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Over 80 pct of unpaid carers keen to return to paid work: Fu Luen

Sherwin Hng

More than 80 per cent of full-time female family carers in Macau want to return to the workforce, but many believe they face significant barriers, including age, outdated academic qualifications, skills or professional credentials, and concerns about balancing employment with family responsibilities, according to a survey released by the Women's General Association of Macau (known as Fu Luen in Cantonese) yesterday.

The findings were presented at a press conference at the Family Service Centre on Rua da Barca. Speakers included Legislative Assembly member and Fu Luen Vice-Chairwoman Wong Kit Cheng, Vice-President Loi I Weng, Policy Research Division Supervisor Ip Weng Hong, and researcher Chan Lap Chu.

The survey, conducted between September and October, collected 672 questionnaires and included 16 in-depth interviews with women aged 18 and above. Nearly 70 per cent of the respondents were aged between 26 and 45, and most of them held undergraduate or postgraduate degrees.

The findings showed that nearly 40 per cent of the respondents spent more than four hours a day on family care, while more than half shouldered most or almost all of their family-care responsibilities. Around 15 per cent were responsible for caring for both their children and their own parents or parents-in-law. Meanwhile, about 40 per cent said they shared care duties equally with their husbands or partners.



(From left to right) Ip Weng Hong, supervisor of the Policy Research Division of the Women's General Association of Macau; Loi I Weng, vice-president of the association; Wong Kit Cheng, vice-chairwoman of the association; and Chan Lap Chu, researcher of the association's Policy Research Division, pose at yesterday's press conference at the association's Family Service Centre on Rua da Barca. – Photo: Sherwin Hng

According to the findings, family responsibilities had also affected women's career development. Nearly 45 per cent said they had chosen jobs with more stable working hours but fewer promotion opportunities or lower salaries. More than 30 per cent had given up further education or training, 20 per cent had turned down promotion opportunities, and nearly 25 per cent had left the workforce because of family-care duties.

The survey and interviews also highlighted a gap between women's willingness to work and their ability to re-enter the labour market. Fu Luen said the employment environment remained insufficiently supportive of full-time family carers, particularly women, creating a situation in which they wanted to work but found it difficult to secure employment. Such an environment could also make women who were still employed more concerned that marriage and having children might affect their career development, according to the findings.

The main difficulties identified by the respondents were heavy workloads and work pressure, financial pressure, and a lack of personal time. They particularly hoped for more flexible working hours and family-related leave, as caring for children and elderly family members often involved unexpected situations, such as illness.

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Members of the Shanghai Ballet perform at Tilles Center for the Performing Arts in New York on Sunday. The Shanghai Ballet brought the classical ballet Giselle to the New York stage on Sunday night, captivating audiences with a performance that showcased the exquisite technique of Chinese ballet dancers. – Xinhua

Nails, screws, needles found in some Halloween treats in Germany

BERLIN – German authorities said yesterday that nails, screws and needles were found inside some sweets collected by children during Halloween and urged parents to be very careful with treats.

In Munich, a nine-year-old child who had been going door-to-door with friends on Saturday bit into a piece of candy containing a nail, though police said the child managed to spit it out without sustaining any injuries.

A nine-year-old girl injured her tongue after biting into a chocolate bar containing a pin at least five centimetres long in the northern town of Bremervörde, according to local police.

On the Baltic Sea island of Fehmarn, police said an 11-year-old girl found a three-centimetre-long sewing needle inside a chocolate bar.

In the central town of Umpferstedt, metal staples were found in chewing gum collected by two children, aged 11 and 12, police stated.

Police launched criminal investigations into those incidents and others but no suspects have been identified.

They said it remains unclear exactly where any of the children received the tampered sweets during their rounds.

Halloween celebrations have grown in popularity in Germany since the 1990s, driven largely by American films and television programmes as well as commercial advertising and an interest in costume parties. *– AFP*

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Xi holds talks with Sultan of Oman, stressing bilateral cooperation, peace efforts in Middle East

– Story on p. 7

Iran says in 'intensive' negotiations with US to avert war

Iran yesterday said "intensive" exchanges were underway with Washington and offered to reopen the Strait of Hormuz under strict conditions, as efforts escalated to avert a return to war.

– Story on p. 11

Portuguese court allows protest tent in Lisbon square

A Portuguese court yesterday ruled that a housing activist could put up a tent in a Lisbon square where security forces used baton charges to clear protesters at the weekend.

– Story on p. 12

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HK man busted for selling THC vapes: police

Sherwin Hng

A Hong Kong man has been arrested for smuggling electronic cigarettes containing tetrahydrocannabinol* (THC) from Hong Kong into Macau to sell, Judiciary Police (PJ) spokesman Cheong Un Hong said during a special press conference on Sunday.

Cheong identified the suspect as a 35-year-old Hong Kong resident surnamed Fung, who holds a Macau non-resident worker permit (blue card) and works as an electrician here.

According to Cheong, following an investigation based on intelligence that a male Hong Kong resident was engaging in drug trafficking activities in Macau, PJ officers launched an operation in the city centre at around 1:00 p.m. on Friday. Officers intercepted Fung and seized six e-cigarette devices from him and subsequently searched his home in the city centre, recovering an additional four used e-cigarette devices. Rapid testing conducted by Judiciary Police confirmed that the e-cigarette oil contained THC. Testing on the four used devices seized from his flat remained pending, Cheong added.

Fung also tested positive for drugs in a urine test, Cheong said.

A total of six e-cigarette devices containing THC oil, weighing 155.2 grams with an estimated street value of about 8,400 patacas, were seized during the operation.

A follow-up investigation revealed that Fung has a history of drug abuse and recently began smuggling drug-infused e-cigarette devices from Hong Kong into Macau to sell at 1,400 patacas each. He had completed transactions with at least three buyers prior to his arrest, Cheong noted.

Cheong said Fung distributed the drug-infused e-cigarettes through referrals within networks of drug users, adding that police are still investigating the actual number of devices sold and his network of buyers.

Fung was transferred to the Public Prosecutions Office (MP) on Sunday, facing charges of drug trafficking, drug consumption, and improper possession of equipment or devices.

The Judiciary Police urged the public, particularly young people, not to accept or purchase e-cigarettes or related products from others out of curiosity, peer pressure, or a desire to follow trends. Residents were also warned against buying e-cigarettes on behalf of others or carrying e-cigarettes of unknown origin across the border for anyone else, as they could unwittingly become involved in drug-related offences, face serious criminal penalties or health risks, or even be exploited by criminal groups.

The police said they would continue to strengthen intelligence exchanges and law-enforcement cooperation with their counterparts in neighbouring regions to combat cross-border drug trafficking and safeguard public security and residents' safety. ■



Judiciary Police (PJ) officers escort the hooded suspect to a PJ vehicle outside the PJ headquarters in Zape on Sunday. – Photo: Maria Cheang Ut Meng

**THC is the primary psychoactive compound found in the cannabis plant. In Macau, THC is treated strictly as an illegal drug. – DeepSeek*

Nurses Association to celebrate 40th anniversary

Armindo Neves

The Nurses Association of Macau (NAOM) held a press conference at the New Orient Landmark Hotel in Zape on Saturday to announce a series of activities to celebrate its 40th anniversary.

According to the group's Chairwoman Che Sio Ieng, the association was founded in 1986 and has consistently upheld its mission of uniting nurses across Macau, safeguarding nurses' legitimate rights and interests, promoting the recognition of nursing qualifications, and laying a solid foundation for the profession's development - thereby establishing the groundwork for the professionalisation of nursing in Macau. She also noted that membership has grown from just over 200 at the time of its founding to more than 1,000 today, accounting for 40 per cent of Macau's total number of nurses.

This year marks the association's 40th anniversary, and to celebrate, according to Che, NAOM has organised a series of events since the beginning of the year.

The celebrations to be held this month include today's general meeting of the association, a thematic seminar, and a celebratory dinner. Tomorrow and Thursday, the association will host the 24th "ICN Asia Workforce Forum" organised by the International Council of Nurses (ICN), and on Friday, the 20th "Alliance of Asian Nurses Associations", according to Che. She added that the association will establish a dedicated WeChat official account platform, keeping pace with the times by creating an efficient centre for information dissemination, member management, and brand building. ■



Nurses Association of Macau (NAOM) Chairwoman Che Sio Ieng addresses Saturday's press conference at New Orient Landmark Hotel in Zape. – Photo: Armindo Neves

MSAR passport holders reportedly denied boarding flight to Mexico

Khalel Vallo

The Identification Services Bureau (DSI) said in a statement that it is following up on a case involving Macao SAR passport holders who were denied boarding a flight to Mexico while transiting through Beijing, after airline staff reportedly cited a temporary change to Mexico's visa-free entry policy.

According to the bureau, the travellers were informed at the airport that their travel documents no longer met the visa-free entry conditions for Mexico and were therefore unable to board the flight.

After receiving the case, the bureau contacted the affected residents and enquired with the Consulate General of Mexico in Hong Kong, the statement said. The consulate replied that, as of the latest information available to it, there had been no change to Mexico's visa-free entry policy for MSAR passport holders, the statement noted.

The bureau said it was actively liaising with the airline to clarify the details of the incident and will continue to follow up, the statement said.

Residents who encounter difficulties while travelling abroad can seek assistance through the following hotlines via DSI hotline (2837 0777) during office hours; 24-hour tourism hotline (2833 3000); Public Security Police Force 24-hour overseas emergency assistance hotline (2857 3333); and Ministry of Foreign Affairs Global Emergency Hotline for Consular Protection and Service (+86 10 12308)

Cases reported through these hotlines will be handled and followed up by the relevant departments under established mechanisms, the statement said. ■



This image downloaded yesterday shows the flag of Mexico.

Gongbei Customs seizes 331,400 cigarettes at HZMB

Armindo Neves

Zhuhai's Gongbei Customs announced in a statement yesterday that its officers seized 331,400 cigarettes at the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge's (HZMB) Zhuhai Port (customs and immigration checkpoint) on October 8.

According to the statement, on that day, while conducting a routine X-ray inspection of a lorry transporting goods declared for export under a customs transit procedure from another region, customs officers noticed abnormalities in the X-ray images of certain areas of the vehicle and therefore proceeded to conduct a manual inspection.

Upon further examination of the relevant goods, officers found that the cartons had been packed around their inner sides and top layer with goods matching the description on the outer packaging, meaning that no abnormalities were visible when any side was opened, the statement said.

Following a detailed inspection, it was discovered that grooves had been left in the middle of some of the goods, and these had been stuffed with cigarettes individually wrapped in opaque plastic bags, the statement said. It added that upon counting, a total of 1,657 cartons of cigarettes—amounting to 331,400 cigarettes—were seized, covering 23 brands including "Chunghwa", "Double Happiness", and "Liqun".

Gongbei Customs reminded the public that, in line with the Chinese mainland's Tobacco Monopoly Law, the state has implemented a monopoly management system for the production, sale, import, and export of tobacco products, operating under a tobacco monopoly licence system. The export of cigarettes requires approval from the administrative department under the State Council in charge of tobacco monopoly and the acquisition of a tobacco monopoly licence. ■



This undated handout photo provided by Zhuhai's Gongbei Customs yesterday shows 331,400 cigarettes seized by its officers at HZMB's Zhuhai checkpoint on October 8.

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MacauPOST

Macau Weather

CLOUDY APART FROM SUNNY INTERVALS.
A FEW LIGHT RAIN PATCHES.
FORCE 3 TO 4 EAST TO SOUTHEASTERLY WINDS, OCCASIONALLY FORCE 5 WITH GUSTS.
RELATIVE HUMIDITY WILL RANGE BETWEEN 60% AND 95%.

24ºC~30ºC

Source: SMG

MGTO launches community tourism photo contest

Khalel Vallo

The Macao Government Tourism Office (MGTO) announced in a statement on Saturday that it is inviting residents and visitors to enter its "Tourism and 'Leisure' Buses: Exploring Community Charms" Photography Contest, with submissions open until November 30.

Organised by MGTO and coordinated by the Photographic Society of Macao (PSM), the contest aims to encourage participants to explore local communities and capture their cultural features, everyday scenery and stories through photography, the statement said, adding that entries must feature scenery from communities covered by the "Tourism and 'Leisure' Buses: Exploring Community Charms" programme. Details are available on the programme's mobile website https://leisurebus.dsedt.gov.mo.

According to the statement, the contest has three categories: Youth Group, Open Group and Visitor Group. Participants must be aged 12 or above and may enter only one category. Each entrant can submit up to 10 photographs, the statement said.

