIVE HUMIDITY WILL RANGE BETWEEN 50% AND 85%.

24ºC~30ºC

Source: SMG

'hush! Beach Concerts' to launch preliminary activities Tuesday

Khalel Vallo

The Cultural Affairs Bureau (IC) announced in a statement on Wednesday that "hush! Beach Concerts x Urban Sports Wellfest 2026" will launch a series of preliminary activities at various locations from November 3 ahead of the main event at Hac Sa Beach on November 14 and 15, featuring music workshops, rap masterclasses, community performances, and beachside sports activities.

Jointly organised by the bureau and integrated resort operator MGM, the event will bring together local and international musicians, DJs, and performers through activities designed to promote music creation, cultural exchange, and community participation, the statement said.

Hong Kong pianist, arranger, and composer Joyce Cheung (張貝芝) will present the "From Classical to Jazz" music-sharing session, followed by a trio performance on the "Music Chill" stage during the main event, the statement said, adding that Chinese mainland rapper Zhao Hong, known professionally as J-Fever, will lead the "Freestyling Everything" rap masterclass and the "Hip-Hop Music and Life" campus workshop, and perform at the "Oriental Rap" prelude concert.

Local musician Pun Kuan Pou will lead young musicians in creating a "pop-rock hush!" theme song combining Chinese and Western instruments, accompanied by the production of a music video, the statement said, adding that Terence Kuong (鄺梓兵), aka DJ SAIYAN, will conduct a workshop on electronic music and DJ techniques, while musicians Jason Chang (曾慶欣) and Wan Si Lok will guide students in creating music with the assistance of AI.



This undated handout photo provided by the Cultural Affairs Bureau (IC) on Wednesday shows its "Run • Sing • Play" activity at Hac Sa Beach in Coloane.

Community activities will include the "Rock Hop Express – Macau Music City Tour Trilogy", the statement noted, adding that the programme will feature an open-top double-decker bus tour highlighting local music and urban stories, mobile rock performances at public spaces, and live music at cafés, bars, and other venues across the city.

At Hac Sa Beach, the "Run • Sing • Play" activity will combine light jogging, musical challenges, and beach games, the statement noted, underlining that "DIWA ELECTRONIC" will return for the third consecutive year with DJ and street dance performances and an interactive illuminated dance floor.

Admission to the November 14–15 main event is free, although some workshops and masterclasses require registration through the "Activity Applications" section of Macao One Account or MGM Ticketing, the statement said, adding that further details are available at www.icm.gov.mo/hush and through the event's official social media accounts and MGM's website. ■

Pui Ching student shines at Beijing Normal University forum

Armindo Neves

Pui Ching Middle School student Peony Wong Chong Kei was invited to serve as a guest speaker at Beijing Normal University's (BNU) Smart Youth Forum to discuss learning and core competencies in the AI era.

According to a statement sent to the *Post* yesterday, Wong was the only secondary school speaker in the "Impact" session.

According to its official website, the forum – themed "We the Future: Imagine · Innovate · Impact" – brought together young speakers from 13 countries and regions. Its core message was that artificial intelligence is a young endeavour, and one that belongs to young people. The forum also provided a platform for young people to contribute their experience, creativity, and vision to collectively shape education in the age of AI, and to gain support through intergenerational dialogue and mentorship, according to the website.

Drawing on her experience in international competitions and scientific research, Wong explained to attendees how secondary school students can make good use of AI while retaining independent thinking, according to Pui Ching's statement.

Wong also took part in a roundtable discussion with Global Student Forum (GSF) Executive Director Jacob Blasius, a representative of Turkmenistan's Ministry of Education, and youth representatives from universities including Peking University (PKU) and Shanghai Jiao Tong University (SJTU), the statement said, adding that her insightful contributions were praised by several scholars, including Prof. Huang Ronghuai, dean of the Smart Learning Institute at Beijing Normal University.



Pui Ching Middle School student Peony Wong Chong Kei (right) and her teacher Winnie Liu Yingyu (left) pose during last Monday's forum held at Beijing Normal University.



Pui Ching Middle School student Peony Wong Chong Kei gives a speech during last Monday's forum. – Photo courtesy of Pui Ching Middle School

Wong's participation showcased the interdisciplinary thinking and international communication skills of her school's students, bringing the perspectives of Macau secondary school students into the global education dialogue, according to the statement.

During a written interview, Wong's guiding teacher, Winnie Liu Yingyu, said that Wong is involved in multiple areas, including technological innovation, public speaking, and scientific research, and is jointly guided by teachers from various subjects at the school.

Liu was Wong's form teacher last year and learnt of her interest in education and psychology, so she used the forum as an opportunity to introduce her to scholars in related fields and explore her aspirations. When coaching her for the speech, Liu suggested that Wong adopt the perspective of a junior secondary student and, drawing on her own learning and competition experience, share the challenges and gains of using AI, thereby presenting a unique viewpoint.

In Liu's view, what matters most in the AI era is cultivating students' abilities in independent thinking, expression, and performance – knowing how to judge AI-generated content, form their own opinions, and express them clearly to others. Stage performance and interaction, she added, still need to be developed through practice. ■

Govt to expand community spending rewards scheme from Sunday

Sherwin Hng

The Macau government will expand the trial implementation of its "Community Consumption Rewards" scheme from November 1 to December 31, aiming to channel more residents and visitors into local neighbourhoods and boost community spending, according to a joint statement issued by five public entities on Wednesday.

The scheme is jointly implemented by the Economic and Technological Development Bureau (DSEDT), the Gaming Inspection and Coordination Bureau (DICJ), the Macao Government Tourism Office (MGTO), the Sports Bureau (ID), and the Macau Productivity and Technology Transfer Centre (CPTTM). It will be expanded to cover a wider range of tourism, cultural, and sporting events and other designated activities, encouraging participants to explore local shops and services.

Under the scheme, eligible participants can obtain a one-time redemption code from on-site staff and scan it using designated electronic payment tools to receive a "discount package." They have the chance to obtain instant-discount coupons worth a total of 50, 100, or 150 patacas. Each person may redeem the package up to twice a week.

Eligible participants include passengers using the "Tourism and Leisure Bus" who alight at designated community stops, people completing the "Discover Macau's History" cultural tourism routes, visitors to the Macau Grand Prix Museum, and holders of flight or ferry tickets to Macau. The scheme will also cover consumers who meet the spending requirement at the 26th Macao Food Festival, holders of tickets to the 73rd Macau Grand Prix, and candidates taking designated examinations organised by the CPTTM.

The coupons can be used at more than 1,000 designated businesses near community stops served by the city's "Tourism and Leisure Bus." Participating businesses cover food and beverage, retail, cultural and creative products, and daily services. Details and the list of participating businesses are available on the scheme's dedicated webpage (https://www.dsedt.gov.mo/rlc), the statement said.

The first phase was trialled during the National Day "Golden Week" holiday, in conjunction with the "Tourism and Leisure Bus" and the "Discover Macau's History" cultural tourism routes. The statement said the initial response had been satisfactory.

To promote the expanded scheme, the DSEDT will distribute promotional stickers and table cards to participating businesses and provide detailed information about the scheme. The DICJ will coordinate with Macau's six integrated resort operators to publicise the initiative through their facilities and channels, while continuing to use the shuttle bus programme to direct visitors towards surrounding neighbourhoods.

MGTO will distribute dedicated activity cards to visitors to the Macau Grand Prix Museum and holders of flight or ferry tickets to Macau between November 1 and December 31. During the 26th Macao Food Festival, running from November 20 to December 6, visitors who spend at least 100 patacas at the festival can obtain an activity card at a designated booth by presenting their original transaction receipts.

Meanwhile, the Sports Bureau will distribute activity cards to ticket holders at the 73rd Macau Grand Prix, which will take place from November 19 to 22, encouraging spectators to visit nearby communities after the races.

From November 7 to December 31, the CPTTM will also distribute cards to candidates taking certification and skills assessment examinations at its International and Professional Examination Centre in the Macau World Trade Centre building. The initiative aims to encourage candidates and their accompanying family members to explore nearby neighbourhoods and spend time at local hotels, restaurants, and shops.

The government hopes the expanded scheme will bring together resources across different sectors, strengthen the appeal of community shopping, and support the development of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), the statement added. ■



This undated photo shows a "Tourism and Leisure Bus: Exploring Community Charms" stop (front, left) near Rua do Cunha in Taipa.



This undated photo shows a "Tourism and Leisure Bus: Exploring Community Charms" stop in front of Don Don Donki in Fai Chi Kei district. – Photos received from GCS



This image provided by the five participating government entities on Wednesday shows the activity card for the "Community Rewards" consumption incentive scheme. Translation from Chinese arranged by the Post.

POLY MGM MUSEUM unveils Zibo glass art exhibition

Khalel Vallo

MGM MACAU's POLY MGM MUSEUM opened "Luminous Brilliance: The Artistry of Zibo Liuli" earlier this month on October 1, National Day, showcasing nearly 180 historic and contemporary glass artworks tracing 3,000 years of Chinese glassmaking and cultural exchange.

Running until March 31 next year, the exhibition is presented in conjunction with the National Museum of China and the Zibo Ceramics and Glass Museum, exploring the development of liuli*, traditional Chinese glass art, and Zibo's reputation as the "Hometown of Chinese Glass".

Zibo is a city in central Shandong province, bordering the provincial capital Jinan to the west, Tai'an to the southwest, Linyi to the south, Weifang to the east, Dongying to the northeast, and Binzhou to the north.

According to the exhibition's information message board at the entrance, Zibo, an ancient capital of the State of Qi and a historic centre of the silk trade, is considered one of the birthplaces of early Chinese liuli craftsmanship. Boshan, a district of Zibo, is home to the earliest and only archaeologically verified ancient liuli kiln site discovered in the whole country, the message said.

The industry flourished during the Ming and Qing dynasties (1368-1912), when artisans from Boshan served in the Qing imperial workshops before taking court glassmaking techniques back to their native region, the message added.

Traditionally made by refining mineral-rich stones through intense heat, liuli was used for everyday utensils as well as treasured imperial objects, according to the message. Generations of craftsmen developed the art through technical innovation and increasingly refined designs, the message said, adding that the ancient text Guanzi** captures this spirit of adaptation: "Do not cling to the past, nor remain fixed in the present; transform with the times and adapt to changing customs."

The exhibition features three thematic chapters: "Forging a Millennium Legacy", "Eternal Iridescence" and "Exquisite Objects of Timeless Elegance". Together, they examine the historical evolution of Chinese glassmaking, the artistic use of colour and contemporary glass craftsmanship.

The first chapter traces ancient glass artefacts from the Warring States period to the Qing Dynasty, alongside Roman and Sasanian glass objects illustrating cultural and technological exchanges along the Silk Road.

The second explores five traditional Eastern colour spectrums – yellow, red, white, blue and green – through works created using techniques including glassblowing, lost-wax casting, inside painting and carving.

The final chapter focuses on lampworking, a glass-forming technique that uses a flame reaching about 1,200 degrees Celsius to create intricate shapes. The technique is recognised as intangible cultural heritage in Shandong.

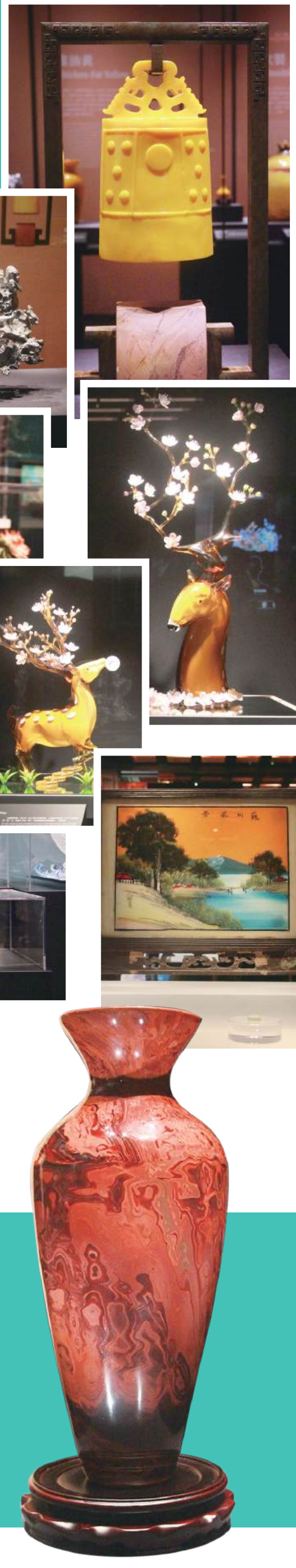
According to the message, interactive displays and digital interpretation include holographic display cases developed by Poly Culture, alongside a craft zone illustrating the glassmaking process, from raw material selection and kiln firing to carving and finishing.

The exhibition also highlights how contemporary artists continue to build on traditional techniques while exploring new creative approaches, allowing liuli craftsmanship to evolve through artistic exchange and helping preserve this cultural heritage.

Located on Level 2 of MGM MACAU in Nape, the museum opens from 11:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. on weekdays and from 10:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. at weekends with free admission.

**Liuli (琉璃, "coloured glass") is a traditional Chinese art-glass craft associated with ancient glassmaking and lost-wax casting. – Gemini*

***Guanzi is also the title of a foundational Chinese philosophical and political text. – DeepSeek*





Photos taken at MGM MACAU's POLY MGM MUSEUM in Nape on September 29. – Photos: Khalel Vallo

Govt to start building survey in 'Laahn Gwai Lau' next week

Tony Wong

The government announced yesterday that it will launch a survey next Wednesday into the conditions of 292 buildings in the neighbourhood colloquially known in Cantonese as "Laahn Gwai Lau" (爛鬼樓 – "Dilapidated Ghost Building").

The area is located in the old quarters of the city centre.

The survey aims to systematically collect baseline data on the state of maintenance of the buildings, including their external condition, and facilities and structural components in their internal common areas.

The upcoming building-condition survey, one of the government's various urban renewal initiatives, was first revealed during a meeting early last month to brief association representatives about Macau's 3rd Five-Year Plan regarding the government's transport and public works portfolio.

The Macau government announced and published the final version of the 3rd Five-Year Plan in August.

The Macao Special Administrative Region's (MSAR) 3rd Five-Year Plan, officially known as the 3rd Five-Year Plan for Economic and Social Development, covers the period between 2026 and 2030.

During last month's meeting, the government said that it was planning to start conducting a citywide survey of the conditions of old district buildings in a gradual manner in the fourth quarter of this year, with the Laahn Gwai Lau area as a pilot zone.

Details of the pilot survey for the Laahn Gwai Lau neighbourhood were announced by the Lands and Urban Construction Bureau (DSSCU) in a statement yesterday.

Yesterday's statement noted that the first phase of the citywide survey, which will start next Wednesday, will be conducted in the area surrounded by Rua de Nossa Senhora do Amparo (關前後街), Rua da Tercena (果欄街), Rua do Infante (皇子街), Rua de Cinco de Outubro (十月初五日街), and Rua das Estalagens (草堆街), covering a total of 292 buildings.

The area covered by the survey's first phase is colloquially known in Cantonese as Laahn Gwai Lau.

The survey area will be divided into three zones, which will be surveyed respectively by three architectural consultancies hired by the bureau.

The bureau has set up a dedicated website (https://www.dsscu.gov.mo/edfcenso/zh) providing further details about the survey, according to which the survey in the three zones will be conducted from next Wednesday through December 24, January 3, and February 2 next year, lasting 51, 61, and 91 days respectively.

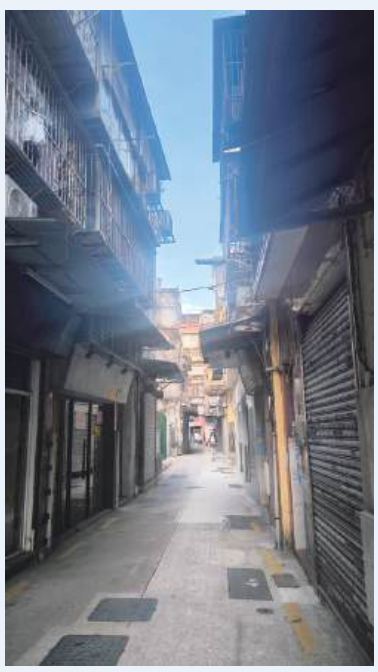
Yesterday's statement said that surveyors from the hired consultancies will visit the site every day during daytime hours to inspect building façades and internal common areas, including entrance halls, stairwells, corridors, rooftops, and water/electricity meter rooms. Through on-site inspections and photographic records, they will gather and log data concerning the condition of building structural components, water and electricity supply facilities, and environmental hygiene, the statement said.

The statement underlined that following an evaluation of the experience gained from the upcoming pilot work, the survey will be gradually extended to other districts in the city, prioritising older districts. The collected building condition data will serve as a reference for the government to advance its urban renewal initiatives, the statement said.

The statement said that to facilitate identification by residents, survey staff carrying out their duties will wear an official badge and a specific work vest. Survey personnel will strictly confine their activities to the common areas of the buildings and will not enter any private units under any circumstances.

The statement reminded residents that neither the bureau nor the architectural consultancies will charge any fees, request personal identification data, bank account details, or passwords, nor will they send notifications or hyperlink requests via SMS, email, or other channels.

All collected data will be used exclusively for government statistical and analytical purposes, and any information involving privacy will be handled in strict compliance with the provisions of the Personal Data Protection Law, the statement said. ■



A pedestrian walks along Travessa do Armazém Velho (爛鬼樓巷), an alley in the "Laahn Gwai Lau" (爛鬼樓) neighbourhood, yesterday.
– Photo: Tony Wong

Govt clears overhead cables to enhance urban environment

Ida Cheong

In an effort to optimise Macau's urban appearance, the Municipal Affairs Bureau (IAM) announced in a statement yesterday that its "Urban Beautification and Sanitation Working Group" conducted clean-up operations this month to remove overhead cables across streets around Tamagnini Barbosa Market (台山街市), Largo do Senado in the city centre, and Rua da Sé (大堂街).

The operation proceeded smoothly thanks to interdepartmental collaboration and residents' cooperation, the statement said.

In addition to detracting from the cityscape, overhead cables pose safety risks such as electric shocks and falling hazards. Following the completion of a pilot cable clearance project in Rua do Comandante Mata e Oliveira (馬統領圍) in late June, several entities – including the Municipal Affairs Bureau (IAM), Fire Services Bureau (CB), Lands and Urban Construction Bureau (DSSCU), Environmental Protection Bureau (DSPA), Transport Bureau (DSAT), Macao Post and Telecommunications Bureau (CTT), CEM, and TDM – reviewed their pilot experience and established a joint cross-departmental mechanism to classify cables into categories such as power supply, telecommunications, and broadcast transmission for targeted handling, the statement said.

Prior to the operations, the working group notified local merchants and residents through neighbourhood associations, widely publicised the upcoming work via direct mail and building notices, and set up a consultation hotline, 2833 7676, for public enquiries or emergency reporting, minimising the impact on residents and business operations, according to the statement.

During this phase, the statement pointed out, the working group inspected 14 sets of overhead cables around Tamagnini Barbosa Market, successfully removing eight sets. The remaining six sets –involving temporary streetlight power supplies, ongoing construction, and underground cable projects – will be removed in subsequent stages in coordination with relevant entities.

Around Largo do Senado and Rua da Sé, 24 sets of cables were inspected, with 12 sets removed so far, the statement said, adding that priority was given to clearing unused cables, while the remaining cables involving temporary power supply and public lighting will be handled in due course. ■



This undated handout photo provided by the Municipal Affairs Bureau (IAM) yesterday shows its "Urban Beautification and Sanitation Working Group" removing overhead cables in Rua da Sé, assisted by the Fire Services Bureau (CB).

New Patane car park opens today with 93 parking spaces

Ida Cheong

Reconstructed from an outdoor motorcycle parking area, the new "Avenida Marginal do Patane Public Car Park" (沙梨頭海邊大馬路公共停車場) will open to the public at 10:00 a.m. today, providing 93 parking spaces for motorcycles, according to a statement from the Transport Bureau (DSAT) yesterday.

The car park entrance and exit, located on Avenida Marginal do Patane, will accommodate a total of 93 parking spaces for heavy and light motorcycles, the statement said.

Aiming to optimise parking space turnover, the facility introduces a "first 15 minutes free" policy, followed by half-hourly rates, and operates on a fully electronic payment system, the statement said, adding that the parking fees for heavy and light motorcycles are split into day and night rates: 1.0 pataca per half hour or fraction thereof during the day, and 50 avos (cents) per half hour at night.

The statement noted that it supports contactless and digital payments including Mpark, Macau Pass, MPay, and UnionPay QuickPass, adding that cash and manual electronic payments at the service counter will only be accepted in the event of system failures. ■



This undated handout photo provided by the Transport Bureau (DSAT) yesterday shows its "Avenida Marginal do Patane Public Car Park" (沙梨頭海邊大馬路公共停車場).

All Souls' Day public holiday notice

Due to the All Souls' Day public holiday on Monday, *The Macau Post Daily*'s editing and reporting teams will be off on Sunday, returning to work on Monday, so the print edition of your favourite newspaper will be on newsstands and delivered to your homes and offices on Tuesday.

The admin team will be off on Monday, so customer service will resume on Tuesday.

However, our website https://www.macaupostdaily.com/ will be updated round the clock.

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

All government offices and banks will be closed on Monday, returning to work on Tuesday.

CPC plenum concludes, adopting resolution on persevering with full, rigorous Party self-governance

Continued from p.1

"It was stressed that many favorable conditions are now in place for advancing full and rigorous Party self-governance, while we also face many new circumstances and new issues in this endeavor," the communique said.

Profound changes in global, national, and Party conditions have made the CPC's tasks of uniting and leading the people in safeguarding China's sovereignty, security, and development interests, of uniting and leading the people in promoting reform and development and maintaining social harmony and stability, and of maintaining its advanced nature and integrity even more formidable, it added.

"Dedicated to fulfilling the Party's missions and tasks, we must act in line with the overall requirements for Party building in the new era, take the Party Constitution as our fundamental guide, maintain the Party's vanguard nature, and uphold the overall leadership of the Party and the centralized, unified leadership of the Party Central Committee," the communique said.

At the session, the guiding principles for persevering with full and rigorous Party self-governance were highlighted as follows: serving the Party's missions and tasks; taking strengthening the Party politically as the overarching principle; exercising rigorous governance across the board; adopting a problem-oriented approach; upholding fundamental principles and breaking new ground; adhering to a top-down approach; and running the Party according to regulations.

Systematic plans for persevering with full and rigorous Party self-governance were also made at the session, according to the communique.

Strengthening the Party spirit represents a fundamental task in the CPC's efforts to ensure full and rigorous Party self-governance, it said.

Democratic centralism is the Party's fundamental organizational principle and leadership system, and its implementation is therefore an inherent requirement for exercising full and rigorous Party self-governance, the communique added.

Strict management of officials is the key to full and rigorous Party self-governance, it noted.

"We will build up the ranks of high-caliber officials with firm political commitment, outstanding professional competence, excellent work conduct, and strict discipline," it added.

Party organizations at all levels play the principal role in exercising full and rigorous Party self-governance, said the communique, adding that it is therefore essential to systematically advance the development of Party organizations at all levels and in all sectors to strengthen their political and organizational functions.

Improving conduct and tightening discipline are effective measures to advance full and rigorous Party self-governance, said the communique.

"It was noted that taking integrated steps to ensure that officials do not have the audacity, opportunity, or desire to commit corruption is both an important strategy for full and rigorous Party self-governance and a fundamental guideline for our fight against corruption," the communique said.

"We must take systematic steps to address both symptoms and root causes of corruption and adopt a holistic approach that combines severe punishment, targeted remedy, and effective prevention, carrying this fight through to the end," it stated.

Strengthening Party regulations and institutions represents a long-term, fundamental strategy for ensuring full and rigorous Party self-governance, said the communique.

Persevering with full and rigorous Party self-governance entails further improvement to Party and state oversight systems, said the communique, adding that it is the common political responsibility of all Party members.

Studying and implementing the guiding principles from this plenary session represent a major political task for the entire Party both at present and in the period to come, according to the communique. It was also stressed that all aspects of the Party's work agenda should be steadily advanced at the turn of the year.

The CPC Central Committee decided at the session that the Party will convene its 21st National Congress in Beijing in the second half of 2027 and stated that this congress, which is to be held at a critical stage for basically realizing socialist modernization and on a new journey toward the Second Centenary Goal, will be a highly important meeting and an event of great political significance for both the Party and the country.

The session elected Zhang Shengmin as a new member of the CPC Central Committee Political Bureau, according to the communique.

The session also decided on the filling of empty seats on the Central Committee by alternate members, deliberated and adopted inspection reports of the Central Commission for Discipline Inspection and the Central Military Commission on those committing grave violations of discipline and laws, and confirmed the Political Bureau's previous decisions to punish those violators.

The CPC Central Committee called upon the entire Party to rally more closely around the CPC Central Committee with Xi at its core and fully implement Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era. *– Xinhua*

HK reveals findings of probe into deadly residential fire



Chief Executive of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) John Lee Ka-chiu (fourth from right) and other HKSAR government officials bow their heads to apologize for the deadly blaze at the residential complex Wang Fuk Court during a press conference in Hong Kong yesterday. China's HKSAR government yesterday released a report on the investigation into a major fire at the residential complex Wang Fuk Court, announcing accountability measures and follow-up reforms. The November 26, 2025 fire resulted in 178 fatalities and 79 injuries, according to official records. – Xinhua

HONG KONG – Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) government yesterday released a report on the investigation into a major fire at the residential complex Wang Fuk Court, announcing accountability measures and follow-up reforms.

At a press conference, HKSAR Chief Executive John Lee apologized for the deadly blaze. The HKSAR government has decided which principal official should bear political accountability, he said, pledging to pursue criminal proceedings against those involved and the companies linked to the incident, and investigate relevant civil servants.

Lee said he has accepted the resignation of Housing Secretary Winnie Ho Wing-yin, appointing Deputy Financial Secretary Michael Wong Wai-lun as the acting secretary for housing.

So far, Hong Kong police and anti-corruption authorities have charged seven people and two companies with a total of 25 offenses.

Based on the independent committee's report, the HKSAR government will undertake comprehensive reforms, including criminalizing bid-rigging in building maintenance projects, establishing a building maintenance support and services bureau, setting up a central data system and a supervisory committee chaired by the chief secretary for administration, Lee said.

Lee also vowed to spare no effort in leading the government in resolving the problems and implementing comprehensive overhauls to ensure that no similar incident occurs again.

Also speaking at the press conference, Chief Secretary for Administration Chan Kwok-ki said that the supervisory committee he chairs will track the implementation of reform measures and push them forward in a rigorous and efficient manner.

The HKSAR government will criminalise bid-rigging in building renovation projects under the competition framework and continue to assist relevant policy bureaus in amending and refining other ordinances related to building management and safety, said Secretary for Justice Paul Lam Ting Kwok. *– Xinhua, MPD*

China's Blue Bay Restoration Initiative named UN World Restoration Flagship

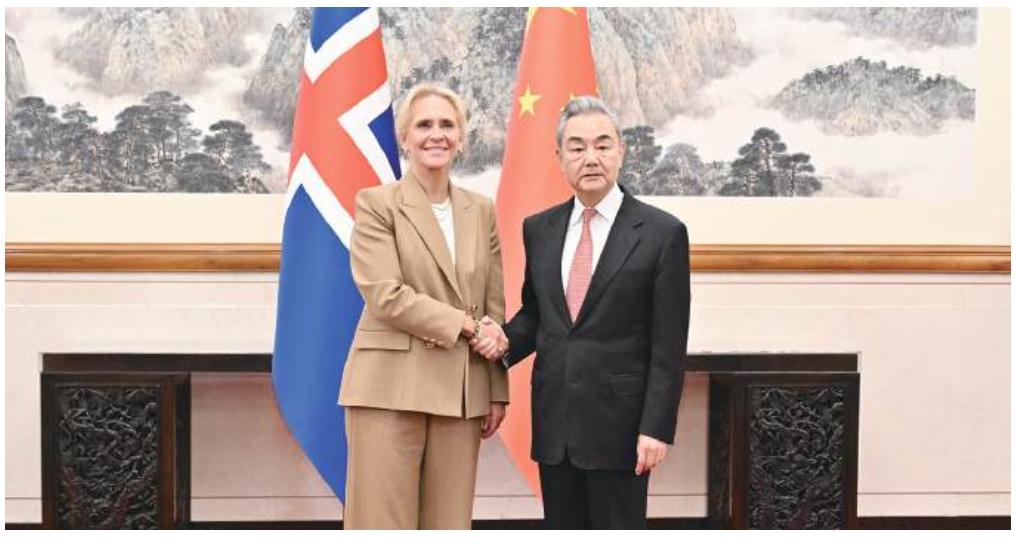
YEREVAN – China's Blue Bay Restoration Initiative* was named a World Restoration Flagship by the United Nations yesterday during the 17th meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (COP17) in Yerevan, Armenia.