Completed entry forms and photo works must be emailed to the Photographic Society of Macao at psm_2015@yahoo.com.hk by November 30, the statement underlined, adding that contest regulations and entry forms are available on the society's website https://www.psm.org.

A judging panel comprising MGTO representatives and industry professionals will assess entries based on their relevance to the theme, overall aesthetics and creative expression, the statement highlighted.

Each category will award first, second and third prizes, as well as 10 merit awards, the statement said, noting that the respective cash prizes are 3,000, 2,000, 1,000, and 500 patacas, with awardees also receiving a trophy or plaque, as well as a certificate.



This poster provided by the Macao Government Tourism Office (MGTO) on Saturday promotes the ongoing "Tourism and 'Leisure' Buses: Exploring Community Charms" Programme Photography Contest.

The programme, launched in April in partnership with Macau's six integrated resort enterprises and upgraded in July, aims to encourage visitors to explore local communities and support community spending. ■

Casino takings fall 10 pct to 21.6 billion patacas last month, 2nd deepest drop this year

Staff Reporter

Macau's 20 casinos generated gross gaming revenue (GGR) of 21.68 billion patacas last month, marking a year-on-year decline of 10.0 percent, the Gaming Inspection and Coordination Bureau (DICJ) announced on Sunday.

Last month's 10.0 percent drop was the second deepest year-on-year of the year, after June's 12.1 percent.

Month-on-month, October's GGR rose by 20.02 percent from September's 18.06 billion patacas.

October was the gaming industry's fifth consecutive month this year to post negative year-on-year GGR growth.

In the first nine months of the year, GGR rose year-on-year by 1.6 percent to 208.79 billion patacas.

Since January, accumulated GGR growth has fallen from this year's high of 24.0 percent year-on-year in January to its lowest rate last month.

The local government-concessioned gaming industry is operated by six rival integrated resort (IR) operators: Sands, Galaxy, SJM, Melco, Wynn, and MGM. Under their concession agreements with the government, they are required to enhance their non-gaming attractions and support the promotion of Macau's cultural heritage and old-quarter renewal projects. The concessionaires pay 35 percent of their GGR as a direct gaming tax to the government, along with an additional 5.0 percent in levies to fund a raft of public causes.

Currently, the six operators run a total of 20 casinos, a 52.4 percent decrease from the peak of 42 casinos in 2021.

At present, SJM and Sands run five casinos each, Galaxy and Melco operate three each, while Wynn and MGM run two each.

According to the latest available DICJ statistics, baccarat accounted for 84.4 percent of local casinos' GGR across their 16 games of chance, including slot machines, at the end of the first half of the year. In comparison, roulette, Europe's classic game of chance, generated a mere 0.75 percent of GGR.

In the third quarter, Macau's casinos operated 6,000 gaming tables and 12,000 slot machines, according to the inspectorate.

Macau's government-concessioned casino industry was established in 1849. ■

Over 80 pct of unpaid carers keen to return to paid work: Fu Luen

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5 policy recommendations

To address the challenges, Fu Luen put forward five policy recommendations, calling for coordinated action by the government, businesses, and the wider community.

The **first** proposal is to establish a cost-sharing mechanism among the government, social organisations, and businesses, while improving the implementation of Macau's Framework Law of Family Policy (Law No.6/94/M). Fu Luen suggests setting up a dedicated fund or providing incentives to encourage employers to introduce family-friendly measures, including flexible working hours, hourly leave, and family-care leave. Such arrangements would allow employees to respond to unexpected family needs without having to leave their jobs or sacrifice career opportunities.

The **second** proposal focuses on strengthening community-based care services. Fu Luen recommends extending subsidised childcare services, currently aimed at infants aged up to three years, to cover children up to the age of six, while reducing fees and increasing child allowances. It also suggests considering a tiered allowance system to provide greater support to larger families. For elderly care, it calls for improvements to district-based services, including more day-care and residential care places, as well as subsidies for age-friendly facilities, to ease the burden on family caregivers.

Third, Fu Luen proposes improving the regulation and recruitment of domestic helpers under the Non-resident Workers Law. It calls for broader and more accessible legal recruitment channels, and suggests considering the employment of domestic helpers with relevant childcare or elderly-care qualifications, drawing on practices in Hong Kong. The aim would be to provide families with more suitable care support while ensuring that the employment of domestic helpers is properly regulated.

The **fourth** recommendation is to establish a transition platform to help women return to employment. Fu Luen suggests expanding the sectors and job opportunities covered by the Women's Career Relaunch Programme, while providing career assessments, psychological support, and job-matching services. These measures would help women who had spent time away from the workforce identify suitable career paths, rebuild their confidence, and reconnect with employers.

The **fifth** proposal calls for more comprehensive skills retraining. Fu Luen recommends providing subsidised training courses linked to recognised professional qualifications, alongside flexible online learning and micro-credential programmes. It also suggests monitoring participants' re-employment progress and employers' uptake of the training, to assess whether the courses are effectively helping women return to work.

Wong and Loi said the survey's findings would help Fu Luen better understand women's difficulties and formulate feasible proposals for the government. They stressed that cooperation among the government, businesses, and the community was needed to shift family care from being regarded primarily as women's responsibility to a shared social responsibility. ■

Int'l automobile expo showcases about 400 cars & motorcycles



Fairgoers check out GAC Group's flagship model, AION UT, during the opening day's 16th China (Macao) International Automobile Exposition at the Venetian Macao Cotai Expo on Friday. – Photo: Ida Cheong

Ida Cheong

The three-day 16th China (Macao) International Automobile Exposition at the Venetian Macao Cotai Expo concluded on Sunday, rolling out nearly 400 new models from over 100 car and motorcycle brands, including Guangzhou Automobile Group Co., Ltd. (GAC Group) flagship models, the ALL-NEW E8, AION i60, and AION N60.

The 3-day event featured new-energy vehicles alongside European, Japanese, and South Korean marques.

Speaking on the sidelines of a launch ceremony on Friday, GAC International Deputy General Manager Wang Shunsheng highlighted Macau's strategic role as a core window for GAC Group's layout across both the Greater Bay Area (GBA) and overseas markets, adding that the GAC Group stands as the only Chinese automotive brand to have participated in the Macau automobile expo for 16 consecutive years.

According to Wang, his company has successfully leveraged Macau as a springboard to enter Portuguese-speaking country markets such as Portugal and Brazil, driving smooth progress in its international expansion.

Meanwhile, the company remains dedicated to serving local users. In response to the "Northbound Travel for Macau Vehicles" policy and Macau's unique road conditions, GAC has introduced tailored vehicle models to facilitate seamless cross-border self-driving trips between Macau and the Chinese mainland.

According to a statement by GAC Group released on Friday, the company achieved a 113 percent year-on-year sales increase in the first quarter of this year, marking a major milestone in its localised market presence, adding that sales in September grew by 34 percent month-on-month in the Portugal market, and sales surged by a 280 percent year-on-year in the Brazil market.

Wang added that GAC Group will continue to rely on the Macau platform to strengthen ties with Portuguese-speaking countries, further explore their markets, and expand its brand market share across these countries.

Wang noted that electric vehicles (EVs) offer high cost-effectiveness in Hong Kong and Macau, prompting a gradual consumer transition from traditional petrol vehicles to EVs. As local charging infrastructure continues to improve, the growth potential for electric vehicles remains substantial, he said, adding that, in line with this trend, GAC Group plans to actively participate in the development of the charging and energy network across Hong Kong and Macau. ■



‘monochrome’ exhibition explores Macau’s identity & memory

Khalel Vallo

Mozambique-born local artist Mónica Coteriano presented “monochrome” last week, an installation combining black-and-white mobile photography and collages, at the Portuguese Bookshop (Livraria Portuguesa) in the city centre, reflecting on Macau’s cultural identity, collective memory and connections with Portuguese-speaking communities.

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

According to the message, Coteriano, who trained in contemporary dance in Lisbon, draws on photographs taken during her 12 years in Macau to explore how personal experiences and shared histories intersect through images, words and everyday fragments. Coteriano, an artist, performer and curator who founded the 10 Marias Cultural Association in Macao in 2016, works across photography, dance, performance, installation, sound and writing.

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

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

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

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

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

At one stage, she considered incorporating more text, almost turning the project into a book, before deciding to adopt a more restrained approach.

The exhibition builds on her earlier projects, including *From Where I Stand – Mobile Photography* (2017), which used photographs taken with an iPhone to explore family, travel and the construction of an imagined reality; *4 Steps into the Clouds* (2019), which combined cotton structures with texts in Portuguese, Chinese and English; and *Safe As* (2020), a group exhibition she curated that examined masks, confinement and virtual communication, the message noted.

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



Photos taken at the Portuguese Bookshop in the city centre last Wednesday – Photos: Khalel Vallo

Tech contests inspire local youth to pursue IT careers & int'l competitions: CPTTM



Attendees and participants pose for a group photo during the awards ceremony for the 2026 "All-Macau Secondary School IT Knowledge Quiz Competition" and the "All-Macau Secondary School Mobile Website Technical Skills Competition" at the Macao Science Centre (MSC) in Zape on Friday. – Photo: Ida Cheong

Ida Cheong

The award ceremony for the 2026 "All-Macau Secondary School IT Knowledge Quiz Competition" and the "All-Macau Secondary School Mobile Website Technical Skills Competition" was held on Saturday, with the aim of providing a platform for local youth to build experience and advance to international competitions.

The ceremony took place at the Macao Science Centre (MSC) in Zape. Jointly organised by the Macau Productivity and Technology Transfer Centre (CPTTM) and the Education and Youth Development Bureau (DSEDJ), the two competitions attracted a total of 436 students, with 52 participants winning prizes.

Hoi Chon Wang, a Form 5 (Senior Middle 2) student representing the winning team in the senior-high division of the IT knowledge quiz competition, told reporters on the sidelines of the one-day event that the contest evaluated participants on computer networking, Microsoft Office software, and Python programming*, with a strong focus on digital literacy. He added that winning the award has reaffirmed his decision to pursue higher education in information technology (IT) after graduating next year, helping him map out a clearer career path.

Hoi expressed hope that Macau will host more IT-related knowledge and skills competitions to encourage high school students to explore the field and build a reservoir of local IT talent.

Meanwhile, Chan Hoi Chon, another participant who won the website technical skills competition, noted that the hands-on experience gained from the mobile web design competition consolidated his technical knowledge. Chan said he plans to continue deepening his expertise in IT and AI. Chan also expressed a desire for local schools to introduce more AI courses or interest groups, enabling students to leverage AI tools to support their daily academic learning across various subjects.

CPTTM Information System & Technology Department Senior Manger Terence Liem Tao noted in a speech that the centre aims to use these competitions to build a bridge for local youngsters to step from Macau onto the global stage. By starting with local contests, students can accumulate practical experience, refine their skills, and eventually earn the opportunity to represent Macao, China, in regional and international competitions, he said. ■

**Python is a popular, high-level, general-purpose programming language created by Guido van Rossum in 1991. It is widely praised for its clean, English-like syntax and beginner-friendly structure. - Gemini*

Market brings families together through festive costume fun

Armindo Neves

The Macao Pátio do Espinho Friends Association and the Macao Sam Pa Mun Friends Association held a market named "Halloween Adventure Market" in Camões Garden on Saturday.

According to a statement released on Saturday, the event aimed to encourage parents and children to unleash their creativity, dress up in different Halloween costumes, and take part in community activities together.

Through games and interaction in a fun and relaxing environment, families were able to create happy memories, strengthen parent-child relationships, promote family harmony, and foster a more inclusive community, the statement said, adding that the event also featured themed game booths, creative workshops, face painting, and temporary tattoos for residents of different ages.

An event titled "Halloween Costume Catwalk" was also held during the market, according to the statement, which attracted more than 100 children and families to register.

Participants appeared in a wide variety of imaginative costumes, including pumpkins, ghosts, and wizards, sharing the festive spirit with their families, the statement said. It added that the Macao Pátio do Espinho Friends Association mascot, "Dim Dim", also interacted with visitors and handed out sweets during the event, receiving an enthusiastic response from children.

In the statement, the organisers considered the event a success, with the strong participation of local families reflecting the community's growing interest in family-orientated and festive activities.