The initiative is jointly led by China's Ministry of Natural Resources and Ministry of Finance. This marks the second time a nationwide ecological restoration initiative from China has received the United Nations Decade on Ecosystem Restoration recognition, making China the first country to achieve the distinction twice.

Chosen from over 200 applications and more than 80 government-submitted nominations, the Blue Bay Restoration Initiative was recognized as one of the world's most promising, ambitious and inspiring examples of large-scale ecosystem restoration, said Inger Andersen, executive director of the UN Environment Programme.

The initiative aims to restore more than 150,000 hectares of coastal wetlands and over 2,000 km of coastline by 2030, bringing lasting benefits to local communities, she added. *– Xinhua*

**China's Blue Bay Restoration Initiative is a large-scale coastal and marine ecosystem restoration program. Since 2016, over 194 Blue Bay projects have been implemented across all 11 coastal provinces. By the end of 2025, more than 150,000 hectares of coastal wetlands and over 2,000 kilometers of coastline had been restored. The initiative emphasizes "land–sea coordination" and "river–sea linkage," combining ecosystem restoration with pollution prevention, shoreline management, and disaster-risk reduction. It supports habitats for over 135 International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Red List species, including the Chinese White Dolphin and the Black-faced Spoonbill. – DeepSeek*



Foreign Minister Wang Yi, also a member of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Committee, shakes hands with Icelandic Foreign Minister Thorgerdur Katrin Gunnarsdottir in Beijing yesterday. – Xinhua

Communiqué of the 5th Plenary Session of the 20th Central Committee of the Communist Party of China

BEIJING – The 20th Central Committee of the Communist Party of China concluded its fifth plenary session yesterday in Beijing with a communique issued.

The following is the full text of the communiqué:

Communiqué of the Fifth Plenary Session of the 20th Central Committee of the Communist Party of China

Adopted at the fifth plenary session of the 20th Central Committee of the Communist Party of China on October 29, 2026

The 20th Central Committee of the Communist Party of China convened its fifth plenary session in Beijing from October 26 to 29, 2026.

A total of 162 members and 117 alternate members of the Central Committee attended the session. Members of the Central Commission for Discipline Inspection and leading officials from relevant departments were present at the meeting in a non-voting capacity. Some of our primary-level colleagues and a number of experts and scholars, serving as delegates to the 20th National Party Congress, also attended the meeting in a non-voting capacity.

The Political Bureau of the Central Committee presided over the meeting. Xi Jinping, General Secretary of the Central Committee, delivered an important address.

The Central Committee heard and discussed a report on the work of the Political Bureau, presented by Xi Jinping on behalf of the Political Bureau. They also deliberated and adopted the Resolution of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China on Certain Major Issues concerning Persevering with Full and Rigorous Party Self-Governance. Xi Jinping delivered explanatory remarks on the draft Resolution.

At the session, the Central Committee fully affirmed the work of the Political Bureau since the fourth plenary session of the 20th Central Committee. It was unanimously agreed that the Political Bureau has secured progress in the following respects: earnestly implementing the guiding principles from the Party's 20th National Congress and the plenary sessions of the 20th Central Committee; adhering to the general principle of pursuing progress while ensuring stability; fully and faithfully applying the new development philosophy on all fronts; implementing the Five-Sphere Integrated Plan and the Four-Pronged Comprehensive Strategy in a coordinated way; balancing domestic and international imperatives; ensuring both development and security; delivering tangible results in high-quality economic development; advancing socialist democracy and the rule of law; improving public communication and cultural work; ensuring the people's wellbeing and promoting ecological conservation; safeguarding national security and social stability; further strengthening full and rigorous Party self-governance; modernizing national defense and the armed forces; carrying out work related to Hong Kong, Macao, and Taiwan; and pursuing major-country diplomacy with Chinese characteristics. Thanks to these efforts, the 14th Five-Year Plan has been brought to a successful conclusion and the 15th Five-Year Plan period is off to a good start with new progress and results achieved in the cause of the Party and the country. It was also noted that, this year, we launched a study campaign on establishing and practicing the correct view of performance and celebrated the 105th anniversary of the Communist Party of China. These occasions have further harnessed the mighty force that stems from the entire Party and the whole nation forging ahead in unity.



Xi Jinping (center), Li Qiang (third from right), Zhao Leji (third from left), Wang Huning (second from right), Cai Qi (second from left), Ding Xuexiang (right) and Li Xi (left) vote during the fifth plenary session of the 20th Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Committee in Beijing. The 20th CPC Central Committee held its fifth plenary session in Beijing from Monday through yesterday. – Xinhua

Looking back on the Party's journey since its founding, the Central Committee pointed out at the session that the key to the success of the Communist Party of China in winning one victory after another lies in its pursuit of the high ideal of communism, its dedication to achieving lasting greatness for the Chinese nation, and its commitment to seeking happiness for the Chinese people and rejuvenation for the Chinese nation. During each historical period, the Party has attached great importance to its self-governance, had the courage to uphold truth and correct errors, and grown ever stronger by relying on its own efforts and the support of the people to resolve its own problems, ultimately emerging as the strong leadership core in the cause of the Party and the people. The Party advanced Party building as a great project and then a great new project in the periods of revolution, development, and reform, and it has made further progress in this regard in the new era since its 18th National Congress. During this course, the Party has found two answers to the question of how to escape the historical cycle of rise and fall: the people's oversight over government and the Party's self-reform. These are the unique discoveries of the Communist Party of China, and will forever stand out in the history of Marxist parties.

Participants at the session gave a highly positive assessment of the great achievements our Party has made in exercising full and rigorous self-governance in the new era. It was unanimously agreed that the Central Committee with Comrade Xi Jinping at its core demonstrated tremendous political courage and a strong sense of responsibility in confronting the grave situation marked by weak, hollow, and watered-down Party leadership, lax, superficial, and ineffective self-supervision and self-governance, as well as some startling problems within the Party. Staying firmly committed to full and rigorous Party self-governance, the Central Committee introduced the most stringent measures and dedicated continuous efforts to tackle all these prominent issues. As a result, the problem of lax and weak self-supervision and self-governance has been addressed at the root, unhealthy tendencies that had long gone unchecked have been curbed, deep-seated problems that had plagued the Party for years have been remedied, and serious dangers hidden within the Party, the state, and the military have been removed. The Party has thus grown stronger through revolutionary tempering. The endeavors to advance full and rigorous governance over the Party in the new era have broken new ground in the self-reform of our century-old Party and brought about historic achievements and transformations in the cause of the Party and the country. The Party and the people have thus seized the historic initiative in building a great party and a great country.

It was pointed out that as the Party endeavors to supervise, govern, develop, and strengthen itself in the new era, the Central Committee with Comrade Xi Jinping at its core has put forward a series of new ideas, new thinking, and new strategies in response to the major questions of our times – what kind of long-term governing Marxist party we should build and how we should build it, thereby giving birth to Xi Jinping Thought on Party Building. This thought has enriched and developed Marxist theory on party building, and it represents a major achievement in advancing the Party's theoretical innovation through the integration of the basic tenets of Marxism with China's specific realities and its fine traditional culture. It stands as a crystallization of the practical experience and collective wisdom of the Party and the people. As an important component of Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era, it provides fundamental guidance and a road map for further advancing the great new project of Party building in the new era.

It was stressed that many favorable conditions are now in place for advancing full and rigorous Party self-governance, while we are also facing many new circumstances and new issues in this endeavor. Profound changes in global, national, and Party conditions have made the Party's tasks of uniting and leading the people in safeguarding China's sovereignty, security, and development interests, of uniting and leading the people in promoting reform and development and maintaining social harmony and stability, and of maintaining its advanced nature and integrity even more arduous. All this poses formidable challenges to the Party's governance and leadership capacity, the quality of its membership, and its resistance against corruption and moral decline under the new circumstances. Moreover, the "four tests" and "four dangers" confronting our Party are still protracted, complicated, and serious.

On this account, all of us in the Party must gain a deep understanding of the great significance of persevering with full and rigorous Party self-governance from the strategic perspective of consolidating the Party's long-term governing position and realizing the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation. We must build firm confidence, maintain resolve, and adopt higher standards and more concrete measures to carry forward the valuable experience of full and rigorous Party self-governance in the new era, handle and resolve the prominent problems in Party building, and consolidate and develop the sound political situation formed through Party self-supervision and self-governance.

It was stated that in persevering with full and rigorous Party self-governance, we must uphold Marxism-Leninism, Mao Zedong Thought, Deng Xiaoping Theory, the Theory of Three Represents, and the Scientific Outlook on Development, fully implement Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era, and thoroughly study and apply Xi Jinping Thought on Party Building. Dedicated to fulfilling the Party's missions and tasks, we must act in line with the overall requirements for Party building in the new era, take the Party Constitution as our fundamental guide, maintain the Party's vanguard nature, and uphold the overall leadership of the Party and the centralized, unified leadership of the Party Central Committee. We must focus on enhancing the Party's capacity for long-term governance, preserving its advanced nature and integrity, and maintaining its close bond with the people. We must unwaveringly apply strict principles, improve the system of exercising full and rigorous Party self-governance, and take strengthening the Party politically as the overarching principle to advance Party building on all fronts. We must stimulate greater motivation, initiative, and creativity within the whole Party, continue working to purify, improve, renew, and excel ourselves, and constantly strengthen the Party's capacity for providing political leadership, giving theoretical guidance, organizing the people, and inspiring society. In doing so, we will see that the Party always remains a vibrant Marxist governing party that stays at the forefront of the times, enjoys the wholehearted support of the people, and is able to withstand all tests, and that it always remains the strong leadership core of the cause of socialism with Chinese characteristics.

At the session, the guiding principles for persevering with full and rigorous Party self-governance were highlighted as follows: serving the Party's missions and tasks; taking strengthening the Party politically as the overarching principle; exercising rigorous governance across the board; adopting a problem-oriented approach; upholding fundamental principles and breaking new ground; adhering to a top-down approach; and running the Party according to regulations.

– Continued on p.8

Communiqué of the 5th Plenary Session of the 20th Central Committee of the Communist Party of China

Continued from p.7

Systematic plans for persevering with full and rigorous Party self-governance were also made at the session with the emphasis on strengthening the Party spirit of Communists; strictly practicing democratic centralism; cultivating high-caliber officials capable of shouldering the mission of national rejuvenation; building a well-knit organizational system characterized by cross-level alignment and effective implementation; improving conduct and tightening discipline on an ongoing basis; taking firm and coordinated action against corruption; running the Party with systems and regulations; refining Party and state oversight systems; and ensuring all responsibilities of Party self-supervision and self-governance are fulfilled in earnest.

It was pointed out that strengthening the Party spirit represents a fundamental task of our efforts to ensure full and rigorous Party self-governance. We must, therefore, encourage all Party members and officials to uphold the Party's nature and purpose, raise Party consciousness, have a better understanding of their identity as Party members and the Party's vanguard nature, and maintain a lifelong commitment to cultivating stronger Party spirit. We must also encourage them to devote efforts to strengthening ideals and convictions, forging strong loyalty to the Party, fostering deep affection for the people, always seeking truth from facts, building moral character, and preserving honesty and integrity. These efforts will help them to be loyal, upright, and responsible and always preserve the true political character of Communists. In this regard, measures will be taken to strengthen education on loyalty to the Party, build cohesion and inner strength with the Party's latest theories, nurture the Party spirit with the Party's good traditions and fine traditional Chinese culture, temper the Party spirit in practice, and enhance Party spirit appraisal.

It was noted that democratic centralism is the Party's fundamental organizational principle and leadership system, and its implementation is therefore an inherent requirement for exercising full and rigorous Party self-governance. We must improve and implement the institutions of democratic centralism, giving full play to intraparty democracy while effectively practicing correct centralism. This will allow us to better draw on the political, organizational, institutional, and working strengths of democratic centralism. In practice, measures will be taken to uphold and strengthen the Party Central Committee's centralized, unified leadership, improve the efficacy of intraparty democracy, strictly implement deliberation rules and decision-making procedures for leadership teams, and regulate leadership team heads' performance of duties and exercise of power.

It was stated that strict management of officials is the key to full and rigorous Party self-governance. We must implement the Party's organizational line for the new era and apply stringent standards to the education, cultivation, selection, appointment, management, and oversight of officials. On this basis, we will build up the ranks of high-caliber officials with firm political commitment, outstanding professional competence, excellent work conduct, and strict discipline. Following sound guidelines in appointing officials, we should take targeted, well-designed measures to select and appoint officials, inspire officials to foster and act on the correct view of performance, enhance officials' competence in fulfilling their duties and breaking new ground, improve the training and selection of outstanding young officials, and strengthen management and oversight of officials, with a view to promoting the training, recruitment, and utilization of talented people across the board.

It was stated that Party organizations at all levels play the principal role in exercising full and rigorous Party self-governance. It is therefore essential to systematically advance the development of Party organizations at all levels and in all sectors to strengthen their political and organizational functions. This will help ensure that the Party's lines, principles, and policies, as well as the Party Central Committee's decisions and plans are implemented through well-coordinated, targeted, and effective efforts. More specifically, we should give play to the exemplary role of Party organizations of central Party and state organs, bolster the functions of local Party committees, take coordinated steps to improve primary-level Party organizations across all sectors, promote Party building in emerging sectors, build a strong contingent of Party members, and refine mechanisms to ensure alignment across different levels of Party organizations.

It was pointed out that improving conduct and tightening discipline are effective measures to advance full and rigorous Party self-governance. We must work in concert to enhance Party spirit, improve Party conduct, and tighten Party discipline, and integrate conduct improvement and discipline enforcement with anti-corruption measures. Drawing on the experience gained in advancing full and rigorous Party self-governance through conduct improvement efforts, we will ensure steady improvements in our conduct, supervise and govern the Party with strict discipline, and pool support and strength with a positive image. In practice, we will follow the Party's mass line in the new era, steadfastly implement the central Party leadership's eight-point decision on improving work conduct, put in consistent and sustained efforts to improve conduct, ensure more rigorous discipline enforcement, and make full use of discipline as a guide, restraint, guarantee, and incentive.