The event achieved its goals of encouraging parent-child interaction, strengthening connections among residents, and promoting community cohesion, the statement said, adding that the association will continue to organise activities for seniors, families, and the wider community, providing more opportunities for residents to participate, connect, and enjoy meaningful moments together. ■

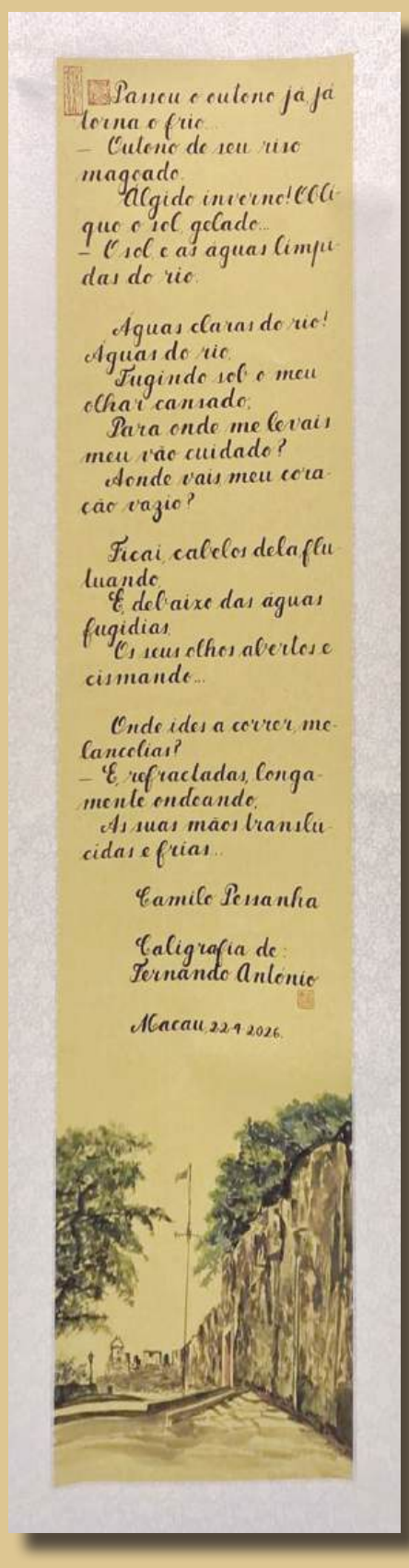


Revellers attend Saturday's Halloween Adventure Market in Camões Garden.



The organisers pose for group photo at the market on Saturday. – Photos courtesy of Macao Pátio do Espinho Friends Association

A Calligraphic Tribute to Camilo Pessanha



Autumn has already passed, now the cold returns…
—The autumn of her sorrowful smile. Bitter winter!
The sun is slanted. Freezing.
—The sun and the clear waters of the river.
Clear river waters! Waters of the river.
Fleeing beneath my weary gaze.
Where do you lead me, my idle sorrow?
Where are you going, my empty heart?
Remain here, her hair floating,
And beneath the swift-flowing waters,
Her eyes open and pondering...
Where are you running off to, melancholies?
—And, shimmering, flowing in waves
Her hands translucent and cold...
Camilo Pessanha

Calligraphy by Fernando António

Macau, 22-1-2026.

Editor's note: This calligraphy of a poem by local Portuguese poet Camilo Pessanha (1867–1926) has been presented by renowned Macau calligrapher Fernando António to The Macau Post Daily, where it is displayed in our office for all our visitors to admire. We would like to use this opportunity to express our gratitude for the present. Coimbra-born Pessanha lived and worked as a judge, teacher and poet in Macau between 1894 and his death.

Sam urges sci-tech ties to boost GBA development

Macao Special Administrative Region (MSAR) Chief Executive Sam Hou Fai addressed the opening ceremony of the 2026 Greater Bay Area Science Forum on Sunday in Nansha, Guangzhou, the Macao Government Information Bureau (GCS) said in a statement.

Sam reaffirmed that Macao will adhere to forward-looking planning, proactive action, a pragmatic and enterprising spirit, and truth-seeking results. It will continue to exert effort in deepening regional cooperation and promoting the exchange of innovation resources, thereby driving the mutual reinforcement of technological innovation and industrial development. Macao will strive to achieve reform, innovation, breakthroughs, and tangible results, contributing Macao's strength to the building of an international science and technology innovation centre, according to the statement.

Sam noted that global technological innovation is accelerating its evolution, with continuous breakthroughs in cutting-edge fields such as AI and biomedicine, profoundly reshaping the industrial landscape and competitive structure. Amid a complex and volatile international environment where scientific and technological cooperation and competition increasingly form the core battlefield of comprehensive national strength, the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area (GBA), serving as a strategic fulcrum for national technological innovation, shoulders the major mission of achieving high-level scientific and technological self-reliance and self-strengthening while welcoming unprecedented development opportunities.

Sam also said that the nation's 15th Five-Year Plan has made systematic deployments for deepening the development of the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area, explicitly proposing to strengthen regulatory alignment and mechanism connectivity in areas such as technological innovation, industrial development, and public services. It aims to give full play to the pioneering and exploratory role of major cooperation platforms and accelerate the development of an internationally first-class bay area, providing important top-level design and institutional guarantees for the three regions to deepen their cooperation, according to the statement.



Chief Executive Sam Hou Fai addresses Sunday's opening ceremony of the 2026 Greater Bay Area Science Forum, in Nansha, Guangzhou, capital of Guangdong Province. Nansha is a district of Guangzhou and a State-level New Area. Nansha is located about 80 km north of Macao by road." – Photo: GCS

Sam also said that scientific and technological cooperation among Guangdong, Hong Kong, and Macao has continuously deepened and progressed in recent years. Mechanisms for the cross-border flow of scientific research funds have been gradually refined, and joint funding programs have been steadily advanced. The construction of the Greater Bay Area Comprehensive National Science Center has accelerated, with major scientific and technological infrastructure and joint laboratories successively deployed. Furthermore, the scope of mutual recognition of professional qualifications for technical talent has continued to expand, making the cross-border flow of innovation factors more convenient. Concurrently, the Guangdong-Macao In-Depth Cooperation Zone in Hengqin has accumulated beneficial experiences in scientific research and development, achievement transformation, and industrial cultivation, exploring a viable pathway for coordinated innovation in the GBA. Guangdong, Hong Kong, and Macao share common roots and complementary advantages, having already formed an increasingly close cooperative pattern in talent, technology, capital, and international resources.

Sam further pointed out that as one of the four central cities of the GBA, Macao's high-quality joint construction of the Greater Bay Area is an important practice in integrating into and serving the overall national development strategy. The MSAR Government has officially promulgated and implemented its third five-year plan, fully aligning with the national 15th Five-Year strategic deployment and clarifying the roadmap for development across areas such as technological innovation, industrial diversification, and regional cooperation.

New historical starting point

Sam also said that standing at a new historical starting point, Macao will base itself on the development positioning of "one centre, one platform, one base" and "one highland", giving full play to its unique advantages of connecting internally while engaging globally, as well as blending Chinese and Western cultures. Taking deep cooperation among Guangdong, Hong Kong, and Macao as the guiding thread and the integrated development of Macao and Hengqin as an important reliance, Macao will proactively integrate and work together to build the GBA's scientific and technological innovation system.

Sam noted his belief that, under the theme "Smart Linkage of the Bay Area, Moving Forward toward New Horizons: Forging a New Frontier for Future Industries", the forum fully embodies the contemporary significance of facing technological frontiers, serving national strategies, and grasping future development. Sam said he looks forward to participating scientists, experts, scholars, and entrepreneurs sharing cutting-edge achievements, exchanging views, and facilitating more cross-sectoral and cross-regional pragmatic cooperation so that innovative achievements can take root and transform into actual development momentum within the GBA.

Looking to the future, Sam said that Macao will accelerate the implementation and effectiveness of four key projects and government-guided funds, solidly promote appropriate economic diversification, and expand broader space for technological innovation and industrial upgrading. Macao will face challenges with an enterprising posture and fulfill its responsibilities with a pragmatic and accountable work style. Hand in hand with sibling cities in the GBA and domestic and international partners, Macao will strive to open up a new phase of high-quality development, making new contributions to the advancement of Chinese modernisation.

The 2026 Greater Bay Area Science Forum was co-hosted by the People's Government of Guangdong Province, the HKSAR Government, the MSAR Government. The three-day forum ended yesterday. This year's edition focuses on future industries and cutting-edge technologies, featuring an opening ceremony, a main forum, multiple professional sub-forums, and special activities, the statement noted. ■

Editor's note: This Chinese-language statement by the Macao Government Information Bureau (GCS) has been arranged, edited and updated by the Post.

Newly merged Culture & Sports Bureau streamlines operations

Tony Wong

The now-defunct Cultural Affairs Bureau (IC) and Sports Bureau (ID) were merged on Sunday into a new public entity, the Culture and Sports Bureau (DSCD).

The Cultural Development Fund (FDC) – also a bureau-level public entity – was also merged into the new public entity, which started operating two days ago.

The new Culture and Sports Bureau is regulated by a new administrative regulation governing its organisational structure and operation, which was promulgated in the Official Gazette (BO) on Thursday last week and took effect on Sunday. Government-drafted administrative regulations, aka by-laws, do not require the legislature's approval.

The now-defunct Cultural Affairs Bureau, headed by a president and two vice-presidents, comprised seven departments and 16 divisions, while the now-defunct Sports Bureau, also headed by a president and two vice-presidents, comprised five departments and 11 divisions.

Including its president, the board of the now-defunct Cultural Development Fund had three members. The president received a bureau-director salary, while the other two members each received a bureau-deputy-director salary. The fund comprised one department and four divisions.

Consequently, these three bureau-level public entities comprised three bureau-director-level positions, six deputy-director-level positions, 13 departments, and 31 divisions in total.

According to its administrative regulation, the new Culture and Sports Bureau comprises eight departments and 16 divisions. It is headed by a director and three deputy directors.

The eight departments are respectively tasked with cultural heritage, libraries and archives, culture and arts, cultural and historical research and dissemination, promoting the development of cultural and sports industries, managing cultural and sports facilities, promoting mass sports and organising sports competitions, and athletes training and sports science.

While the bureau-level Cultural Development Fund has been merged into the new Culture and Sports Bureau, the Sports Fund – which was operated by the now-defunct Sports Bureau – has now been replaced by a new fund called Cultural and Sports Fund – operated by the new bureau.

The new fund has a board consisting of seven members, all of whom each receive a salary equivalent to 80 points for public servants – 7,520 patacas currently.

Meanwhile, according to an executive order gazetted on Friday, the new Culture and Sports Bureau is headed by Deland Leong Wai Man, who had headed the now-defunct Cultural Affairs Bureau since February 2022.

In the run-up to the IC-ID-FDC merger, Leong had concurrently headed the now-defunct Sports Bureau since September 20.

While the new bureau has three deputy directors in its organisational structure, only two deputy directors have so far been appointed – Choi Kin Long and See Lei Si Leng. Choi was an IC vice-president, while Lei was an ID vice-president. ■



Pedestrians walk past the headquarters of the new Culture and Sports Bureau (DSCD) in Praça do Tap Siac yesterday. The building was the headquarters of the now-defunct Cultural Affairs Bureau (IC). The now-defunct Sports Bureau (ID) was headquartered in Zape. – Photo: Tony Wong

Xi holds talks with Sultan of Oman, stressing bilateral cooperation, peace efforts in Middle East

BEIJING – President Xi Jinping said yesterday that China stands ready to work with Oman to steer their strategic partnership to a higher level, and to help restore peace and realize lasting stability in the Middle East at an early date.

Xi made the remarks during talks with Sultan Haitham Bin Tarik Al Said of Oman, who is on a state visit to China – the first by Oman's head of state since the establishment of diplomatic relations between the two countries 48 years ago.

The talks constituted an important chapter in the history of China-Oman relations and will inject strong impetus into the development of bilateral ties, Xi said.

He said China and Oman should enhance political mutual trust and strengthen exchanges of experience in national governance, while expressing China's support for Oman in safeguarding national independence, sovereignty, security and stability, and in independently exploring a development path suited to its national conditions.

The two sides should expand practical cooperation and continuously cement the foundation of mutually beneficial and win-win cooperation, he said, adding that China is committed to promoting high-quality development and expanding high-standard opening up, which will bring greater opportunities to Oman and other countries.