It was noted that taking integrated steps to ensure that officials do not have the audacity, opportunity, or desire to commit corruption is both an important strategy for full and rigorous Party self-governance and a fundamental guideline for our fight against corruption. The Party tolerates no corruption, as it has no special interests of its own besides the interests of the working class and the greatest possible majority of the people. Keeping this firmly in mind, we must steadfastly follow a distinctive Chinese path of anti-corruption and strengthen the Party Central Committee's centralized, unified leadership over anti-corruption work. We must take systematic steps to address both symptoms and root causes of corruption and adopt a holistic approach that combines severe punishment, targeted remedy, and effective prevention, carrying this fight through to the end. While maintaining a tough stance against corruption, we should also strengthen checks on and oversight over the exercise of power, fortify the cultural-ethical foundations for championing integrity and disdaining corruption, and enhance coordinated efforts to prevent corruption by rooting out audacity, opportunity, and desire.

It was noted that strengthening Party regulations and institutions represents a long-term, fundamental strategy for ensuring full and rigorous Party self-governance. We must uphold the Party Constitution as the fundamental code of conduct for all Party members, deepen institutional reforms related to Party building, and integrate law-based governance of the country and regulation-based self-governance of the Party, thus providing strong institutional support for persevering with full and rigorous Party self-governance. For this purpose, stronger measures will be taken to improve the framework of Party regulations and institutions, ensure the enforcement of institutions, and eliminate hidden rules.

It was stated that persevering with full and rigorous Party self-governance entails further improvement to Party and state oversight systems. With this in mind, we should ensure that Party committees (leading Party members groups) exercise general oversight, improve the dual leadership system for discipline inspection and supervision, pursue greater integration and efficient collaboration between intraparty oversight and other avenues of oversight, and give play to the role of inspections as a powerful tool of comprehensive oversight.

It was stressed that persevering with full and rigorous Party self-governance is the common political responsibility of all Party members. Attaching crucial importance to the responsibility system for Party self-supervision and self-governance, we will establish a robust, unified system where all sides perform their respective responsibilities in close collaboration. Furthermore, relevant performance assessment mechanisms will be improved, so that those who have failed to effectively carry out Party self-supervision and self-governance and caused serious problems in this regard are strictly held to account.

It was pointed out that studying and implementing the guiding principles from this plenary session represent a major political task for the entire Party both at present and in the period to come. With this in mind, we should fully grasp the guiding principles from the session, strengthen organization and leadership, and make tenacious efforts to solve prominent problems, seeing that all arrangements of the Resolution are implemented to the letter.

It was stressed that all aspects of our work agenda should be steadily advanced at the turn of the year. To fulfill this year's main goals and tasks for economic and social development and secure a good start for the 15th Five-Year Plan period, we will adhere to the general principle of pursuing progress while ensuring stability; fully and faithfully apply the new development philosophy on all fronts; move faster to foster a new pattern of development; make full and proper use of macro policies; tap deeper into the potential of domestic demand; further deepen reform and opening up; and pursue sustained and high-quality economic growth driven by innovation. In an effort to ensure security while pursuing development, we will press ahead with initiatives to see that public services are inclusive, meet essential needs, and provide a cushion for the people most in need, and deliver better results in our work related to workplace safety, disaster prevention, mitigation, and relief, food and drug safety, as well as social stability. As part of our endeavors to consolidate and expand the progress made in the study campaign on establishing and practicing the correct view of performance, we will, in the midst of a new round of elections at all levels, step up training for new members of leadership teams, particularly their heads, on the view of performance to inspire and guide them to deliver for the people through hard work in line with the requirements of serving the public good, benefiting the people, making sound decisions, and taking solid, down-to-earth actions.

The Central Committee decided at the session that the Party will convene its 21st National Congress in Beijing in the second half of 2027 and stated that this congress, which is to be held at a critical stage for basically realizing socialist modernization and on the new journey toward the Second Centenary Goal, will be a highly important meeting and an event of great political significance for both the Party and the country. The entire Party must unite and lead the Chinese people in forging ahead with one heart and one mind to achieve the goal of basically realizing socialist modernization and continue to break new ground in building a great country and advancing national rejuvenation on all fronts through Chinese modernization. With concrete actions, we will set the stage for the successful convening of this congress.

At the session, Zhang Shengmin was elected member of the Political Bureau of the Central Committee.

It was decided that, in accordance with the Party Constitution, empty seats on the Central Committee were filled by alternate members Lu Dongliang, Bao Gang, Xing Shanping, Qu Yingpu, Lv Jun, Zhu Tianshu, Zhu Guoxian, Liu Jun, Liu Jie and Liu Qiang.

At the session, the Central Commission for Discipline Inspection's reports on the grave violations of discipline and the law involving Ma Xingrui, Lan Tianli, Liu Jianchao, Wang Lixia, Jin Zhuanglong, Lei Fanpei, Yi Huiman, Wang Xiangxi, Sun Shaocheng, Li Yunze, Fei Dongbin, Wu Shenghua, Yu Jianfeng, Yuan Jie, Zhang Zhongyang, Wen Gang, Jin Donghan and Fang Hongwei were deliberated and adopted. The Central Military Commission's reports on the grave violations of discipline and the law involving Zhang Youxia, Liu Zhenli, Wang Renhua, Liu Qingsong, Huang Ming, Li Qiaoming, Li Wei, Zhang Hongbing, Wang Haijiang, Zhang Lin, Wang Peng, Liu Faqing, Yang Cheng, Zhong Shaojun, Zhao Xiaozhe and Fang Yongxiang were also deliberated and adopted. The Political Bureau's previous decisions to expel Ma Xingrui, Zhang Youxia, Liu Zhenli, Lan Tianli, Liu Jianchao, Wang Lixia, Jin Zhuanglong, Lei Fanpei, Yi Huiman, Wang Xiangxi, Sun Shaocheng, Wang Renhua, Liu Qingsong, Huang Ming, Li Qiaoming, Li Wei, Zhang Hongbing, Wang Haijiang, Zhang Lin, Wang Peng, Liu Faqing, Yang Cheng, Zhong Shaojun, Zhao Xiaozhe, Fei Dongbin, Wu Shenghua, Yu Jianfeng, Yuan Jie, Zhang Zhongyang, Wen Gang, Jin Donghan, Fang Hongwei and Fang Yongxiang from the Party and to remove Li Yunze from his position within the Party were confirmed.

At the session, all Party members were called upon to rally more closely around the Party Central Committee with Comrade Xi Jinping at its core and fully implement Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era; forge ahead with dedication and enterprise, persevere with full and rigorous Party self-governance, and continually break new ground in supervising, governing, developing, and strengthening the Party; and unite and lead the Chinese people of all ethnic groups in a tireless effort to build China into a great modern socialist country in all respects and advance national rejuvenation on all fronts through Chinese modernization.

– Xinhua

N Korea fires 'around a dozen' ballistic missiles into East Sea

Hieun Shin

SEOUL – North Korea fired "around a dozen" short-range ballistic missiles off its east coast yesterday, Seoul's defence ministry said, less than a week after South Korea proposed talks over a growing border row.

The launches follow a slew of recent weapons tests by Pyongyang, including a new precision-guided torpedo system and an intermediate-range hypersonic missile, both of which were said to employ AI technology.

South Korea's Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) said its military detected "around a dozen short-range ballistic missiles fired from the Wonsan area of North Korea towards the East Sea", the body of water also known as the Sea of Japan.

The missiles flew about 250 kilometres, and "South Korea and the United States are conducting a detailed analysis of their exact specifications", Seoul's military said, adding it had stepped up surveillance of possible additional launches.

The Japan Coast Guard had earlier urged ships in the area to be vigilant.

Seoul's National Security Office, meanwhile, said the launches violated UN Security Council resolutions, labelling them "serious acts that do nothing to help manage the current situation".

Yesterday's missile flurry comes against the backdrop of growing tensions over a landmine explosion along the heavily fortified border between the two Koreas that saw three South Korean soldiers wounded.

A joint Seoul-UN investigation earlier this month concluded that North Korea planted the landmines over a year ago.

Seoul accused Pyongyang of "a clear violation of the Armistice Agreement" and demanded an apology, something the North has mockingly dismissed.

'Show of force'

"This should be seen as a fairly high-level show of force," Lim Eul-chul, a professor at Kyungnam University, told AFP.

"North Korea is demonstrating that it has the capability to completely destroy major South Korean and US military facilities," he said.

Pyongyang was also sending a political message, Lim added, by "showing off its overwhelming military power and warning Seoul not to interfere with its efforts to fortify the border".

Last week, Kim Yo Jong, the powerful sister of North Korean leader Kim Jong Un, said the North would place loudspeakers on standby along the border "within days" and had put unspecified "new counter means" on alert.

Both countries have occasionally turned to loudspeakers blaring propaganda across their shared border and other psychological warfare methods.

South Korea days later proposed military talks with the North to "mutually confirm the precise location" of their border and discuss restoring communication channels, but Pyongyang has yet to respond.

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

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

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

In his most recent comments, Trump seemingly downplayed the possibility of a summit while insisting his relationship with Kim Jong Un was "very good".

In October, North Korea launched several short-range ballistic missiles a day after Trump suggested the two might meet this year. – *AFP*



This photo taken on Tuesday shows the Manila Galleon Monument in Acapulco, Guerrero state, Mexico. Built in 1936, the monument commemorates the historic maritime trade between Manila in the Philippines and Acapulco in Mexico. The port city of Acapulco on Mexico's Pacific coast was once a major hub for trade between Asia and the Americas. In 1565, a Spanish galleon sailing from the Philippines reached Acapulco, helping establish a trans-Pacific maritime route. For approximately 250 years, the Manila Galleon trade connected Manila with Acapulco, carrying Chinese silk, porcelain, and other Asian goods to the Americas and transporting silver from the Americas to Asia. Traces of this historic maritime trade can still be found in Acapulco today, from the centuries-old Fort of San Diego and Chinese porcelain displayed in its museum to models of sailing ships and a monument commemorating the Manila Galleon. – Xinhua

Rains bring relief to Indonesian city weary of fire haze

PALANGKARAYA, Indonesia – Residents and firefighters in an Indonesian city long shrouded in a toxic haze brought on by months of wildfires rushed outside dancing and chanting as rain this week brought a welcome respite.

Intermittent rains have been falling in Palangkaraya, the capital of Central Kalimantan province on Indonesian Borneo, where devastating wildfires have raged since August.

On Wednesday night, exhausted volunteer firefighters jumped around in the puddles and kissed the ground in gratitude as another burst came down.

"We were overjoyed; every one of us volunteers were so happy that we prostrated ourselves in gratitude. Praise be to God that there was finally rain," firefighter Lukman El Hakim told AFP.

More than 11,000 people have been treated for respiratory infections in Palangkaraya during the months-long crisis that has also affected Indonesia's neighbours with haze pollution.

The city's air quality index hit 4,000 this month, its worst ever measurement and more than 13 times the environment ministry's threshold for pollution deemed "hazardous" to health.

The World Health Organisation has linked exposure to air pollution, including high levels of tiny, airborne PM2.5 particles, to increased risk of illness and premature death.

Palangkaraya resident Muhammad Jihan Alwi used the reprieve to jog outdoors for the first time in months.

"Of course I'm happy to be out jogging again, breathing in fresh air that's better than yesterday, just feeling grateful," the 23-year-old said, smiling.



Volunteer forest and land fire fighters celebrate during a downpour in Palangka Raya, Central Kalimantan province, Indonesia on Wednesday, following months of forest and land fires. – AFP

Not over yet

However, the BMKG climatology agency said dry weather would continue to dominate for a while, with more wildfires possible.

The BNPB disaster agency has said it is operating 61 planes and helicopters for cloud seeding and water bombing in six Indonesian provinces.

Light to heavy rains have recently fallen in Central Kalimantan, South Kalimantan and South Sumatra, encouraged by its cloud seeding operations, said the agency.

"With the onset of rain, PM2.5 concentrations in Palangkaraya have also begun to show a decline," BMKG official Tri Handoko Seto told AFP yesterday.

"Although still in the 'unhealthy' category, there is now a downward trend compared with a week ago, when levels were predominantly in the 'very unhealthy' and even 'hazardous' categories."

Tri said the short-term prediction was for rain clouds in affected provinces.

Efforts to seed them in a bid to stimulate more rain would continue "in the hope that the rain can truly soak the burned peat areas down to below the surface".

But he said vigilance was necessary "bearing in mind that there is still the possibility of another dry period before we fully enter the peak of the rainy season".

At least 11 people have died fighting Indonesia's wildfires, most recently a 45-year-old forest ranger who was killed by a falling tree while battling flames in North Toraja, South Sulawesi, on Wednesday.

Police said yesterday they were continuing to crack down on individuals and corporations responsible for the fires.

The national police's top detective, Asep Safrudin, said 245 individuals and 20 corporations have been named as suspects and could face jail time and heavy fines.

Deforestation monitor Nusantara Atlas says the fires consumed more than 1.9 million hectares in the nine months to September.

The haze has sent pollution levels soaring as far afield as Malaysia, Singapore, the Philippines and East Timor, clouding Indonesia's ties with its neighbours.

Experts say the wildfires can be blamed in large part on slash-and-burn land-clearing practices, often by timber, palm oil or mining companies. – *AFP*

Thailand revokes citizenship of naturalised chief rabbi

BANGKOK – Thailand's government said yesterday it had revoked the citizenship of a prominent head rabbi who was a naturalised Thai, as the country tightens enforcement of its immigration laws.

Rabbi Yosef Chaim Kantor's Thai citizenship was stripped over his repeated use of his US passport after naturalisation in 2013, according to an interior ministry statement.

The order was signed by Prime Minister Anutin Charnvirakul, who is also interior minister.

Thai law prohibits naturalised citizens from continuing to use their former nationality, although it is not always enforced.

Tourism is a major source of income for Thailand, but the behaviour and businesses of foreigners living in the Southeast Asian country has come under growing scrutiny.

Foreign nationals have been accused of using Thai proxies to circumvent restrictions on non-Thais owning land and businesses.

Kantor arrived in Thailand in 1993, according to the Jewish Association of Thailand.

After naturalisation, he continued to use his US passport up to 16 times to travel to Australia, the interior ministry said.

"Any illegal act, whatever it involves, must be dealt with firmly," Anutin told reporters yesterday when asked about the order.

Anutin, who won February's elections on a nationalist platform, revoked Kantor's citizenship under the 1965 Nationality Act.

The move came after Thai authorities earlier this month raided three Jewish organisations in Bangkok, including Chabad House, where Kantor works.

Police said at the time that Chabad Foundation Bangkok was found to be employing three Myanmar workers without work permits.

Police also seized evidence such as tax filings and land purchase and building construction records from Gan Chabad, a Jewish school.

Chabad is an Orthodox Jewish movement headquartered in New York with venues around the world.

Rabbi Nehemya Wilhelm, of the Chabad House in Bangkok, told AFP yesterday that the organisation legally employed about 40 workers and paid a fine for three from Myanmar whose documents had been in the midst of processing.

He said Kantor has lived in Thailand for more than 30 years, and used his US passport to visit the United States and Australia.

"Thailand is his home," said the rabbi, who also holds Thai citizenship.

"It's really painful to get such a decision just because he has another citizenship."

"We feel the tension," Wilhelm added – but "Thailand welcomes Jewish people" and "we don't feel under threat".

Kantor, who Wilhelm said was visiting New York, could not be immediately reached for comment yesterday. – *AFP*

Afghanistan opium poppy cultivation surges despite Taliban govt ban: UN

]KABUL, Afghanistan – Opium poppy cultivation in Afghanistan more than quadrupled in 2026 despite a Taliban government ban, the United Nations said yesterday, urging that impoverished farmers needed alternatives to the lucrative crop.

Cultivated areas reached 43,000 hectares, up from 10,000 hectares in 2025, while estimated opium production jumped fivefold from 300 tonnes to 1,500 tonnes, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) said in a report.

Long the world's leading producer of poppies, Afghanistan was overtaken by Myanmar after a 2022 Taliban government ban crushed the trade in the country. But rampant poverty has driven some farmers to return to the trade.

"Without opium, we cannot even afford basic food," Mohammad, a 22-year-old farmer in Afghanistan's northeast, told AFP.

Afghanistan's 2022 crackdown drove cultivated areas down from more than 200,000 hectares to 10,000 hectares in 2025.

Myanmar cultivated 53,000 hectares in 2025, with no 2026 figures available.

The Taliban authorities claim to have destroyed more than 22,000 hectares.

But UNODC said many poppy plots were concealed among cereal crops or behind walls, making them difficult to detect.

Afghanistan's Interior Ministry rejected UNODC's figures, saying the report had "overlooked the practical achievements made in combating narcotics" and was based partly on "incorrect information from biased groups".

Approximately 26,000 hectares had been planted with narcotic-producing crops in 2026, but eradication operations were carried out before they reached maturity, reducing the remaining cultivated area to "nearly zero", the ministry told AFP.

Mohammad lives with his parents in Badakhshan which has become Afghanistan's main opium poppy-growing province.

"The Taliban threaten us and do not allow us to grow opium. We cultivate it with a great deal of fear," he said, asking only to be identified by his first name.

"I want to buy a car, build a house and get married. Without opium, I cannot achieve these things," he added.

'The only way'

In May, two people were killed in clashes that erupted as Afghan security forces moved to destroy opium poppy fields in Badakhshan.

Another 35-year-old farmer named Mohammad, who ploughs his poppy field with an ox, said: "If we grow wheat, it is not enough to sustain our lives. We are forced to grow poppies to earn a good income."

Mohammad said that he is threatened by the authorities and sometimes his crops are destroyed, but he will continue.

"It is the only way to cover living expenses," he said.

One hectare of wheat generated just over US$770 in 2023, compared with US$10,000 for a hectare of poppy, according to UNODC.



This photograph taken on October 11 shows an Afghan farmer holding raw opium at his house in Badakhshan province. – AFP

"Opium prices slightly decreased from US$570 per kilogram in 2025 to US$500 per kilogram in 2026, remaining well above pre-ban levels of less than US$100 per kilogram," UNODC said in a press release.

"The fourfold increase in opium poppy cultivation shows the difficulty in sustaining decreases in illicit opium cultivation when poor farmers have no alternatives to feed their families," said UNODC Executive Director Monica Juma.

The Taliban government acknowledged that the ban was not a "sustainable and long-term solution" without alternative livelihoods and economic support for farmers.

The challenge comes as Afghanistan faces the return of 6.6 million Afghans since 2023, climate disasters, dwindling aid and banking isolation since the Taliban movement returned to power in 2021.

With support from Japan and the European Union, UNODC has funded programmes to help farmers find alternatives.

'International problem'

Through the NGO Afghan Aid, Zikrullah, 35, who supports an extended family of 12 in Badakhshan, received improved wheat seeds and fertiliser.

"We're satisfied, it takes less effort than opium and we're more at ease," he told AFP, also asking to be identified only by his first name.

A third farmer named Mohammad, 30, who has converted 80 percent of his land to wheat, told AFP, that the lack of water in recent years has affected crops other than poppy.

To curb opium production sustainably, alternative crops alone are insufficient, UNODC Country Representative for Afghanistan Polleak Ok Serei told AFP in an interview in Kabul.

"Sustainable alternative livelihood requires more than thinking in terms of alternative crops," he said.

Farmers "need access to markets, including international markets through trades. They need infrastructure, roads, irrigation, storage".

UNODC estimated in 2025 that approach would require approximately US$500 million, but "only 10 percent" had been funded by donors and the Taliban authorities, according to Ok Serei.

The strategy also takes time, he said.

"Thailand spent 15 years investing in alternative livelihood before starting eradicating," Ok Serei said.

The problem extends far beyond Afghanistan, he added.

"It truly is an international problem," Ok Serei said, explaining that Afghan drugs were consumed across other continents.

Afghan opium is the main source of heroin in the European Union, where approximately 850,000 people used opioids in 2024, according to the European Union Drugs Agency.

Addressing the problem requires international cooperation, the UN representative said.

Ok Serei called for a "drug demand reduction strategy, not only in Afghanistan but also outside of Afghanistan". *– AFP*

Afghan police say 2 children killed by Pakistani gunfire near border

JALALABAD, Afghanistan – Gunfire from Pakistani border forces killed two children in eastern Afghanistan, Afghan police said yesterday, as sporadic cross-border fire continues to fuel tensions between the two neighbours.

Syed Tayyeb Hammad, the spokesman for Nangarhar police command, told AFP the incident occurred on Wednesday near the Torkham border crossing in Nangarhar province.

He said two other civilians were also wounded.

Two Pakistani officials stationed near Torkham told AFP on condition of anonymity that "there had been no firing in the area for the past three days".

Relations between Pakistan and Afghanistan have been fraught since the Taliban authorities took power in 2021, and worsened after deadly border clashes in October last year that led to near-total closure of the border.

Clashes subsided after mediation, but the conflict intensified again in February this year, with Pakistan declaring "an open war" on its neighbour.

Islamabad accuses Afghanistan of allowing militants responsible for deadly attacks on Pakistani territory to operate from its soil. Afghanistan's Taliban authorities have denied the allegations.

Hundreds of civilians have been killed in fighting between the two countries since October last year, according to figures from the United Nations' mission in Afghanistan. *– AFP*

Pakistan court jails rights activists for 10 years under terror laws

ISLAMABAD – A Pakistani court sentenced two prominent human rights lawyers yesterday to 10 years in prison under anti-terrorism legislation, in a case condemned by rights groups.

Imaan Zainab Mazari-Hazir and her husband, Hadi Ali Chattha, had faced accusations of removing security barriers during a visit by the England cricket team.

Judge Tahir Abbas Sipra found that "to put the security of (the) team at risk clearly shows the intentions and objective of the accused to create a sense of terror", according to a copy of the court judgement obtained by AFP.

The document also detailed the pair's lengthy jail sentences.

The defendants had denied the allegations, saying they had been targeted for their human rights and legal work and were "being made an example to further cement the chilling effect against those who stand (or want to stand) against tyranny, oppression and injustice", the document said.

The couple were arrested in October 2024 over the allegations of removing police barriers during the team's visit to the capital Islamabad, but were later released.

They were arrested again in January 2026 and sentenced to 17 years in prison in a separate case involving social media posts. The Supreme Court suspended those sentences in September, but police rearrested them hours later on separate charges.

Following their rearrest, the New York-based Human Rights Watch urged Pakistani authorities to "stop using criminal prosecutions to punish lawyers engaged in peaceful dissent", and urged their immediate release.

Amnesty International also called their rearrest a "terrible injustice" at the time, saying the charges were "not only absurd but an insult to their lifelong commitment to human rights". *– AFP*

Bangladesh sentences Hasina-era minister to death

DHAKA – A Bangladesh court sentenced a senior leader of the former ruling party to death in absentia yesterday for his role in the killing of six people during the 2024 uprising, while three other party leaders were sentenced to life imprisonment.

The four men, members of ousted leader Sheikh Hasina's Awami League, were convicted of the murders of six people in western Kushtia district during the unrest, which led to the former premier's ouster.

The leader sentenced to death by the three-member tribunal was Md Mahbubul Alam Hanif, the party's joint general secretary, who also served as a minister during Hasina's iron-fisted rule.

"The charges against the convicts were undoubtedly proved," chief prosecutor Md Aminul Islam told reporters.

The tribunal also ordered the confiscation of half of their immovable properties to be distributed as compensation to the families of people killed or injured during the uprising, Islam said.

State-appointed defence lawyer Md Amir Hossain called the verdict "unacceptable".

As many as 1,400 people were killed between July and August 2024, according to the United Nations, when Hasina's government attempted to suppress the student-led uprising.

Hasina's 15-year rule ended in August 2024, when she fled by helicopter to neighbouring India, where she remains in hiding.

She was sentenced to death by hanging in absentia in November 2025.

Yesterday's sentencing brings the total number of people convicted of crimes related to the 2024 uprising to 72.

Of those, 23 have been sentenced to death, but only four are in custody.

Hasina has refused to accept the authority of the court.

The government of Prime Minister Tarique Rahman, which won a landslide victory in February in the first elections since Hasina was ousted, has requested her extradition.

Hasina, 78, has said she will return to Bangladesh of her own volition in December, despite the death sentence she faces. *– AFP*

US fires senior army general over alleged leaks: reports

WASHINGTON, DC – The United States has fired a top military planner, US media reported, with some outlets saying the dismissal was due to the officer allegedly leaking classified information.

Army Lieutenant General Brett Sylvia was removed from his role as head of strategy, plans and policy on the Joint Staff, US media reported on Wednesday, citing unnamed sources.

CBS and Fox both reported that Sylvia's dismissal was related to leaks, with the former citing a Pentagon official as saying the general failed three polygraphs about sharing classified information with the media.

A spokesperson for the Joint Staff, a top Pentagon body that handles planning and other issues, initially issued a statement that confirmed Sylvia's departure and wished him well but later withdrew it, saying: "Upon further review, we determined that the statement did not appropriately reflect the full circumstances."

Pentagon spokesman Sean Parnell then said in a post on X that the Defence Department "has zero tolerance for the intentional, unauthorised disclosure of classified information" and took "necessary personnel action to protect sensitive information."

Parnell did not identify Sylvia by name and said "no further comment will be made regarding the individual or the circumstances of this action."

"This matter, along with others, have been referred to the Justice Department for potential further legal action," he added.

The Justice Department did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

Since returning to office early last year, Trump has overseen a purge of top military personnel, including the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, general Charles "CQ" Brown, whom he fired without explanation in February 2025.

Renewed Iran strikes?

Other senior officers pushed out include the heads of the US Army, Navy and Coast Guard, the general who headed the National Security Agency, the vice chief of staff of the US Air Force, a Navy admiral assigned to NATO, and three top military lawyers.

Secretary of Defence Pete Hegseth has insisted the president is simply choosing the leaders he wants, but Democratic lawmakers have raised concerns about the potential politicisation of the traditionally neutral US military.

Hegseth said last month that the United States had slashed the number of its generals and admirals by 20 percent, in a move he said was aimed at "accountability."

He suggested the cuts targeted officers who failed to get on board with his efforts to ensure the military is focused on war-fighting rather than the "woke" policies of previous administrations, describing the reductions as an "accomplishment."

The reported sacking of Sylvia comes as Trump is believed to be weighing fresh strikes against Iran after US midterm elections next Tuesday.

"We may do another little Epic Fury," Trump said last week, referring to US-Israeli attacks on Tehran in February that triggered the war.

He did not give any indication on timing.

Neither the United States nor Iran has engaged in major attacks on land-based targets since early September, settling instead into a pattern of strikes on commercial ships.

Sylvia's previous roles included leading the 101st Airborne Division – the US army's air assault division – and heading a unit in Iraq. *– AFP*

Polish bishop found guilty of failing to report sex abuse

WARSAW – A Polish court yesterday found a bishop guilty of failing to report sexual assaults on minors by two priests in the first case of its kind in the heavily Roman Catholic country.

The bishop, Andrzej Jez, was placed under two years of supervised release, with a quarter of his salary over that period to go to a child protection agency.

A spokesman for the court in the southeastern city of Tarnow called the verdict "unprecedented". Defence lawyers said they would lodge an appeal.

The abuse was committed in the 1980s. Polish media reported that there were dozens of victims.

Jez only reported the assaults after the legal limit for action to be taken against one of the priests had expired. The second, in fragile health, is facing legal proceedings.

Prosecutors said the bishop could not argue that it was a religious secret as canon law was changed under the late Pope Francis so that it no longer applies to sexual abuse crimes.

Polish law has since 2017 made it a punishable offence not to report abuse crimes to the authorities.

Poland has been hit by a series of sex scandals involving the Catholic Church. Since 2020, the Vatican has sanctioned several bishops accused of negligence or covering up abuse.

Suspicions have even been raised that Pope John Paul II knew about abuse cases when he was Archbishop of Krakow from 1964 to 1978. *– AFP*

ECB chief Lagarde to step down early, triggering succession race

Sam Reeves

FRANKFURT AM MAIN – European Central Bank (ECB) President Christine Lagarde will step down in February, months before her term ends, officials said yesterday, kicking off a race to succeed her against a turbulent backdrop in the eurozone and further afield.