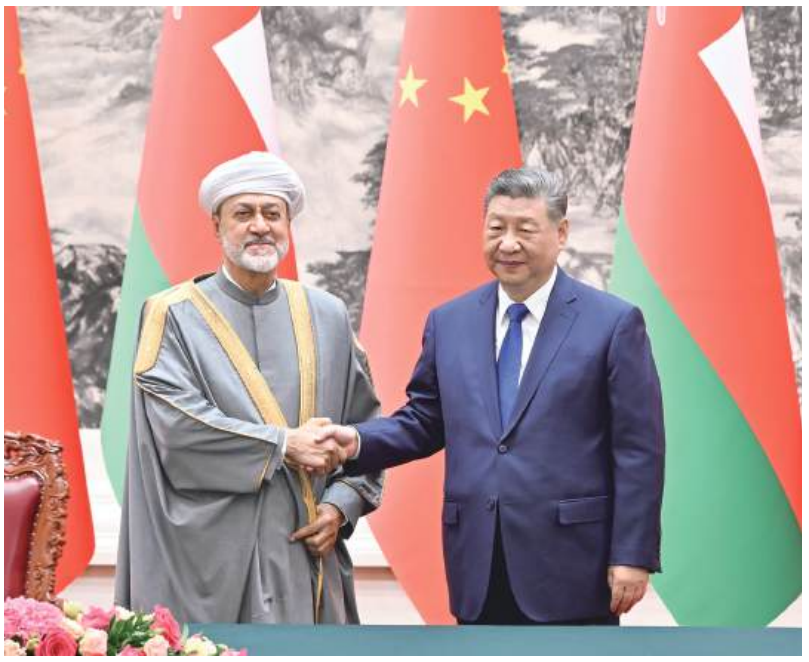
China is ready to deepen the synergy of development strategies with Oman and be a stable and reliable partner in the energy sector, a partner with promising potential in investment, and a partner in fostering innovation within advanced technologies, he said.

China aims to make bilateral energy cooperation more multi-dimensional and comprehensive, strengthen exchanges in industry, investment, AI, science and technology, and people-to-people ties, and join hands on the paths toward development, revitalization, and modernization, Xi said.

He also called for efforts to intensify cooperation in such fields as education, tourism, health, media and sports, to continuously substantiate the China-Oman strategic partnership.

Xi noted that the Middle East and the Gulf region should not become an arena for major power rivalry or geopolitical conflicts, and that concerted efforts are needed to foster and maintain peace and stability in the region.

"China has been actively committed to ending hostilities and promoting peace, aiming to contribute its wisdom and solutions to resolving the regional security predicament," Xi said.



President Xi Jinping (right) and Sultan Haitham Bin Tarik Al Said of Oman shake hands on the sidelines of the signing of cooperation documents covering areas including industrial and supply chains, green development and digital finance after their talks in Beijing yesterday. Xi held talks with Sultan Haitham Bin Tarik Al Said of Oman, who is on a state visit to China, at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing. – Xinhua

China will continue to advocate resolving disputes through political and diplomatic means, and support regional countries in building a common home of good-neighborliness, development, security and cooperation, he added.

China is ready to strengthen communication and coordination with Oman and other Arab states and Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries to jointly work for the early restoration of peace and tranquility in the region and the realization of lasting stability, Xi said.

Sultan Haitham Bin Tarik said that Oman firmly adheres to the one-China principle and supports China in safeguarding its national sovereignty and territorial integrity.

He expressed hope that this visit will serve as a new starting point to explore more cooperation opportunities with China, and build a future-oriented partnership and promote greater development of bilateral relations.

Stressing that China has been Oman's largest trading partner for many years and Chinese enterprises' investment in Oman has kept growing, Sultan Haitham Bin Tarik said Oman is ready to synergize development strategies with China and strengthen cooperation in trade, investment, industry, infrastructure, AI, science and technology, and other fields.

He said Oman highly appreciates China's just position on the Middle East issue and stands ready to maintain close coordination with China to uphold international law, advocate for the peaceful resolution of disputes, and jointly promote security and stability in the region and beyond.

After their talks, the two leaders jointly witnessed the signing of cooperation documents covering areas including industrial and supply chains, green development and digital finance.

During the visit, the two sides issued a joint statement on deepening the China-Oman strategic partnership.

Prior to the talks, Xi held a welcome ceremony for Sultan Haitham Bin Tarik in the Great Hall of the People. Xi also held a welcome banquet for him at noon. *– Xinhua*

Xi stresses improving protection, coordination to make Yellow River more beautiful

BEIJING – President Xi Jinping has stressed efforts to continuously improve protection and coordination to make the Yellow River more beautiful.

Xi, also general secretary of the Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Committee and chairman of the Central Military Commission, made the remarks in a recent instruction on further advancing the protection and governance of the Yellow River.

Xi emphasized that solid efforts must be made to promote ecological protection and high-quality development in the Yellow River Basin, carry forward the Yellow River culture, and ensure that this mother river delivers sustainable benefits to the Chinese nation and future generations.

Xi's instruction was conveyed at a work conference on comprehensively advancing the protection and governance of the Yellow River, held yesterday in Zhengzhou, central China's Henan Province.

Vice Premier Liu Guozhong, also a member of the Political Bureau of the CPC Central Committee, attended and addressed the conference. He called for joint efforts to advance greater protection and coordinated governance of the Yellow River, ensure the river is well managed, and enhance the conservation and intensive utilization of water resources.

The conference briefed participants on the achievements in Yellow River governance over the past 80 years under the leadership of the CPC.

Thanks to 80 years of conservation efforts, the river, once prone to devastating floods, heavy sedimentation and shifting channels, now has cleaner waters and more sustainable water use.

The Yellow River, China's second-longest river, flows 5,464 km through nine provinces and autonomous regions, crossing deserts and loess lands, before emptying into the Bohai Sea in Shandong. *– Xinhua*

Tender launched for new checkpoint between UM campus & Hengqin



This undated photo downloaded from the University of Macau's (UM) website shows part of its campus.

Tony Wong

A tender has been launched for the design of a construction project to build a new border checkpoint between the campus of the public University of Macau (UM) and Hengqin, according to a notice published by the Guangdong government late last week.

The 106-square-kilometre Hengqin island in Zhuhai City has been officially known as the Guangdong-Macao In-Depth Cooperation Zone in Hengqin since its inauguration in September 2021. The adjacent island is three times the size of the Macao Special Administrative Region (MSAR).

The UM campus, located on Zhuhai's Hengqin island, is under the MSAR's direct jurisdiction on a plot of land covering one square kilometre leased from the Chinese mainland.

The current Hengqin checkpoint is a Macau-mainland joint checkpoint, where the MSAR exercises direct jurisdiction over a part of the checkpoint on Zhuhai's Hengqin island, i.e., the Macau-side zone of the Hengqin joint checkpoint. It is connected to Macau's Cotai via the Lotus Flower Bridge across the Cotai-Hengqin waterway.

The UM campus is connected to Macau's Cotai via an underwater vehicular tunnel. In addition, the UM campus is also connected to the Macau-side zone of the current Hengqin joint checkpoint via a flyover – which can be used by both vehicles and pedestrians.

The new project – a tender for its design has been launched – will build a new joint checkpoint enabling border crossers to travel directly between the UM campus and Hengqin.

The one-square-kilometre UM campus is located south of the current Hengqin checkpoint.

According to the notice published by the Guangdong government, the new checkpoint will be located at the southwestern tip of the UM campus.

According to the notice, the new checkpoint will cover a gross floor area of 8,956 square metres, comprising 4,395 square metres at the MSAR-side zone and 4,561 square metres at the mainland-side zone.

The tender is for the design of the construction project. According to the notice, the project is expected to cost 194.33 million yuan.

Potential bidders are required to submit their quotations by 9:30 a.m. on November 23. ■

Student Post

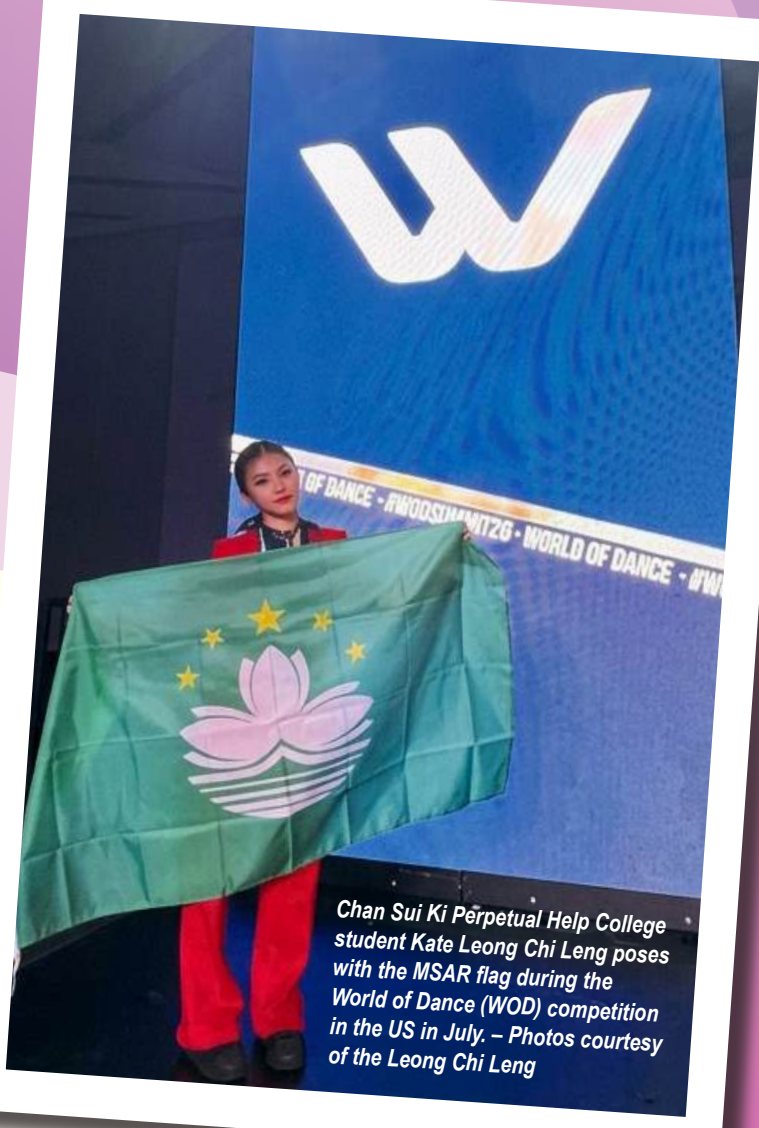
Standing on My Dream Stage

Kate LEONG CHI LENG F5C Chan Sui Ki Perpetual Help College

I have been dancing since I was five. Although I cried almost every time I went to the dance studio, TDSM, as a child, I can wholeheartedly say that I have loved dancing all along. Dancing is my life. It teaches me to express myself through body language and gives me the confidence to stand in front of an audience. So far in my dancing journey, qualifying for the World of Dance (WOD) competition, an opportunity as monumental for dancers as the World Cup is for footballers, has been one of my greatest milestones.

When my dance teachers asked if we wanted to take part in WOD, I hesitated. The preliminary round fell right in the middle of my school test week. However, my teachers reassured me that this was a rare chance to step onto my dream stage and that I had enough ability to overcome the challenge. So I organised my schedule carefully and joined my teammates for practice every single night.

As the day arrived, we delivered a flawless performance and won first prize! This earned us a ticket to the Final Round in the US, where we would represent Macao and compete against elite teams from across the globe. It felt surreal! We would also attend masterclasses to sharpen our technique. Yet the stakes were higher this time. We needed longer practice hours, especially in the week before our trip, which coincided with my exam week. Travelling to the US without our parents also felt daunting. I was utterly overwhelmed.



Chan Sui Ki Perpetual Help College student Kate Leong Chi Leng poses with the MSAR flag during the World of Dance (WOD) competition in the US in July. – Photos courtesy of the Leong Chi Leng

I agonised over the decision for nearly a month. Fortunately, my teammates rallied around me. They reminded me of the late nights we had spent practising, cheering, and dancing together, and they asked, "Why not seize this precious chance to show the world the effort and power of Macao's young dancers?" That was my moment of epiphany. I gave my teachers a resounding "yes" and threw myself into training.

We had less than three months to choreograph our piece. We practised day and night to make sure every transition was seamless and every movement perfectly synchronised. Obstacles were everywhere: building chemistry with new teammates, designing costumes, and pushing through injuries while mastering acrobatic tricks. To make matters worse, our teachers could not come to the US with us to rehearse and perform. We felt despondent and anxious.

After landing in the US, we had only one day to overcome severe jet lag while continuing our intense rehearsals. Predictably, our performance that day was a complete disaster. Devastated, almost all of us burst into tears. However, our teachers comforted us and reminded us to try our best without worrying about the result. We reset our mindset and pushed forward.

When the big day came, we were all trembling with nerves as we waited backstage. Yet the atmosphere was electric, with teams cheering each other on with warmth and respect. When I stepped onto my dream stage, my heart was practically beating out of my chest. But the moment the music played, a wave of confidence swept over me. My legs stopped shaking, and I became fully immersed in the joy of performing. Afterwards, the audience, crew, and teams from other countries showered us with heartfelt applause and praised Macao's unique performance. Soon after, we discovered that we had placed in the Top 4 of the Junior Division in the semifinals, qualifying us for the Global Top 10 Finals the following day!