"It has been a great pride and a huge privilege to serve this institution," Lagarde posted on X, announcing that she would resign nine months before her term officially ends in October 2027.

"I think that I leave this institution with a sense of good work done and an ECB that is fit for the future," she said.

Lagarde's early resignation opens the way for European leaders to choose a new ECB chief before French presidential elections in the spring, with officials fearing that a far-right victory could complicate talks to pick her successor.

But it also comes at a difficult time in the eurozone as worries mount about France's public finances and the central bank seeks to navigate the energy shock triggered by the US war on Iran, with inflation currently almost double the ECB's two-percent target.

EU chief Ursula von der Leyen thanked Lagarde "for everything you have done for Europe and the euro".

German Chancellor Friedrich Merz said Lagarde had led the bank "with great aplomb during challenging times" and French President Emmanuel Macron thanked Lagarde on X for her service "during a period marked by numerous crises".

Lagarde, who previously headed the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and served as French finance minister, did not say what her next move would be.

But she has ruled out running for the French presidency herself, and has been tipped to take the helm of the World Economic Forum (WEF), which organises the annual summit of politicians and business leaders in Davos, Switzerland.



European Central Bank (ECB) President Christine Lagarde waves as she leaves a press conference after a meeting of the ECB Governing Council in Berlin on September 10. – AFP

'I don't think I can remain neutral'

Lagarde, who served in the governments of France's centre-right presidents Jacques Chirac and Nicolas Sarkozy, has also hinted that she could get involved in campaigning for the presidential vote, saying it was important to have a "European voice" in debates.

Speaking at the end of a regular ECB monetary policy press conference in Frankfurt am Main yesterday, Lagarde said she was quitting so that she could intervene in politics.

"I want to have the freedom of speech, the freedom of expression and the freedom to engage on matters that are not monetary policy matters," she said.

"I don't think that I can remain neutral. I don't think that I can be comfortable in that neutrality at the present time."

Her tenure was marked by repeated geopolitical upheavals that often left policymakers struggling to fulfil the ECB's main task of keeping consumer prices in check.

The COVID-19 pandemic, the war in Ukraine and subsequent energy shock – which pushed eurozone inflation to a record of over 10 percent – the US tariff blitz and now the fallout from the Iran war all severely tested the institution.

The ECB's governing council, which sets interest rates for the 21-member single currency area, faced criticism, in particular during the 2022 inflation surge, for responding too slowly.

But officials also won praise for seeking to overhaul the central bank so it is better prepared for a more uncertain world, introducing new crisis-fighting tools and seeking to communicate its decisions more clearly.

Succession race

António Costa, head of the European Council, said the process to appoint Lagarde's successor would begin immediately to ensure a "smooth transition".

The frontrunners to succeed her are seen as former Dutch central bank chief Klaas Knot and Spain's Pablo Hernández de Cos, currently head of the Bank for International Settlements.

One EU diplomat, speaking anonymously, said Knot was seen as the preferred candidate, as he was an experienced crisis manager and a good communicator.

But there are likely to be frantic negotiations in coming weeks between European capitals as several top ECB officials are due to be replaced – Lagarde, executive board member Isabel Schnabel and chief economist Philip Lane.

Holger Schmieding, chief economist at the bank Berenberg, predicted that EU leaders would try to fill the vacancies "as a package, no later than the EU summit of 17-18 December, and possibly beforehand". *– AFP*

Finland's only news agency to close down text and photo services

HELSINKI – Finnish news agency STT, one of the oldest in the world, yesterday announced it will end its news and photo services next year, following years of financial woes.

Following restructuring negotiations, STT's board of directors said they had "decided to wind down the company's news and photo agency operations" with these services ending operations on March 31, 2027.

"Next Sunday marks exactly 139 years since STT began operating in its original form. I see the closure of our news and picture operations as a tragedy for Finnish society as a whole," STT CEO Kimmo Laaksonen said in a statement.

As a result, the Nordic country will become one of few Western countries without its own news agency, Finnish broadcaster Yle reported.

The company estimates that the restructuring will result in 89 positions being eliminated, including 68 journalistic roles. Thirty temporary contracts will not be renewed.

The company will in the future distribute corporate press releases, a service that employs seven people.

STT also said that it was "exploring opportunities to commercially utilise its archives and the technology currently under development".

Marjaana Varmavuori, the chair of the Union of Journalists in Finland, called the news "devastating".

"Its role in producing and distributing reliable information in Finland is irreplaceable. I am deeply shocked that the state and media companies intend to let our national news agency collapse," Varmavuori said in a statement. *– AFP*

Bolsonaro claims he is Brazil's true leader after fleeing to US

Yussel González and Fran Blandy

MIAMI – Brazil's defeated right-wing presidential candidate Flávio Bolsonaro insisted on Wednesday he is his country's rightful leader, after fleeing to the United States to start a self-imposed exile.

Bolsonaro's defiance on arrival in Florida signalled continued upheaval for Brazil, where leftist President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva won a dramatic runoff election on Sunday.

"I am the elected president, and the criminals who stole Brazil's election are part of a criminal organisation that has established a tyranny," Bolsonaro said in the statement published on his X account, slamming "electoral fraud."

"I will lead the opposition from here," he said. In a subsequent statement, he revised his claim, saying he is the "leader," rather than "president."

Bolsonaro, 45, touched down on Wednesday in a private jet at Opa-Locka Executive Airport near Miami.

Rogério Marinho, the leader of Bolsonaro's Liberal Party in the Senate, told reporters in Brasilia that he was in "solidarity" with the former candidate, describing him as a "political exile."

However, he distanced himself from Bolsonaro's statement, and refused to back up Bolsonaro's claims of electoral fraud.

"The Liberal Party cannot make that claim," he said. "There is no evidence of that."

Flávio Bolsonaro "is an expression of the right in Brazil today...he calls himself a leader and it's true: he's a leader," Marinho told reporters.

US President Donald Trump's administration has strong links to Bolsonaro and his father Jair Bolsonaro, who is under house arrest in Brazil after attempting to overturn his own electoral loss to Lula in 2022.

Trump reiterated his stand that Brazil's election was "very strange" but told reporters he "won't get involved" in Flávio Bolsonaro's claim to the presidency.

Details of how Bolsonaro, accompanied by his wife and daughters, made it to US soil are still emerging.

He is under investigation in his home country over alleged corruption and money laundering. With his current parliamentary immunity about to expire, he was ordered to surrender his passports but left anyway, reaching the United States via Argentina and Ecuador.

A police source told AFP that Bolsonaro's Brazilian and diplomatic passports had been cancelled, but the senator has also held Italian nationality since 2023, according to Italian documents seen by AFP.

The US Department of Homeland Security said in a statement that the Bolsonaro family members were inspected and cleared "with applicable immigration laws and procedures."

The travel ban was issued by powerful Supreme Court Justice Alexandre de Moraes, who led the case against Bolsonaro's father and is a controversial figure hated by the Brazilian right.

'Shameful' act

Lula, who won Sunday's election with 51.8 percent of the vote, called Bolsonaro's departure a "shameful" act.

"A person who sneaks out of their country must have something to hide," he said in Brasília during his 81st birthday celebration on Tuesday.

But Brazilian police issued a statement on Wednesday saying that he was not considered a fugitive.

There was controversy in neighbouring Argentina, where opposition lawmakers demanded to know how Bolsonaro had managed to transit through the country.

While Argentinian authorities said he was carrying valid travel documents, officials have requested chief of cabinet Diego Santilli to provide details to parliament, according to opposition lawmaker Agustin Rossi.

Fraud cases

The most high-profile fraud case against Bolsonaro in Brazil centres on the unreleased biopic "Dark Horse" starring US actor Jim Caviezel as Flavio's father Jair.

In May, the outlet Intercept Brasil revealed audio recordings in which Flávio Bolsonaro negotiated approximately US$24 million to finance the film with banker Daniel Vorcaro, who is jailed over one of Brazil's biggest-ever fraud cases.

Before the leak, Flávio Bolsonaro had denied knowing Vorcaro, or that he had financed the movie.

In July, the Supreme Court ordered a probe into the film's financing, and whether it involved corruption, money laundering or the illegal movement of currency.

Bolsonaro acknowledged Vorcaro had funded the film, but insisted it was a private business deal that was "completely legal." – *AFP*

Trump hardens stance on Brazil election 'disgrace'

Danny Kemp

WASHINGTON, DC – US President Donald Trump yesterday stepped up criticism of Brazil's "disgraceful" presidential election, declining to say whether he recognised leftist Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva's victory over right-wing ally Flavio Bolsonaro.

Senator Bolsonaro fled to the United States to start a self-imposed exile on Wednesday and insisted that he is his country's rightful leader despite his defeat in the presidential run-off.

"I think the election was a disgrace in Brazil," Trump told reporters when asked if he accepted incumbent Lula's victory, as the US leader headed on a midterms campaign trip.

"I don't want to comment on it right now, but I thought the election was a very great embarrassment to the people of Brazil," Trump added.

"I watched the election. I let it be. I was asked not to take sides by the president, the current president. I didn't take sides, but when I watched what went down in Brazil, it was a disgrace."

Trump pointed to the reaction of the Brazilian stock market, which dropped after Lula's victory, adding: "I thought it was a very disgraceful situation for Brazil."

The US leader's stance appeared to have hardened from as recently as Wednesday, when he said Brazil's election was "very strange" but added that he "won't get involved" in Flavio Bolsonaro's claim to the presidency. – *AFP*

Spain mourns after latest train tragedy kills 74

Diego Urdaneta

URDA – Spain began three days of mourning yesterday after its second high-speed rail collision this year killed 74 people and injured scores, with relatives desperately seeking news about their loved ones.

One of Europe's deadliest train disasters this century has raised fresh questions about safety on Spain's rail network after the transport minister reported an "error" and "inexplicable circumstances" that led to the crash.

During a visit to the crash site, Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez, who faces a general election on November 29, pledged to establish the cause of the crash.

"We are working day and night not only to support the victims' families, but also to establish every last detail of this tragedy and strengthen safety measures to ensure it never happens again," he said.

The collision happened in the central region of Castilla-La Mancha on Wednesday morning when a service by state operator Renfe ploughed into the back of a stationary train belonging to private Spanish company Iryo.

Emergency services combed through the twisted wreckage at night to find further victims on the key line linking Madrid with the southern city of Seville, hoisting pieces of mangled metal with cranes, AFP reporters saw.

Sniffer dogs and thermal drones were deployed at the crash site a few kilometres from the village of Urda yesterday to search for bodies, the regional government said, raising the death toll to 74 from 69.

Josimar Medina, a 31-year-old Peruvian who was holidaying in Spain with his girlfriend, said he was sleeping on the Renfe train when "I woke up and I was in the air."

Pablo Mejia, 42, escaped with injuries to his head, telling AFP that a last-minute change of seat saved his life.

Wearing a bloodstained grey jumper and holding his tattered suitcase, he recounted "a very strong hit... a lot of people on the floor, on top of each other, seats ripped out, suitcases, a lot of chaos".

"I think I've been born again," he said.

King Felipe VI and Queen Letizia visited crash victims in a Toledo hospital yesterday afternoon.

'Nervous and desperate'

A school in Urda, around 130 kilometres south of Madrid, is being used to allow relatives to enquire about their loved ones.

Teams of Red Cross workers offered support to groups of people who arrived, some of them in tears, amid crowds of police and journalists from around the world.

Red Cross psychologist Carmen García said "long and hard hours" were in store because "every person will manage it in their own way.

"We have people who are in shock, who haven't taken on board what has happened, angry people, sad, worried people. The grieving will be complicated," García said.

José Miguel Fernández, a parish priest in Urda, joined the emergency services in offering support to the victims' families.

"Many of them were calm, others were nervous and desperate. They wanted to know straight away and get news" of their loved ones, he told AFP.

Safety questions

Flags flew at half-mast on public buildings with official ceremonies and public events cancelled or scaled back.

Transport Minister Oscar Puente said on Wednesday that an automatic control system went down on 69 kilometres of track, causing all trains there to be stopped.

But the control centre decided to "resume traffic in circumstances that, from our point of view, are inexplicable," Puente said, with the Renfe train travelling 25 kilometres before striking the Iryo.

The control centre "had more than enough time to verify the error, and they did not fix it", he added.

In January, two high-speed trains collided in the southern region of Andalusia after one of them derailed and crossed onto the adjacent track, killing 46 people.

The investigation into that accident is ongoing, but the left-wing government faced heavy criticism over its management of Spain's railways.

Train drivers went on strike yesterday "to defend rail safety". The strike had been called before Wednesday's crash. – *AFP*

Portugal's president urges dialogue amid housing protests



Demonstrators protest against Portugal's housing shortage, soaring rents and low wages in front of the Assembly of the Republic (Parliament) in Lisbon on Tuesday. The protesters have accused the government of failing to act to tackle Portugal's housing crisis and trying to push through rent reforms to make eviction easier. The Portuguese demonstrators have followed the lead of protesters in neighbouring Spain, where tents have been set up in central Madrid for weeks. – AFP

LISBON – Portugal's president on Tuesday called for dialogue over access to housing after police cleared protest camps in Lisbon and Porto during which several people were hurt.

Demonstrators had set up the camps in an echo of a tent city established in Madrid, in neighbouring Spain, a month ago, over the same issue.

Police on Sunday cleared the camps in Lisbon and Porto, resulting in 31 arrests.

They said seven people were hurt, including three officers. The organisers of the protest camps said some 60 people were hurt.

President António José Seguro said that Portugal has "a culture of dialogue, not a culture of violence" and urged the protesters and the government to talk.

Prime Minister Luis Montenegro, speaking to parliament on Tuesday, defended the police actions as "reasonable" while acknowledging that the country has "a housing crisis".

The centre-right leader noted that real estate prices had doubled in a decade, but blamed the problem on previous leftist governments he accused of failing to build enough housing and on a migration policy he deemed overly permissive. – *AFP*



Inter Miami's Argentine forward Lionel Messi poses with a young fan named Huddy before the start of a Major League Soccer (MLS) regular match against FC Cincinnati at Nu Stadium in Miami, Florida, on Wednesday. – AFP

S Korea's boss backs Son as captain after rift rumours

Football

SEOUL – Son Heung-min will continue as South Korea captain despite reports of friction between the former Tottenham striker and his senior international teammates, coach Robert Moreno said yesterday.