Having already achieved our goal, we felt far less pressure in the Final Round and simply poured our hearts into the stage. Unforgettably, at the end, dancers from around the world danced and cheered together on stage. Although we finished in 6th place, our teachers reminded us that we were already champions. We were not only among the best in the world, but also forever the best in their hearts.

Words cannot fully describe how I felt after the WOD Finals. It was a bittersweet mix of reluctance to leave, a touch of regret, and immense relief. Those few days showed me the true magic of dance. Dance is a language without boundaries, bound only by shared passion. I learnt that with enough determination and trust, nothing is impossible. I was deeply proud to represent Macao on the world stage.

Gratitude to my dedicated teachers, my incredible teammates, and all our supporters. Together, we achieved this remarkable result of ranking among the Worldwide Top 6. As our team's slogan says, we strive for excellence and refuse to settle for mediocrity. I will continue to pursue dancing, and I look forward to returning to that dream stage once again.



The Last Match



Pui Va Middle School student Tong Che Si Tong participates in a football competition in September this year in Thailand. – Photo courtesy of Tong Che Si Tong

Tong Che Si Tong from Pui Va Middle School

I went to Thailand for a football competition. Our last match was against a very confident team. Before the game started, we heard their players talking about how they would celebrate each goal. After hearing that, we decided not to let them have any celebrations.

During the first half, we worked very hard and defended bravely. Unfortunately, they still managed to score one goal. In the second half, things became much more difficult. We weren't a professional team, and our energy slowly ran out. The other team kept attacking and scoring. In the end, we lost 0-9, but never gave up.

Linger

Chin Pereira Norte Vitória Cristal from Pui Va Middle School

When the Earth pulls me into its dark embrace, and tiny beings explore my hollow chest. Let them find the warmth of my quiet efforts to be someone good, my wish is to leave the world kinder than I found it.

Will my pain stain this Earth that gave me life? The thought aches. So while I breathe, for all the burdens I am strong enough.

Image provided by Pui Va Middle School student Chin Pereira Norte Vitória Cristal recently





Image provided by Fu Luen School student Hailey Lao Hei Lam recently.

The Power of Listening

Rain U Weng Pui from Fu Luen School

Have you ever felt stressed and upset at school? However, you have no one to talk about your worries and struggles. Many of our classmates may feel lonely every day. In our busy school life, we may not notice their negative emotions.

In school, when I see a classmate feeling stressed or sad, I will stay with them quietly and listen to them carefully without judging them. I will give them time to share their feelings instead of giving advice too quickly.

When I do this, my classmates may feel comforted and much less lonely. They know someone really cares about them. Little by little, they may become braver when they face their own troubles. If I keep doing this, they may start listening to other classmates too. This small kindness can slowly spread across our whole school and warm many hearts around us every day. More students will learn to care for one another and build a warmer school community.

Listening is a powerful small act of kindness. Simply by listening, we can help someone who is having a difficult time feel better.

Starting today, let's try to be patient and take the time to listen to the people around us. Remember that a small act of kindness can make a big difference to our someone's life.

Thousands build Buddhist monuments for Bhutan's 'mindfulness' city

Dechen Wangdi

GELEPHU, Bhutan – Tens of thousands of volunteers helped raise 108 Buddhist stupas in Bhutan on Sunday, marking the Himalayan kingdom's ambitious plans for a "mindfulness" city aimed at driving economic growth.

The 15-metre-tall solid towers – sacred Buddhist monuments found across the Himalayas – stretch along 12 kilometres of riverbank near the Indian border, at the site of the future Gelephu Mindfulness City.

More than 40,000 volunteers participated in building the structures as "a physical form of prayer made permanent in stone and earth", after starting work after midnight, officials said.

"I was worried that raising 108 stupas in a single day might not succeed," Bhutan's King Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck said in a speech at the ceremony.

"But everything went successfully, and for that, I am truly grateful."

The ceremony was attended by around 200,000 people, or nearly a quarter of the population, officials told AFP.

Landlocked Bhutan, with a population of just under 800,000 and wedged between China and India, is known for its policy of prioritising "Gross National Happiness" alongside economic growth.

Bhutan hopes the city will boost its economy and persuade more young people to stay, attracting investment in sustainable business, green technology, education, tourism and financial services.

The King established the special zone by royal charter in 2024, saying its purpose was to "create a vibrant economic hub".

Bhutan faces a declining birthrate and an exodus of young people seeking opportunities abroad.

"This occasion will be recorded in our history for generations to come," said Nima Gyeltshen, 65, head of the Organisation for Youth Empowerment, which helps young Bhutanese find work.

Cryptocurrency ambitions

The sleepy town, 240 kilometres from the capital Thimpu, has a population of less than 10,000, according to the last census in 2017.

Together, the 108 stupas –a number with significance in Buddhist traditions – stand more than 10 times the height of Egypt's Great Pyramid of Giza, organisers say, at an estimated cost of US$21 million.

Farmer Thukten Tshering, 71, said he did not understand much about the new project but was looking forward to it.

"Responsibilities at home never allowed me to pursue dharma (path of duty)," he said.

"At 71, I want to take every opportunity to be part of spiritual activities around me."

Analysts have questioned whether Bhutan can attract sufficient investment to realise its vision.

But Indian billionaire Gautam Adani, head of the ports-to-power conglomerate, joined Gelephu Mindfulness City as a founding member in January.

The site is set to be connected to India's rail network in neighbouring Assam, with an international airport slated to open in 2029.

The project is also linked to Bhutan's cryptocurrency ambitions, with the kingdom mining bitcoin using surplus hydropower and pledging to use digital assets to support the city's development.



Volunteers construct a stupa at Gelephu in Bhutan on Sunday, as part of a project to build 108 Buddhist stupas in a single day. *– AFP*

Bishnu Maya Moktang, a local resident who attended Sunday's ceremony, said she was excited about the upcoming mindfulness city.

"I hope to live long enough to see it," Moktang, 56, told AFP.

"My parents died young and they would never see the city. I feel fortunate." *– AFP*

Taliban government voices 'serious concern' over US Afghan deportation plans

KABUL – Afghanistan's Taliban authorities voiced concern yesterday over reported plans by Washington to deport scores of Afghan immigrants to Pakistan with the aim of their eventual return to their home country.

More than 150 Afghans in the United States would be deported via Pakistan to Afghanistan, including relatives of those who assisted US forces before their 2021 withdrawal, according to US media reports and an advocacy group.

"The Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan expresses its serious concern over reports that the United States intends to deport some Afghan refugees to Pakistan who have not yet been able to obtain legal residency documents in that country," foreign ministry spokesman Abdul Qahar Balkhi said in a statement.

Advocacy groups have warned that the removal of former allies and their families could endanger their lives.

After regaining power, Taliban authorities announced a general amnesty for Afghans who worked with Western-backed forces and governments and have repeated promises this year that their former foes could safely return home.

However, the United Nations has recorded reports of extrajudicial killings, detentions and abuses.

President Donald Trump's administration last year issued travel bans for a number of countries, including Afghanistan, as part of a broad immigration crackdown.

His administration sort to sought to end deportation protections for Afghans, some of whom were granted special immigrant visas following the 2021 takeover by Taliban authorities.

Among those expected to be deported are relatives of Afghans who assisted the US military in the country prior to the fall of Kabul, according to AfghanEvac, a group seeking to help former Afghan allies.

While the United States cannot arrange deportations directly to Afghanistan, anonymous US officials told *The New York Times* that Pakistan will oversee their expulsion to Afghanistan.

In recent years, Germany and Turkey have deported Afghan nationals directly to Afghanistan, despite concerns from human rights groups over the risks facing returnees.

Balkhi said Taliban authorities urged "the United States of America to adopt a responsible and measured approach in this regard and to take any decisions and measures regarding the fate of Afghan citizens with clear mutual understanding, necessary coordination, and consideration of the rights and legitimate demands of the individuals concerned".

"The Afghan side is ready to interact in this regard in a practical and mutually understanding manner," he added.

Pakistan's government earlier this year ordered law enforcement nationwide to arrest Afghan citizens without visas as part of a years-long repatriation policy that has pushed back millions of Afghans who fled throughout decades of war.

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

Philippine police arrest senior figure of Japanese telecom fraud syndicate

MANILA – Philippine authorities have arrested a suspected senior figure of a Japanese telecom fraud and theft syndicate that has targeted elderly people in recent years, local media reported on Saturday.

According to local media Inquirer.net, the 57-year-old Japanese suspect, believed to be the syndicate's second-in-command, was arrested by police and immigration personnel in Nueva Ecija province, north of Manila.

Philippine police said the suspect has been regarded as the top leader of the group, known as JP Dragon, since its former head was arrested in the Philippines in June last year. The group has been linked to theft and telecom fraud activities across Asia.

In recent years, Philippine police have stepped up their crackdown on telecom fraud. JP Dragon is also linked to the "Luffy" crime group, which carried out fraud and robberies across Japan between 2021 and 2023 and whose key members were also arrested in the Philippines. *– Xinhua*

Japan urges US to enforce discipline after 2nd Marine arrest

TOKYO – Japan urged the United States to enforce discipline among its troops after a Marine was arrested on suspicion of drink driving during a curfew in the wake of another serviceman's arrest on a murder charge, the defence minister said yesterday.

US forces on the Japanese island of Okinawa were barred from drinking alcohol for two days early last month and faced a 30-day curfew after the murder of a woman allegedly committed by an American Marine.

The case has triggered outrage in Japan and reignited controversy over the heavy US military presence on the southern island.

A second Marine had been arrested over allegations he drove under the influence of alcohol, Defence Minister Shinjiro Koizumi said.

The arrest took place on Saturday, according to media reports.

"We requested that the US side strictly enforce discipline among its personnel, implement effective measures to prevent a recurrence, and ensure full compliance with the nighttime curfew," Koizumi told reporters.

"We want them to take (the incident) seriously," he added.

The curfew imposed last month required all troops to be back on base or at "an off-base domicile" from midnight to 5:00 a.m. [local time]

Last week, Japanese prosecutors indicted the Marine accused of murdering a woman in Okinawa.

Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi told lawmakers days after the woman's death that the government had lodged a strong protest with the United States, urging their "full cooperation with the investigation" and "strict discipline among US military personnel".

The *Yomiuri Shimbun* newspaper reported that, according to the indictment document, the 20-year-old suspect allegedly strangled the woman from Naha in a hotel with a telephone cord on October 3.

The United States has around 54,000 military personnel stationed in Japan, mostly on Okinawa.

Crimes committed by US personnel have been a thorn in relations between the close security allies.

Foreign Minister Toshimitsu Motegi has previously said that officials were reviewing the off-base code of conduct for US troops in Japan following the alleged killing.

The existing policy, updated in 2024 following a string of sexual assaults by US military personnel in Okinawa, includes a ban on servicemembers drinking in public off base between 1:00 a.m. and 5:00 a.m. or going to bars during those hours. *– AFP*



A man inspects damage caused by a cold lava flow from Mount Semeru, which destroyed seven houses and caused a 150-metre section of road to collapse, along the Glidik River in Purorejo village, Lumajang regency, East Java province, Indonesia yesterday. *– AFP*

Iran says in 'intensive' negotiations with US to avert war

TEHRAN – Iran yesterday said "intensive" exchanges were underway with Washington and offered to reopen the Strait of Hormuz under strict conditions, as efforts escalated to avert a return to war.

Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi said indirect talks were taking place via mediators. China also urged a return to negotiations, while Iran's security chief discussed the conflict with Russian President Vladimir Putin.

Oil prices, sent rocketing by Iran's blockade of the Strait of Hormuz energy corridor, dropped more than six percent yesterday on optimism over the eight-month-old conflict.

"Given the sensitivity and gravity of the current situation, consultations and deliberations are very intensive," Araghchi said in a video interview with the official IRNA news agency.

"Qatar and Pakistan are playing a very active mediating role in these negotiations."

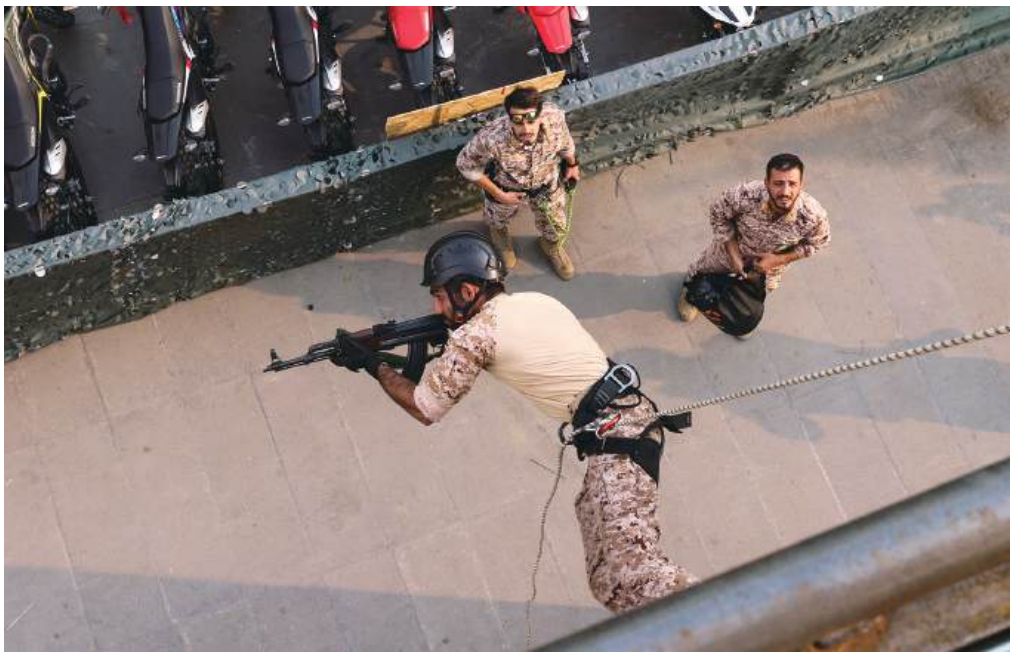
The Axios news outlet reported that US Vice President JD Vance had sent a letter to Iranian national security chief Mohsen Rezaei about possible new talks, marking the highest-level move in months.

The redoubled diplomatic push came ahead of today US midterm elections, where dissatisfaction over the war and higher fuel prices are weighing on US President Donald Trump's Republicans.

Democrats expect to win at least partial control of Congress and impose political constraints on Trump for the first time in two years.

Iran's First Vice President Mohammad Reza Aref said the messages received from the US were "an acknowledgement of our victory".

But Trump kept up his threats against Iran, telling a campaign rally that at "some point we're going to have to give them the hammer".



Members of the Iranian military demonstrate their skills during the inauguration of the Jan-Fada ("Self-Sacrificed for Iran") training camp at Tajrish Square, in front of the Emamzadeh Saleh shrine, in Tehran, yesterday. *– AFP*

'Good-faith approach'

A senior Iranian official said Tehran was ready to open Hormuz, the export highway for the energy-rich Gulf, within two days – as long as Washington agrees to its list of demands.

In September, Iran proposed a seven-day plan to reopen the strait if the US agreed to demands including ending the war on all fronts, unfreezing Iranian assets, lifting oil sanctions and ending its counter-blockade of Iranian ports.

"The possibility of implementing this plan in two days is another indication of Iran's good-faith approach," foreign ministry spokesman Esmaeil Baqaei told reporters at a briefing.

"We have stated that, if Iran's demands are met, it would be possible to restore security to the Strait of Hormuz and resume the negotiating process within a short period."

Baqaei said "everything depends" on the US side accepting the Iranian demands. "Only then can we discuss the subsequent stages," he added.

Chinese President Xi Jinping discussed the war with Oman's Sultan Haitham bin Tariq in Beijing yesterday – the first visit to China by the Gulf nation's head of state since diplomatic ties were established.

"The two sides called for resolving disputes through political and diplomatic means, urging the United States and Iran to pursue a peaceful path, achieve a ceasefire [and] prevent war entirely," an Omani statement said.

China also held meetings with Iranian and Saudi officials in Beijing yesterday.

Beijing supports Tehran in "safeguarding its own sovereignty and security", Foreign Minister Wang Yi told Ali Bagheri, deputy secretary of Iran's Supreme National Security Council, according to a Chinese statement.

Bagheri told Wang that "Tehran's stance on defending its national security, sovereignty, and territorial integrity remains unchanged, and that Iran will make no compromises in this regard", according to state TV.

Russian President Putin also spoke with Iran's security chief Mohsen Rezaei about the war by telephone, Iranian state media said.

'Powerful response'

In an interview with Al Jazeera released on Sunday, Araghchi said Washington must accept a new route agreed between Iran and Oman for transiting the strait.

He said the US must also remove sanctions imposed in recent months and reduce American troop numbers in the region.

Washington has since August rolled out a fresh raft of sanctions, part of what it called "economic asphyxiation" of Iran.

American and Israeli threats to Iran rose in the run-up to the midterms and last week's elections in Israel, where Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu failed to secure a majority.

On Saturday, Trump said he still had to "take care" of one or two targets including Pickaxe mountain in central Iran, a suspected nuclear site which Tehran denies is such a facility.

"Any act of aggression against Iran, any military attack against Iran, by whatever means, will be met with a powerful, immediate and comprehensive response from us," Baqaei said. *– AFP*

Children born from incest can claim compensation: Netherlands

THE HAGUE – Children born from incestuous relationships have the right to claim compensation in the Netherlands if they can prove they suffered serious psychological harm, the country's government said yesterday.

The decision follows a ruling by the top administrative court, the State Council, which ruled in favour of a man whose mother was abused by his grandfather while she was still a minor.

"In light of the ruling... I conclude that children born of incest may... be eligible for compensation if they can demonstrate that they have sustained serious psychological harm," said junior justice minister Claudia van Bruggen.

The State Council ruled that a child's right to mental health is "directly violated" by a case of incestuous violent sexual abuse, even before birth.

"The fact that the resulting mental harm may only manifest itself after the birth of the child does not mean that there is no sufficient connection between the crime and the harm," the State Council ruled.

The court ordered the man to receive compensation within 12 weeks. *– AFP*

US approves cheap generic of breakthrough HIV shot for poorer countries

Issam Ahmed

WASHGINTON, DC – The US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) yesterday approved a low-cost version of a twice-yearly HIV prevention shot, bringing the breakthrough drug closer to market in low-income countries.

The tentative approval was announced by Dr. Reddy's Laboratories, the Indian maker of the generic version of lenacapavir, and by Unitaid, a global health initiative.

The generic will be available for US$40 per person per year in 120 countries, under a pricing agreement announced in September 2025 between Unitaid, the African health research institute Wits RHI, and the Clinton Health Access Initiative (CHAI) and Dr. Reddy's.

Lenacapavir was first developed by US pharmaceutical company Gilead Sciences and approved in June 2025 after proving more than 99.9 percent effective in large clinical trials.

"This is an extraordinary milestone for global health. For too long, people in lower- and middle-income countries have had to wait a decade or more to access breakthrough medicines already available elsewhere," Carmen Perez-Casas, Unitaid's senior strategy lead for HIV and pandemic preparedness, told AFP.

"With lenacapavir, we've reduced that gap to little more than a year. Having an FDA-approved generic at US$40 per person per year – a price comparable to daily HIV prevention pills – is a remarkable achievement."

A twice-yearly injectable that is akin to a vaccine – albeit without training the immune system – can be a more effective way to administer HIV preexposure prophylaxis (PrEP) than daily pills, which first won US approval in 2012 but only work if taken consistently.

But lenacapavir's high cost – roughly US$28,000 per year in the US, though insurance lowers what patients pay – was a major obstacle to its becoming a game-changer against a disease that has killed over 40 million people in four decades.

In late 2024, Gilead granted voluntary licences for lenacapavir to six generic manufacturers, including Dr. Reddy's.

Even before generic availability, more than 125,000 people in 10 early adopter African countries have already started Gilead's lenacapavir, Unitaid's statement said.

"This is a moment of immense pride for all of us at Dr. Reddy's," said Deepak Sapra, CEO of Pharmaceutical Services and API at Dr. Reddy's, in a statement.

The generic was granted "tentative approval" by the FDA, Unitaid said, under an accelerated pathway that allows sponsors to use existing data.

From approval to rollout

Lenacapavir was named "Breakthrough of the Year" in 2024 by the prestigious journal Science, which hailed the basic research underpinning the drug, specifically a new understanding of HIV's capsid protein, which forms a protective shell around the virus's genetic material and which lenacapavir targets.

An HIV infection once condemned patients to AIDS (Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome), when the immune system is so damaged that everyday germs make people very sick.

The first antiretrovirals that could fully suppress HIV and stave off AIDS were developed in 1996, with current generations even better, allowing people to live normal life spans while managing their chronic infection.

Oral PrEP pills came along in 2012, and before lenacapavir, a PrEP drug called cabotegravir was approved in 2021 requiring shots every two months.

Perez-Casas said the real work for lenacapavir was still ahead, in moving from approval to rollout.

"An estimated 1.2 million people acquired HIV last year, even as we now have a medicine offering near-100 percent protection with just two injections a year," she said.

"The demand is high, and we cannot afford to lose momentum. Unitaid is already working with governments and partners to support country-led rollouts, ensuring that communities play a central role in bringing this breakthrough to the people who need it most." *– AFP*

Flávio Bolsonaro says he left Brazil because he is the victim of 'persecution'

BRASÍLIA – Former conservative presidential candidate Flávio Bolsonaro said on Friday that he fled Brazil to the United States because he was a victim of "persecution" in his country.

Bolsonaro, who lost the October 25 election runoff to President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, secretly left Brazil last Tuesday and arrived in Florida aboard a private jet on Wednesday after travelling through Argentina and Ecuador.

"The persecution began even sooner than I imagined," the senator said during an Instagram livestream in which he discussed his decision to flee after his Brazilian passports were cancelled as part of a money laundering investigation.

In the video, he recounted how police informed him last Monday that his passports were being revoked as he left a visit to his father, former president Jair Bolsonaro, who is under house arrest.

"With tears in his eyes, he told me: 'You know where they're going with this, don't you?'" he said of his father.



A screengrab made on Saturday shows Brazil's former presidential candidate Flávio Bolsonaro speaking during a livefeed on his Instagram account on Friday. – AFP

"I told him: 'Dad, I know... Now I know what I have to do,'" he recounted.

Although he gave no details of how he left the country, he said he and his wife made the decision "without anyone knowing" and urged people not to "point the finger at anyone."

US President Donald Trump and Argentine President Javier Milei have been asked by their detractors to explain the involvement of the United States and Argentina in the senator's escape.

"I didn't leave Brazil, I left for Brazil," Flávio Bolsonaro said, alleging that Supreme Court Justice Alexandre de Moraes had made false accusations against him.

He also suggested there had been irregularities in the runoff, comparing them to "handball goals" that were not disallowed by VAR, without detailing what those irregularities might have been.

He also predicted that the economy would "go bust" under Lula and said he was willing to run for president again: "I'm not talking about 2030, I'm talking about before then." – *AFP, MPD*

Lula to attend COP31 climate summit in Turkey

BRASÍLIA – Brazilian President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva will attend the UN Climate Change Conference (COP 31), held November 9-20 in Antalya, Turkey, a government source told AFP on Saturday.

The recently re-elected leftist leader is a leading figure in global warming discussion.

Brazil hosted the previous summit last year in the heart of the Amazon.

Despite the symbolism of holding the talks in the world's largest tropical rainforest, delegations failed to set binding targets or deadlines for phasing out coal, oil and gas.

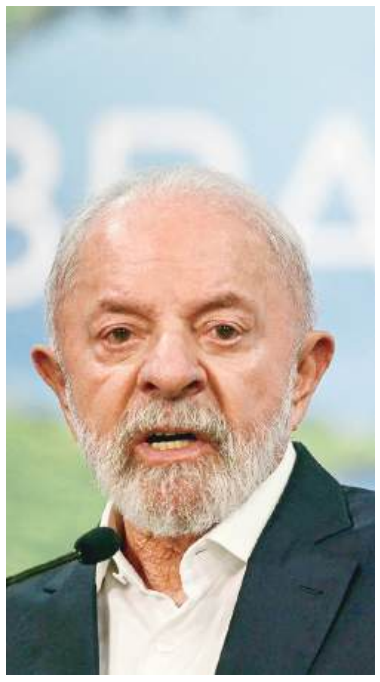
Experts say an agreement on that front is unlikely this year, with markets under intense pressure from the war in the Middle East.

Among its 10 "priority issues," Turkey proposes reducing emissions by increasing electricity's share of global energy consumption to 35 percent by 2035. The current share is around 23 percent.

Turkey will hold the presidency of this year's annual climate summit, while Australia will lead the negotiations. The meeting of heads of state is scheduled for November 11-12.

Lula, 81, won the October 25 presidential runoff against conservative Flávio Bolsonaro.