Moreno named Son, now 34 and playing for LAFC in Major League Soccer, in his squad for friendlies against Saudi Arabia and Qatar next month.

He also selected experienced Europe-based trio Kim Min-jae, Hwang Hee-chan and Hwang In-beom, who reports say were ready to quit the national team last month.

Moreno said he had held "many conversations with the players" since taking over on an interim basis after South Korea's World Cup flop in North America.

"I spent more time communicating than training," the Spaniard said at a press conference that lasted more than an hour.

"Even in the best teams people can have different opinions. What matters is how those differences are resolved."

Moreno's contract is set to expire after the two friendlies, although South Korean football chiefs could keep him on for the Asian Cup, scheduled for Saudi Arabia in January.

When asked about Son's leadership role in the team, Moreno said: "The captain is Son Heung-min. I have nothing more to say."

Speculation about discord emerged after Bayern Munich defender Kim threw his boots in anger after being substituted in the second half of a 0-0 home friendly draw with Venezuela this month.

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

Moreno said "the team is healthy" and backed the players to work together.

"I believe you can find the answer in what I have said today and the squad that has been announced," he said.

South Korea's football association this month told fans to stop "excessive personal attacks" on players.

The national team is in the crosshairs after a poor showing at the World Cup, which saw coach Hong Myung-bo quit after they failed to get past the group stage. *– AFP*

No surprise to Carrick he's still Man Utd manager

LONDON – Under-pressure Manchester United manager Michael Carrick said he was "here to do my job" as he insisted he needed "no assurances" over his future at Old Trafford.

Despite mounting criticism of United's dismal form, Carrick claimed he was unsurprised to still be in charge after a woeful run of results.

The 45-year-old also gave his backing to United captain Bruno Fernandes.

Portugal midfielder Fernandes was left on the bench for Sunday's loss at home to Bournemouth following his criticism of Carrick's tactics in a recent 4-1 thrashing by Como.

"He's the one that's kind of led the team so well for many a game and many a year, and he'll continue to do that," Carrick told reporters yesterday.

Carrick's position has been the subject of intense speculation after a miserable run of eight games without a win.

Sunday's humbling 3-0 loss against Bournemouth left United one point above the Premier League relegation zone.

The 20-time English champions have won just two of 12 matches in all competitions this season, with a return of seven points from eight league games representing their worst start to a league season in 40 years.

Carrick was widely expected to be sacked this week but he remains in charge after a show of support from the club's hierarchy.

Speaking ahead of tomorrow's match away to Chelsea, the former United and England midfielder was in defiant mood.

Asked if he was still surprised to be in post, Carrick said: "No, I am here to do the best for the team, and I am desperate to make us better and improve things, so I'm not surprised, no."

'Get the position'

Carrick was equally adamant he did not require public backing from United's owners or director of football Jason Wilcox.

"I don't need assurances from anyone," he said. "I totally get the position, I get the job, the responsibility, I get what comes with that."

Questioned on Fernandes's position, Carrick said leaving him on the bench against Bournemouth was a "decision for the game".

"That's it. Bruno is fully committed to this football club. I've got no issues with that, we move forward. We're looking forward to the game at the weekend now," he said.

Carrick has retained the support of the United faithful, being warmly applauded by fans as he made his way down the tunnel following the Bournemouth defeat.

Moments later a chorus of boos erupted as the players left the pitch as supporters made clear where they think the blame lies for United's poor performances.

Carrick was handed a two-year deal in May after inspiring a revival as caretaker boss that saw United finish third in the Premier League and return to the Champions League after struggling under Ruben Amorim.

But results have been so bad this season that former United captain Gary Neville, who played alongside Carrick at Old Trafford, said yesterday that "sometimes a manager needs sacking for their own good".

Carrick, however, was adamant he would not walk away from his job, saying: "I've said it before, I care about what the supporters think. I care about what we give them, and what we offer them, and what they see.

"I know this job, I know what it brings, I know what we need to do really to be better. I don't need anyone else to tell me anything else."

This season's drastic decline is an all-too-familiar story for United supporters, who last witnessed a Premier League title triumph 13 years ago under Alex Ferguson.

But Carrick insisted his much-criticised players felt the sting of poor results every bit as much as the fans.

"The boys are hungry," he said. "We're hurting because we haven't won enough football games. But there is an intensity, an edge, a hunger to do better." *– AFP*



Manchester United's English head coach Michael Carrick reacts with fans to their defeat on the pitch after the English Premier League match against Bournemouth at Old Trafford in Manchester, north west England, on Sunday. – AFP

Chelsea win as Bayern draw with Madrid in Women's Champions League

PARIS – Goals from Ellie Carpenter and Kadeisha Buchanan were enough to give Chelsea their second win in this season's Women's Champions League on Wednesday to join Arsenal and Lyon at the top of the table.

Bayern Munich came from two goals down to draw with Real Madrid while Servette thrashed OH Leuven 5-1.

Chelsea, who reached the final in 2020-21, opened their campaign with a win and a draw despite scoring just once in their first two games.

They looked nailed on for another win in the first half at Plough Lane as they dominated the game without getting a goal.

That changed in the 51st minute when Wieke Kaptein cut the ball back for substitute Carpenter, making her 50th Champions League appearance, who slid the ball under the goalkeeper Rachele Baldi.

Melvine Malard missed a golden chance to put the game to bed but Buchanan made it 2-0 a minute from time, heading Kaptein's cross into the Roma net.

"I'm pleased with the fact we scored really early in the second half. We could probably have killed the game a little bit earlier," said Chelsea coach Sonia Bompastor.

"In these kinds of matches, if you don't kill it off, you just leave the hope for the opponent. When that's the case, they have a lot of energy and confidence.

"It's important for us in these games to be able to be clinical and ruthless as early as possible.

"But we find different ways to impose ourselves in the game and to score goals. So it's good."

Chelsea move to seven points after matchday three, behind Lyon and Arsenal on goal difference. Champions Barcelona, who have six points after winning both of their opening games, will return to the top if they beat HB Koge in Denmark yesterday.

Becho, Russo hat-tricks

Marie-Antoinette Katoto scored the first two before Vicki Becho chimed in with a hat-trick off the bench in eight-time winners Lyon's 5-0 home thrashing of Inter Milan.

Arsenal got their campaign up and running with a 3-0 win over Benfica, Alessia Russo netting a hat-trick to become the highest scoring English player in European football with 23 goals.

"I love playing in the Champions League and I love scoring goals," Russo told UEFA.

"It was really good to get the win. To score a hat-trick is really special.

"We knew they were going to be tough. We were patient. It was a good night, lots of attacking football and really nice to get the win."

There was a moment's silence before kick-off at the Sportpark Unterhaching in Munich as a mark of respect after at least 68 people were killed in a train crash near Madrid earlier on Wednesday.

Real Madrid, who were all wearing black armbands, took an early lead when Athenea found the net in the seventh minute.

Former Bayern forward Lineth Beerensteyn doubled the lead 15 minutes later before her old team fought back with an Edna Imade header just after the half-hour.

Momoko Tanikawa equalised in the 52nd minute with a curling shot from the edge of the box and it finished 2-2.

Swiss side Servette dispatched Belgium's Leuven 5-1 with Paola Hernandez and Gloria Marinelli scoring two goals each. *– AFP*

Antonelli ready to rewrite the F1 record books in Mexico



Race winner Mercedes' Italian driver Kimi Antonelli holds the trophy while celebrating on the podium at the conclusion of the United States Formula One Grand Prix at the Circuit of the Americas in Austin, Texas, on Sunday. – AFP

F1

MEXICO CITY – Kimi Antonelli will take his place in Formula One's record books as the youngest champion and Italy's first since 1953, barring a wild swing of unexpected misfortunes amid a fiesta atmosphere at this weekend's Mexico City Grand Prix.

The runaway leader of the drivers' championship needs to finish ninth or better in his Mercedes to take the title aged 20 years and 68 days, lowering the record held by Sebastian Vettel by more than three years.

Almost more remarkably, he will also succeed Italy's last champion Alberto Ascari, who won for Ferrari in 1953, after a gap of 73 years during which his country has become synonymous with Formula One.

After winning the United States Grand Prix last Sunday, his two remaining title rivals team-mate George Russell and Ferrari's Lewis Hamilton are 123 and 124 points adrift respectively and can only prevent the seemingly inevitable by winning and hoping Antonelli finishes 10th or worse.

Such an outcome is highly unlikely.

Antonelli has won nine races of this year's 18 to date. In his last 11, he has scored nine podium finishes, one fifth and one 15th place – only his second non-points-scoring race in 18 outings that began with a second-place in Australia followed by five wins.

It is the consistency of a champion, a driver with a clear vision of his work and a cool head albeit on such young shoulders. Out of the car, he is boyish, precocious and has an infectious sense of fun. Some have said he behaves like a puppy.

But when the visor is pulled down, he has proved he has both the talent and the mentality to win and remain, mostly, unflappable under pressure.

"I'm going to approach it with the same mindset," he said in Texas. "Trying to have as much fun as possible, but trying to fight for another win. It's best to finish on a high and that is my goal."

'Tequila party'

His team boss Toto Wolff, who drafted the teenage Antonelli into the Mercedes seat last season following the departure of seven-time champion Hamilton, is anticipating a celebration probably this weekend with the next race in Brazil as a backstop.

"It's going to be a tequila party," he said. "Or if not, it will a caipirinha party the weekend afterwards."

As Mercedes celebrate – they could also clinch the constructors' championship at the high altitude Autodromo Hermanos Rodriguez – Ferrari's loyal tifosi may have mixed feelings about whether to laugh or cry.

The 'scarlet scuderia' had a chance to sign Antonelli as a boy of great potential, but said he was too young.

"I am a Ferrari man and delighted to see what Antonelli is doing," former president Luca di Montezemolo told Spain's *AS* newspaper last month.

"But what I do regret is that Ferrari had the chance to sign him and they didn't. A great opportunity vanished, but it was better for him – to be such a young Italian driving a Ferrari would have been terrible pressure."

Antonelli will not be favourite to win on Sunday, knowing that on this occasion it is more important simply to finish well than win – and, after a strong run of recent form, four-time champion Max Verstappen is poised to take advantage for Red Bull.

He has triumphed five times in Mexico and won twice before last Sunday's race in Austin while world champion Lando Norris won from pole last year for McLaren and is due a change in fortunes. Ferrari's Charles Leclerc and seven-time champion Lewis Hamilton should also be contenders.

At the back of the grid, but on top of the local causes for celebration, will be Cadillac's Mexican driver Sergio Perez who is set for his 300th race start.

The 36-year-old, who on Wednesday announced a contract extension that will keep him at the American team through to 2029, has been a home favourite for years and will generate his own festive atmosphere.

A memorable weekend is in prospect. *– AFP*

Rybakina secures year-end top rank with Tokyo win

Tennis

TOKYO – World number one Elena Rybakina hailed her "amazing achievement" after securing the year-end top ranking with a 6-2, 6-3 win over fellow Kazakh Yulia Putintseva in Japan yesterday.

Rybakina became world number one for the first time last month in winning the US Open, replacing Aryna Sabalenka at the summit.

She ensured she will start 2027 on top after a comfortable opening match in Tokyo, swatting aside world number 67 Putintseva at the Pan Pacific Open in 70 minutes.

The achievement capped a year in which Rybakina also won the Australian Open in January and now has three Grand Slam titles.

"It means a lot, this is something we worked for with the team," said the 27-year-old.

"So many great players and we are all really close to each other, and I'm happy that now with last week and with today's win I made it possible to secure number one at the end of the year.

"It's an amazing achievement and hopefully we can continue this way next year," she added.

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

She arrived in Tokyo after winning her fourth title of the season last week at the Ningbo Open in China.

She sent down six aces against Putintseva and saved the only break point she faced.

"Today the serve definitely helped me in the important moments," she said.

"I was just trying to pick my spot and I think today with a closed roof and a combination of the balls and the court made me feel better serving.

"I'm glad today it worked."

Rybakina's opponent in the quarter-finals will be Canada's Leylah Fernandez, who she beat in the Ningbo final.

Rybakina said she had not had time to explore Tokyo but planned to indulge a new hobby when she gets a chance.

"Because of my coach I am a little bit following Pokemon cards now," she said.

"I'm not a huge fan but he is so I know a little bit, and we were getting some cards, opening them and trying to find some important ones." *– AFP*

French businessman Roux de Bezieux takes over 2030 Winter Olympics after leadership turmoil

PARIS – High-flying businessman Geoffroy Roux de Bezieux vowed yesterday to deliver an "enchanted moment" as he was unveiled as the new head of the organising committee of the 2030 Winter Olympics in the French Alps.

The organisation of the 2030 Games has been hit by a leadership crisis, with Edgar Grospiron resigning as head in September, the latest in a series of high-profile departures from the organising committee.

"Presiding over Alpes 2030 is an honour because above all it is a commitment to promoting, as a team, sport and France," Roux de Bezieux said.

The 64-year-old, the former president of France's largest employers' association (Medef) between 2018 and 2023, was on the board of the 2024 Paris Olympics organising committee and helped organise the 2023 Rugby World Cup in France.

"Presiding over Alps 2030 is an honour because above all it is a commitment to promoting, as a team, sport and France," said Roux de Bezieux, who started his working career at French cosmetics giant L'Oreal before making his fortune creating or running several telecom operators and companies.

"It's the job of a lifetime!" he added, of the daunting Olympic challenge ahead.

"I'm taking this on with great enthusiasm. On a personal level, I experienced the two Olympic fortnights of Paris 2024 as an enchanted moment... and I would like to be able to bring that back to our fellow citizens in 2030."

Flanked by France's Sports Minister Marina Ferrari at a press conference in Lyon, Roux de Bezieux said of the 2030 Games: "We're not behind schedule, but we're not ahead of it either."

His predecessor Grospiron, 57, who won an Olympic ski gold in the moguls at the 1992 Albertville Games, had been in the job for 18 months.

Grospiron had to contend with political power struggles and tensions with regional stakeholders, who resented the efforts of some officials to impose methods used in the highly successful 2024 Paris Games on the organisation of the Olympics in the French Alps.

Key Games stakeholders, including the French government and the Provence-Alpes-Cote d'Azur and Auvergne-Rhone-Alpes regions, as well as the French Olympic and Paralympic committees, told the International Olympic Committee (IOC) last month that they no longer believed they could work with Grospiron.