"It was a victory for the fight against climate change" over "climate change denial," Brazilian Health Minister Alexandre Padilha, who will accompany the president to COP31, told AFP on Wednesday. – *AFP*



Brazilian President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva speaks during a press conference at the COP30 UN Climate Change Conference in Belém, Pará State, northern Brazil, on November 19, 2025. – AFP

Chinese state TV spikes Real Madrid match after Mbappe row

BEIJING – Chinese state broadcaster CCTV did not broadcast a Real Madrid La Liga match on Sunday after star forward Kylian Mbappe caused a furore in China with remarks he made about former leader Mao Zedong.

The match between Real Madrid and Racing Santander began at 15:15 GMT but was not broadcast on either of CCTV's two sports channels.

None of the other matches from the 11th round of Spain's La Liga have been broadcast live on public television so far.

A viral video in recent days showed Mbappe referring to Mao as a "dictator", prompting the body overseeing CCTV to say it would halt broadcasts of the top Spanish league.

Mbappe, Real and La Liga later all said sorry for his remarks, and China's foreign ministry said it took the player's apology "seriously".

Asked by AFP before the weekend, La Liga said that Chinese television had previously shown all games live, without specifying which platforms hosted the broadcasts.

AFP journalists did find live broadcasts of matches on Migu, a digital streaming service owned by the state-owned China Mobile telecom network. That included Barcelona's 6-1 win over Alavés on Saturday.

However, the Racing Santander–Real Madrid match did not appear to be broadcast on Sunday on Migu.

China Media Group (CMG), which oversees CCTV, had said it had moved yesterday to suspend La Liga broadcasts, adding that apologies from La Liga, Mbappe and Real Madrid were "an absolute prerequisite" for moving past the furore.

The viral video showed Mbappe saying that the funniest internet meme about him he had seen was of his face photoshopped onto that of "some guy – I think he's a Chinese dictator".

This was an apparent reference to a meme of Mbappe superimposed on an image of Mao.

Mbappe later apologised for his "ill-judged" comments, La Liga said it "deeply" regretted them, and Real followed suit.

CCTV's sports website later reported that CMG had acknowledged the apologies, but it remains unclear whether talks to defuse the situation have begun.

China is a huge market for European football, with CCTV also carrying matches from the Premier League as well as the German, French and Italian top flights.

Real Madrid coach José Mourinho said on Saturday that the club had "done our part" to put the controversy behind them.

It is beyond the pale in the Chinese mainland to crack jokes about Mao, who died in 1976.

Major Chinese brands cancelled sponsorship deals with Mbappe after his comments.

Various overseas sports leagues and players have found themselves in hot water for comments on topics that are politically sensitive to China.

China effectively cut ties with the NBA for several years from 2019 after then-Houston Rockets general manager Daryl Morey tweeted his support for Hong Kong's anti-government protesters. – *AFP, MPD*

Portuguese court allows protest tent in Lisbon square

LISBON – A Portuguese court yesterday ruled that a housing activist could put up a tent in a Lisbon square where security forces used baton charges to clear protesters at the weekend.

Protesters said they would gather again in Rossio square following the ruling, setting up a potential new showdown.

The Lisbon administrative court ruled that the activist could put up a tent in Rossio square through the night. Security forces had used a decree banning demonstrations overnight to justify clearing protesters in Lisbon and the northern city of Porto at the weekend.

At least 20 police and dozens of protesters were injured as scuffles broke out during the clearing operation in the two cities, authorities said.

"The court has confirmed what we have always maintained: the time of day, in itself, does not justify dispersing a demonstration," organisers of the Lisbon protest camp said on their Instagram account.

The interior ministry said that the court decision was "limited to a specific, individual case" and "does not rule on the legality of police interventions, nor does it recognise a general right to set up permanent encampments in public spaces."– *AFP*

2-month-old baby killed in Colombia bombing

BOGOTÁ – A two-month-old baby girl was among four people killed in a truck bombing by suspected guerrillas near a military base in western Colombia, authorities said.

The bomb attack in the town of Planadas in Tolima Department comes as right-wing President Abelardo de la Espriella steps up military operations against the country's drug-trafficking insurgents.

Authorities said a hospital and several homes were damaged in the blast.

Footage from the scene showed a woman screaming as a man pulled a small body from the rubble.

"With deep sorrow, I report that the attack in Planadas has left a preliminary toll of four people deceased, including a baby girl of only two months old," Tolima Governor Adriana Magali Matiz wrote on X.

Planadas Mayor Juan Camilo Hueje told a local radio station that multiple people with injuries were taken to a local school for treatment.

It was not clear who was responsible for the bombing.

Hueje said that drones were seen flying over Planadas.

Colombia's cocaine-trafficking guerrillas have dramatically increased their use of drones in their war with the state, in some instances for surveillance, in others to carry out attacks.

Reacting on X, De la Espriella blamed "narcoterrists" for the Planadas and other recent attacks and vowed: "WE WILL TAKE YOU DOWN!"

Matiz described the attack as a "vile and criminal act that we reject with absolute forcefulness."

"Attacking the civilian population and putting at risk the lives of our soldiers and the Tolima families is crossing a line that we will not tolerate," she said.

The attack is the latest in a string of assaults by the various guerrilla factions that refused to join a landmark peace deal between the state and the rebel army FARC a decade ago.

US-backed De la Espriella broke off all peace talks when he came to power in August.

He has ordered a barrage of airstrikes on the guerrillas, who have responded with bombings and drone strikes.

On Saturday, a policeman was killed when a motorbike laden with explosives was detonated during Halloween celebrations in the town of Algeciras in Huila department, which neighbours Tolima in the south.

On Friday, De la Espriella sent troops into Cúcuta, the main city on the border with Venezuela, due to an increase in attacks in that region. – *AFP*

Barca equal to PSG, Real Madrid, insists Gordon

BARCELONA – Barcelona winger Anthony Gordon insisted yesterday his team are not below the likes of Paris Saint-Germain and Real Madrid, despite recent defeats by both sides.

Hansi Flick's side were unbeaten until facing European champions PSG on October 20, but lost 4-2 in Paris before a 2-1 Clasico defeat at home on October 25 by Madrid.

Spanish title holders Barcelona last won the Champions League in 2015 and questions remain about their ability on the biggest occasions.

"I don't think they're above (us). We have to take responsibility for both losses because they're the two biggest games we played so far this season and we lost, but I don't think they're above us," Gordon told reporters.

"I think we're a fantastic team and on any given day we can beat anybody. In these two games, the PSG game has a bit of context... on the weekend in their league they rested their whole team.

"We didn't have this privilege, so we were really tired in the game. This is normal, fine, we have to take responsibility, but I think they had a massive advantage with this."

Gordon said his team deserved to win the Clasico, which Real Madrid claimed with a late goal from Kylian Mbappe as Barca's defence crumbled.

"Madrid is the one game, the most important game we want to win. For me we should have," continued Gordon.

"For me were there much better team in the game, we had all the ball, all the possession, the better chances, but we were a slight bit off our best game. It cost us in the end, we conceded two very bad goals.

"Against this kind of opposition and this level of player it can really hurt you in these games. We'll learn for next time and I'm really excited to play these type of teams again to show what we can do."

Barca host Premier League side Aston Villa today as they aim to get back on track in the Champions League, before visiting Atletico Madrid on Sunday in La Liga.

"I'm always motivated the same... the fact they're English doesn't make it more motivating for me," said Gordon ahead of Villa's visit to Camp Nou.

"They're a very good team... they have a great coach (Unai Emery), one of the best in the world... it's going to be a very difficult game."

Villa hold a 100 percent record so far in the Champions League, defeating Viking, Fenerbahce and Club Brugge.

Barcelona signed Gordon from Newcastle in the summer for a fee which could rise to 80 million euros (US$89m).

The 25-year-old has three goals and five assists in 13 appearances for Barcelona across all competitions, but said his best is yet to come.

"It's a big change, a new team, it's been a massive change for me and my family," added Gordon.

"I've started well but like I've said numerous times, I can do more. It will take some time to grow, feel settled, and then when this happens I think you'll see the very best of me, which you definitely haven't seen so far."

The game will be played at 4:00 a.m. tomorrow morning Macau time. *– AFP/MPD*



Barcelona's English forward Anthony Gordon gives a press conference at Joan Gamper training ground in Sant Joan Despi yesterday, ahead of the UEFA Champions League football match between FC Barcelona and Aston Villa. – AFP

Carrick shrugs off Man Utd sack talk ahead of Roma match

MANCHESTER – Michael Carrick brushed off suggestions he has just two games left as Manchester United boss as he prepares his underperforming side for today's Champions League clash against Roma.

Carrick's position at Old Trafford is increasingly precarious following Saturday's 2-0 defeat at Chelsea, which extended United's winless run in all competitions to nine games - they last had a longer such sequence in 1984.

Former United and England midfielder Carrick was asked at his pre-match press conference yesterday whether he felt he had just two games remaining at the helm - against Roma and Aston Villa.

The Villa match on Sunday comes just before an international break, potentially giving the United hierarchy an opportunity to make a managerial change.

"No, not at all," said the 45-year-old, in his first full season in charge. "If you look into the future, you never know what's going to happen.

"I don't know what's going to happen. That doesn't change the way I feel, how we're preparing for the game tomorrow [today].

"I'm actually really looking forward to the game, can't wait for the game tomorrow. You might think I'm crazy with the results we've had and what's going on, but I genuinely can't wait."

Carrick also said he had "no concerns" over the commitment of out-of-form Argentine centre-back Lisandro Martinez, who was sent off in United's defeat at Stamford Bridge.

The defender had previously criticised club chiefs over a lack of investment in the squad.

"Things happen in football, sometimes you do things, sometimes you make decisions, sometimes you make mistakes, sometimes it goes well for you, but the commitment is not an issue for sure," said Carrick.

Dressing-room mood

The United head coach insisted the dressing room was in "a good place" despite the club's terrible start to the season.

"Perception is a funny thing. You can make things look all sorts of different ways and think about all sorts of different things," he said.

"I've said it before, the commitment of the players to the club, to me, to each other, I don't question that at all. We need to play better, we can make better decisions, but commitment is not a thing at all."

United are just one place above the Premier League relegation zone after taking a mere seven points from their nine matches so far this season.

And they are 20th in the Champions League table following a dismal 4-1 defeat away at Como last month. Only the top 24 teams will progress beyond the league phase.

But midfielder Kobbie Mainoo, sitting alongside Carrick at yesterday's press conference, said United could turn things around.

"We've not had the results we've wanted," said the 21-year-old. "But we need to look forward now. There's big, big games ahead and I feel like we're one win away from changing that."

Carrick has fond memories of facing Roma as a member of Alex Ferguson's team, scoring twice in United's 7-1 quarter-final second-leg triumph in the Champions League in 2007.

"It was a magical night, I have to say," he recalled. "It was one of the best nights, one of the best games, one of the best atmospheres I've been fortunate enough to witness.

"The fact that I scored a couple and that was very unusual gives me great memories, but it was more the emotion of the night. I have to say, it was a special one." *– AFP*

Can PSG win a 3rd straight Champions League without injured Kvaratskhelia?

Andy Scott

PARIS – As Paris Saint-Germain head to Spain to face Villarreal today, the French club's quest to win a third consecutive Champions League title is under threat as injuries to key players raise doubts about the strength of their squad for another tilt at European glory.

PSG's thrilling 4-2 win two weeks ago against Barcelona was overshadowed by the sight of Khvicha Kvaratskhelia having to be helped off injured in the second half.

The Georgian was probably the best player in last season's Champions League knockout rounds, with seven goals and four assists in eight games up to and including the final against Arsenal.

But the rupture to the anterior cruciate ligament in his right knee which the 25-year-old suffered in the win over Barcelona means he is unlikely to return this season.

That is a hammer blow for PSG, who have become Europe's outstanding club side since Kvaratskhelia joined from Napoli in January last year.

Luis Enrique's team began this season's league phase with three wins from three and are well set to reach the knockout stage, but PSG must now be mulling whether to sign a replacement for Kvaratskhelia in the January transfer window.

"Not especially. No injury means we need to sign a new player. None," Luis Enrique said when asked if PSG now needed to go shopping.

"I already said at the start of the season that our team could stay the same, even with two or three injuries. That said, we are always open to the possibility of new players. But not just because we have injuries."

Barcola missed?

PSG had already taken something of a risk by selling Bradley Barcola to Liverpool in August in a blockbuster 145 million-euro (US$162m) transfer.

Goncalo Ramos, Lee Kang-in and Ibrahim Mbaye all made significant attacking contributions in the last two seasons, but were allowed to leave too.