With the opening ceremony just three and a half years away, Roux de Bezieux has a burgeoning inbox, not least convincing future sponsors, easing internal tensions and reassuring one and all about how the project is being managed.

Asked about his "contact list" and his ability to rally sponsors, he replied: "You won't sell a product if it's bad. This isn't about cronyism."

The French Alps Winter Olympics are scheduled for February 1-17, 2030, with the Paralympics to be held a month later between March 1-10. *– AFP*

Martin to ride with broken wrist in Malaysian MotoGP practice

MotoPG

SEPANG, Malaysia – Championship-chasing Jorge Martin will risk racing with a broken wrist in today's opening practice for the Malaysian MotoGP.

The Aprilia rider trails Spanish compatriot Marc Marquez by 10 points at the top of the standings with four race weekends to go, starting at Sepang.

Martin fractured his wrist crashing during a sprint duel with Marquez last weekend at Phillip Island.

Marquez won the sprint for Ducati and could have amassed an even bigger lead had Sunday's main race in Australia not been called because of bad weather.

Martin will participate in today's first practice session to assess if he can compete in Sepang over the weekend.

"If I wasn't in the championship fight I'd have my arm in a cast," said Martin.

"I feel grateful to be here, to be able to try after only five days since I broke my radius," he told reporters.

Marquez is happy to see Martin racing.

"If Martin is on the race track he will be fast," said the reigning MotoGP champion and current leader.

Italian Marco Bezzecchi lies 50 points adrift of Marquez in the standings and is aware his challenge is a tough one.

"It's clear that if I want to try to stay in the fight I have to try to not lose many points. It won't be easy because everyone is super quick. I have to be competitive and try to fight for those positions," he said.

Unpredictable conditions at the Sepang circuit will test the riders.

Torrential rain and suffocating humidity are expected throughout the race weekend. *– AFP*

The Violin Case: Macau odyssey

Critique by Stefan Hammond

"The Violin Case", a feature film from Macau-based director Max Bessmertny, unfolds in layers that touch upon the mercenary nature of the art world versus the human appreciation of artistic beauty. Its Macau-centric nature will delight viewers familiar with the gorgeous grime of the MSAR's streets, the eccentricities of its inhabitants and their tangled relationships.

Bessmertny's lens peers deep into street-real Macau, far from the glitz depicted by Hollywood efforts like last year's "Ballad of a Small Player". Exterior shots traverse the travessas of the peninsula, green metal sidewalk arches lit by sodium vapour yellow streetlights. Characters struggle with obstinate traffic, dodgy air-con units, and each other. The film revels in specific Macau details: taxi drivers bark at customers who delay their mahjong pursuits, a feisty bar owner eighty-sixes* a besotted customer, aunties count in Cantonese during group exercises at a local park.

Struggling artist Theo (Kelsey Wilhelm) loses an essential artwork in a taxi (Filipe Baptista Tou's performance as salty cabbie Ah Chong is on point) and must retrieve it. The work is discarded next to a dumpster, but Filipino garbageman Manny (João R Pascual) sees its beauty and takes it home. The artistic worth of the piece – intrinsic and unhyped, triumphs.

Manny's wife (Loretta Lai) finds a contact for the artwork, and the call leads to Pauline (Clara Brito), a powerful Art Doña who thinks she controls Theo's career. Theo finds a cohort in Evelyn (Mi Lee) and they comb Macau searching for the MacGuffin**. The odyssey reveals all manner of Macau denizens – friendly strangers on late-night minibuses, conspiratorial data mavens, and the possibly apocryphal "Flying Robber". Relationships run the gamut from nascent to on-the-wane to "it's complicated." The 87-minute film is a satisfying yarn that barrels along at a good clip and is absolutely worth a watch.

Maiden feature in Macau

Director Bessmertny's CV includes short films that resonated on the international film festival circuit. But organising an English-language feature film in the MSAR was a different beast.

"The film was privately financed," says Bessmertny. "Everyone came in and we did it the old school way, Blood Simple style," he says, referencing the first Coen Brothers film. Funds trickled in from Macau sources: friends and film fans. Macau institutions also supported the project: Artyzen Grand Lapa, Galaxy Entertainment Group, Melco Resorts & Entertainment, the Macau Social Club. "The government's Cultural Development Fund, the Fundo de Desenvolvimento da Cultura (FDC) supported the project post-completion, "which we appreciate."

One factor that complicated the shoot was the ongoing COVID pandemic, which meant that anyone travelling to Macau was subject to a three-week quarantine. In the event, the entire cast and crew was made up of locals except for the cinematographer and assistant director, who arrived from Hong Kong.

"I'd worked with the lead actor, Kelsey, on my short films, so I always thought of him for this role," says Bessmertny. "We did an audition and he was perfect. I also auditioned a few actresses for the Evelyn role and Mi Lee ended up being the right one – she flew in all the way from overseas, to Macau, during COVID."

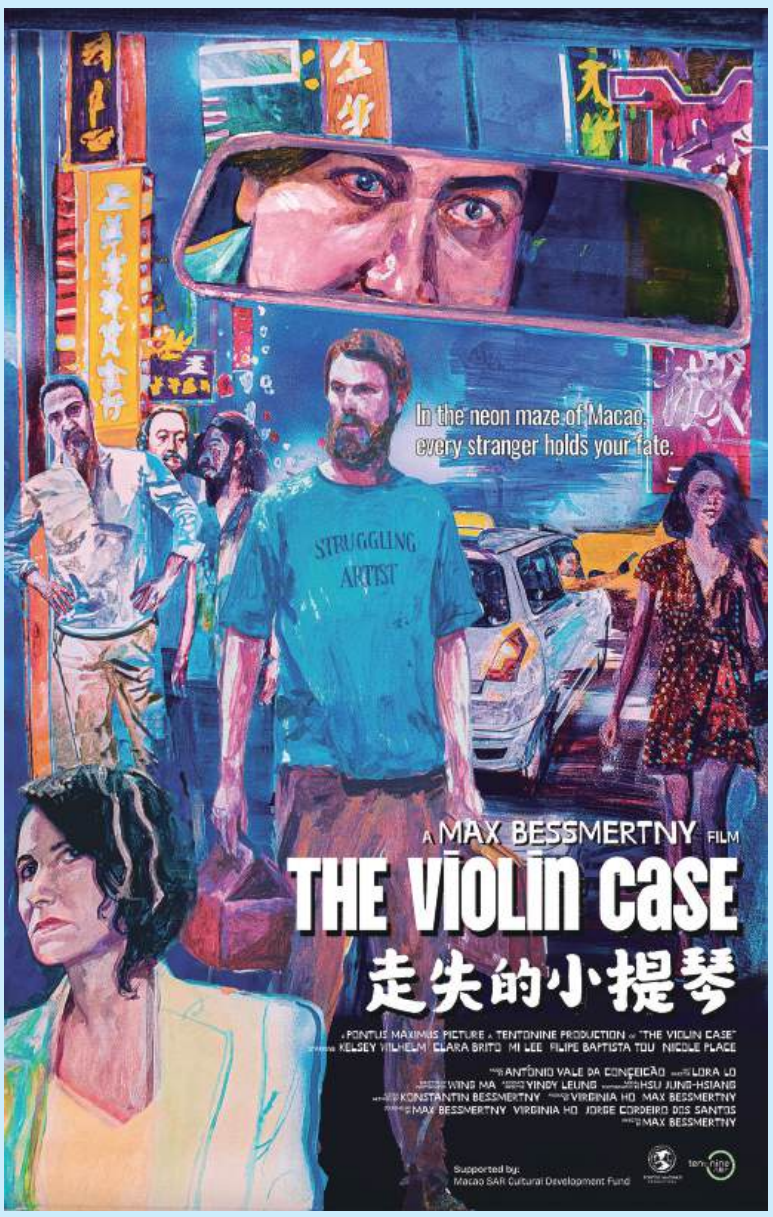
The Violin Case is a refreshing look at the realities of creative work in a universe where art may be for art's sake, but the door paint has wilted in the subtropical heat, and the rent is due.

End

**The verb "eighty-six" is an informal American English slang term that means to reject, discard, cancel, eject, or throw out someone or something. – Gemini*

***A MacGuffin is a plot device in filmmaking, literature, and storytelling – an object, goal, event, or person that drives the plot forward and motivates the characters, even though the specific details of what it actually is are largely irrelevant to the audience. – Gemini*

Editor's note: Footnotes added by the Post



Poster for The Violin Case / Photo: IMDb

A throne on wheels, popemobiles star in new Vatican show



Visitors look at one of the historic papal vehicles, Mercedes-Benz 600 Pullman Landaulet (W 100), on display at the Square Garden (Giardino Quadrato) during the press preview of the "A Century of Papamobile" exhibition, in the Vatican Museums, at the Vatican, on Wednesday. – AFP

Alexandria Sage

VATICAN – Popemobiles past and present from German automaker Mercedes-Benz are the stars of a new show at the Vatican Museums, emblematic vehicles that serve to bring the pope closer to his flock.

"A Century of the Popemobile" tracks the long relationship between the Stuttgart-based automaker and the Holy See, where the head of the Catholic Church has used increasingly sophisticated vehicles to meet the faithful, whether in St Peter's Square, or during papal voyages around the world.

Opened to the public yesterday, the exhibit in a temporary pavilion within the Vatican's Square Garden features eight models borrowed from the automaker's collection and that of the Vatican.

First on display – and poles apart from the white popemobiles of present-day – is the Nurburg 460, a shiny black Pullman limo delivered to Pope Pius XI in 1930, whose luxurious exterior reveals a plush papal seat inside, covered in raspberry silk brocade.

Last is the hulking ML 500 made for Pope Benedict XVI in 2012, with its enlarged enclosed back section allowing for optimal viewing of, and by, the pope.

Sandro Barbagallo, head of the museum's department of historical collections, told journalists during a preview on Wednesday that the popemobile should not be viewed as "just a simple means of transport".

"The so-called popemobile serves to allow people to see the pope, but also to allow him to see. It serves so that people can greet the pope, but also and above all so that the pope can, along the roads, greet and at the same time bless," he said.

"It is a modern technology placed at the service of the pontiff, at the service of his ministry," said Barbagallo.

The first so-called modern popemobile appeared in 1980, with the Mercedes-Benz 230G for Pope John Paul II.

Its rear resembled an elevated throne covered by a transparent dome, adorned with mother of pearl paintwork and gold trim.

Other cars on display include the 1960 300D Landaulet with its plush beige mohair seat and removable side windows for Pope John XXIII and the 1997 lungo Landaulet with its electrohydraulic soft top for Pope John Paul II.

Although the show recounts 100 years of papal mobility, it leaves out the various vehicles produced by Mercedes-Benz's competitors and gifted to the pope, including from Fiat, Renault, Volkswagen – and even Ferrari.

'Sardine can'

Popemobiles have included bulletproof glass since the assassination attempt on John Paul II in 1981 in Rome.

But for all their benefits, the popemobiles sometimes meet resistance from those they were designed to transport.

Pope Francis famously told a Spanish newspaper in 2014 that he couldn't get close to the people from within his "sardine can" popemobile encased in bulletproof glass, saying he preferred to be more out in the open, despite the safety risks.

For short trips to cross Rome, Francis often opted for a simple white Fiat.

Accessing the show, visitors enter through the museum's Carriage Pavilion with the ornate horse-drawn coaches of popes and cardinals of years past, before global automakers began wooing the pope with their vehicles.

Speaking to journalists, the chief executive of Mercedes-Benz Heritage, Marcus Breitschwendt, said the automaker's historic cars, including popemobiles, are exhibited in a closely protected museum in Stuttgart.

"A clear rule to everybody" prevails there, Breitschwendt said.

"It's strictly forbidden to everybody, even to our CEO, to all of us, to sit on the pope's seat.

"And that's the way it will stay."

– AFP

World Weather

CHINA	ASIA-PACIFIC	WORLD	LUSOPHONE
Beijing 4°C~21°C	Manila 23°C~33°C	New York 9°C~22°C	Lisbon 13°C~27°C
Shanghai 12°C~24°C	Bangkok 25°C~34°C	London 8°C~15°C	Rio de Janeiro 19°C~25°C
Hong Kong 22°C~29°C	Tokyo 11°C~20°C	Frankfurt 3°C~14°C	Luanda 24°C~28°C
Taipei 20°C~27°C	Singapore 25°C~32°C	Vancouver 5°C~9°C	Maputo 16°C~28°C
Guangzhou 20°C~32°C	Kuala Lumpur 23°C~32°C	Paris 5C~15°C	Dili 22°C~34°C
Nanjing 9°C~24°C	Jakarta 24°C~33°C	Moscow 2°C~12°C	São Tomé 24°C~32°C
Guilin 19°C~30°C	Seoul 7°C~19°C	Las Vegas 14°C~22°C	Praia 22°C~32°C
Xi'an 7°C~20°C	Sydney 15°C~24°C	Monte Carlo 12°C~19°C	Bissau 23°C~32°C



1. Vibrant parade

Participants march in a Junkanoo parade as Britain's King Charles III visits in Parliament Square in Nassau, The Bahamas on Wednesday. – *AFP*



2. Pumpkin Baloo

A woman walks past an exhibit depicting Baloo the Bear and Mowgli from "The Jungle Book" of an exhibition around the theme of tropical jungle at the Krewelshof farm near Mechernich, western Germany, yesterday. – *AFP*



3. Strange food bowls

Humboldt penguins eat fish from carved pumpkins to promote Halloween, at ZSL London Zoo in central London yesterday. – *AFP*



4. Looking exotic

Lana Ja'Rae attends "Cursed Amulet III" Halloween Extravaganza on Wednesday in New York City. – *AFP*



5. Fragrant ladies

Floral mannequins representing Gladys Russell (left) and Maud Breton, inspired by HBO's Emmy-nominated series "The Gilded Age" are displayed during the Fleurs de Villes THE GILDED AGE exhibition at Greystone Mansion & Gardens in Beverly Hills, California, on Wednesday.

The exhibition features floral designs created by local florists and runs through November 4. – *AFP*



6. Flying in Giza

England's Ben Maher on Point Break competes during the Longines Global Champions Tour 2026 at the Giza pyramids, west of Cairo, Egypt on Saturday. – *AFP*