However, Luis Enrique described the business done by the club during the summer as "exceptional", saying: "I am very happy to begin the season with the number of players that we have".

PSG signed Maghnes Akliouche, a French international winger or midfielder, from Monaco and Spain's World Cup final match-winner Ferran Torres from Barcelona, each for a reported 50 million euros.

They also recruited Belgian international winger Mika Godts from Ajax for a reported 55 million euros.

Torres scored seven goals in his first six appearances, but has gone six games without finding the net. Godts got off to a slow start but has just scored in back-to-back games.

But as the new signings settle, there are renewed doubts about Ousmane Dembele's ability to stay fit after he suffered a hamstring injury against Barcelona - a player whose minutes were very carefully managed last season is now out for several weeks.

And it is not just in attack where PSG have injuries, with centre-back and captain Marquinhos and left-back Nuno Mendes sidelined.

In that case, perhaps the answer to all their problems is right-back Achraf Hakimi, scorer of a hat-trick in Friday's 5-1 win at Le Havre in Ligue 1.

"He is more of an attacker," said Luis Enrique, who has overseen more wins than any other coach in PSG's history.

"He plays higher up the pitch and has the ability to make runs and set up goals.

"He is the best right-back in the world. What I like is that he is always at the highest level, always ready. That means a lot."

PSG made it nine straight wins in that game, despite having only two starters from last season's Champions League final in their line-up.

With competition to PSG lacking in France, being able to rest key players in Ligue 1 and still win remains something which could help them when it comes to Europe.

"We are going to need everyone if we are going to win trophies, and with the injuries there will be opportunities," insisted Luis Enrique.

The problem is there are few players anywhere who could adequately replace a talent like Kvaratskhelia.

The game will be played at 4:00 a.m. tomorrow morning Macau time.

– AFP/MPD

Host of fresh faces in Australia white-ball squads to face England

Cricket

SYDNEY – Australia named a host of fresh faces in new-look white-ball squads yesterday to face England with exciting young quick Mahli Beardman and allrounders Jack Edwards and Liam Scott among those getting call-ups.

Batting prospects Ollie Peake and Jake Fraser-McGurk were also included, as were wicketkeepers Lachlan Shaw and Sam Harper with Mitchell Marsh captaining both the one-day and Twenty20 sides.

"These ODI and T20 matches provide several players, many of whom have had opportunities on recent tours, with a great chance to further demonstrate their ability against very strong opposition," said chairman of selectors George Bailey.

Beardman, Peake, Edwards, Scott, Nikhil Chaudhary, and Joel Davies made their white-ball debuts in recent times. Harper and Shaw are the two uncapped players.

"They are good examples of players who have had an opportunity at the international level and have continued working on their game from what they learnt from those experiences," added Bailey.

Australia play three home ODIs against England between November 13-18 followed by five T20s.

They will provide an opportunity for Australia's next generation to stake their claims ahead of the 2027 World Cup in South Africa, Zimbabwe, and Namibia.

With a home Test series against New Zealand to follow, star fast bowlers Pat Cummins, Mitchell Starc and Josh Hazlewood are being rested after playing their part in Australia's 2-1 Test series defeat in South Africa.

Fellow Test players Travis Head, Alex Carey, Matt Renshaw, Josh Inglis, Cooper Connolly and Cameron Green were named in the ODI squad, but will not play the T20s.

Following the New Zealand series, Australia travel to India for five Tests before a 150th anniversary clash in Melbourne against England then an Ashes campaign.

"We are in the middle of a highly demanding phase of our schedule," said Bailey, referring to Australia's Test players.

"To manage this workload, each player's build-up to the New Zealand series will be carefully planned and focussed on individual's physical and mental preparation." *– AFP*

China wins 1st gold at 2026 Youth Olympics in coastal rowing

SALY, Senegal – Su Juntao and Liu Lili won China's first gold medal at the 2026 Youth Olympic Games yesterday, claiming the mixed double sculls beach sprint title as coastal rowing made its debut at the event.

The pair clocked 2 minutes, 22.37 seconds at Saly Beach West, finishing 6.58 seconds ahead of Austria's Lukas Schoenhuber and Alena Lux. France's Raphael de Boussac and Elisa Guilloton took bronze.

The victory made Su and Liu the first Youth Olympic champions in the mixed double sculls beach sprint event, adding to their under-19 title at the World Rowing Beach Sprint Finals in Qingdao, last month.

"I felt really nervous. We didn't get rest after the world championships, so it's quite tiring," Liu said.

"Both of us are very strong, so that is our advantage, and we tried our best on the sea," Su added.

China coach Fei Penghui said the pair had entered the competition as strong contenders following their success in Qingdao.

"We had high expectations of winning the gold medal before the competition," Fei said. "The two athletes competed in the U19 event at the 2026 World Rowing Beach Sprint Finals in Qingdao in mid-October and won the title. We are really proud of them."

Fei also highlighted the significance of winning gold in a discipline making its Youth Olympic debut.

"The Youth Olympic Games are a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. They earned their places here through hard work," he said.

China's Italian head coach Francesco Cattaneo praised the pair for maintaining their form after their recent world title.

"After winning gold in Qingdao, they have demonstrated their high level of performance again at the Youth Olympic Games," Cattaneo said. "To repeat that success is very difficult, and they did a very good job."

Coastal rowing beach sprints combine running on sand with rowing through open-water waves before a final dash to the finish. The discipline is also set to make its senior Olympic debut at Los Angeles 2028.

Asked about the possibility of competing in Los Angeles, Su played down expectations, pointing to the strength of China's senior rowers.

"Well, I think the Olympics is still too far away for us, because our senior team is also strong," he said. *– AFP*

Photos on Games on page 16

Medal Tally

Rank	National				
1	Japan	2			2
1	RUS	2			2
3	CHN	1	2		3
4	CRO	1	1		2
4	NZL	1	1		2
6	ARG	1		1	2
7	AZE	1			1
7	ECU	1			1
7	EGY	1			1
7	TUR	1			1
7	UKR	1			1
12	GRE		1	1	2
12	RSA		1	1	2
14	AUT		1		1
14	CAN	1			1
14	IRI	1			1
14	JOR	1			1
14	LTU	1			1
14	ROU	1			1
14	SRB	1			1
21	SVK			2	2
22	BEL			1	1
22	BRA			1	1
22	FRA			1	1
22	IND			1	1
22	ISR			1	1
22	ITA			1	1
22	MDA			1	1
22	MGL			1	1
22	SEN			1	1
22	TPE			1	1
22	UZB			1	1
22	VEN			1	1
22	ZAM			1	1



Mercedes' Kimi Antonelli (top) of Italy celebrates being crowned the Formula One World Champion with Red Bull Racing's, 4-time World Champion, Max Verstappen (left) of the Netherlands and Ferrari's, 7-time World Champion, Lewis Hamilton of Britain at the Autodromo Hermanos Rodriguez in Mexico City, Mexico, on Sunday. **– Xinhua**

Sport in brief

IOC confirms 7 countries interested in hosting 2036 Olympics

GENEVA - Germany, Hungary, India, Qatar, South Africa, South Korea and Türkiye remain the seven countries interested in hosting the 2036 Olympic Games, the International Olympic Committee confirmed yesterday.

The list remains unchanged from the IOC's initial announcement on October 6, with no additional National Olympic Committees expressing interest before the October 31 deadline.

"This will be the first edition of the Olympic Games to be elected under the Fit for the Future changes," said Kolinda Grabar-Kitarovic, an IOC member and chair of its Future Host Commission for the Games of the Olympiad.

"The strong interest in hosting the 2036 Olympics shows that countries across the world recognise the enduring social and economic value the Games can have for local communities," she added.

Grabar-Kitarovic said the IOC would continue working with all seven interested parties as they develop their hosting proposals. *– Xinhua*

China's Sun, South Korea's Jang triumph at WTT Champions Montpellier

Table tennis

PARIS – China's Sun Yingsha defeated compatriot Kuai Man 4-1 in the women's singles final, while South Korea's Jang Woo-jin rallied past German veteran Patrick Franziska in a seven-game thriller to claim the men's singles title at the 2026 WTT Champions Montpellier on Sunday.

After dropping the opening game 8-11, second seed Sun found her rhythm and won the next four games 11-7, 11-3, 11-9, 11-6.

"We know each other very well and are quite evenly matched. Kuai has shown significant progress and a very high level of play recently. So I wanted to play freely, without putting too much pressure on myself, and focus on challenging her throughout the match," Sun said after the match.

"France will also host the ITTF Singles World Cup next year, so I see this as a very good start to my time competing here," she added.

In the men's singles final, Jang, 31, came from 3-1 down to beat the 34-year-old Franziska 3-11, 11-7, 7-11, 9-11, 11-9, 11-8, 11-8. *– Xinhua*

Tourists star in personal microdramas in 'China's Hollywood'

Isabel Kua

HENGDIAN – Inside the ornate imperial chamber of a replica Chinese palace, tourists twist their faces in feigned anger and mimic the movements of a director as they star in their own personalised microdramas.

Gao Saifei, a 19-year-old aspiring actress among the group, told AFP she travelled to Hengdian World Studios – often referred to as "China's Hollywood" – for the chance to act out a scene from a popular Chinese period drama.

Clad in a yellow Chinese imperial robe and furrowing her brows, she pretended to slap a kneeling concubine, while a crowd of enraptured tourists filmed the scene.

"It felt so liberating," Gao told AFP excitedly, after her scene was met with applause from onlookers.

The sprawling studio in Zhejiang province, which includes a replica of Beijing's Forbidden City, has drawn visitors like Gao, who want the chance to act in very short microdramas for social media.

These mostly vertical soap opera-like series with episodes as short as 30 seconds have taken China by storm, with people across the country watching them on ByteDance-owned apps like Hongguo and Douyin.

Microdrama productions in Hengdian for tourists like Gao operate seamlessly, with a team including camera operators, lighting assistants, a director and sometimes extras assigned to each film set.

The director demonstrates the lines, actions and facial expressions of each character for tourists to mimic.

"Playing the emperor... allowed me to be a bit arrogant and dramatic," said Gao, who studies acting in Sichuan province.



A film crew film tourists dressed in traditional Chinese costumes during a microdrama shoot at Hengdian World Studios in Hengdian, Zhejiang Province, last month. – AFP

"It really helped me let loose and break out of my shell."

'Back in time'

At another studio in Hengdian, tourists sat at vanities as make-up artists powdered their faces and styled their hair in intricate designs.

Customers pay 388 yuan for the studio's full microdrama package, which includes a costume, hair and make-up services, and an edited video at the end of the filming.

The affordable rates have also drawn foreign tourists such as Kinjal Patel from London, whose US$150 package includes English translators.

Patel, 35, who described herself as a microdrama and period drama fan, was playing the role of an innocent older sister defending herself against a manipulative, evil younger sister, who accuses her of breaking their mother's teacup.

"I... wanted to experience the architecture, the culture, the history and just walk through it because you feel like you're back in time," said Patel, donning a red Ming dynasty dress.

Microdramas are a hit because their content often "leans toward the realm of dreams and fantasies", said Wu Yizhuo, who was directing Patel's video.

"For instance, stories where a security guard is pursued by a beautiful female CEO, or a cleaning lady is wooed by a handsome, domineering CEO – these are essentially escapist fantasies," Wu told AFP, referring to some popular microdrama tropes.

"Even though we know full well that what we're watching is fictional, our emotions still get swept up in the plot, allowing us to release some stress," he said.

'AI falls short'

Microdrama production companies have been increasingly harnessing AI to replace actors and screenwriters with algorithms, slashing costs in the process.

AI-generated content accounted for 95 percent of the 128,000 microdramas released nationwide in the first quarter of 2026, state broadcaster CCTV said in June.

Workers in Hengdian have found themselves with far fewer roles this year, according to CCTV.

While some actors working as extras could earn as much as 600 yuan per day "in previous years", daily pay is half of that this year, it said.

Student Gao said AI was able to bring to life "grander, more epic scenes on a much smaller budget" but is a double-edged sword as acting majors like her "might find ourselves out of work".

She feels that while AI characters may appear "quite fluid" in terms of their facial expressions and movements, humans possess "genuine emotions" that "AI cannot truly replicate".

"AI falls short when it comes to capturing the true depth of human emotion." *– AFP*

Techno music pioneer Juan Atkins dies at 64

NEW YORK – Juan Atkins, a Detroit producer and pioneer of the techno music genre, has died at 64, his agency said on Sunday.

Atkins was found unresponsive in his hotel room ahead of a planned performance in Mexico City and later pronounced dead at hospital, his agency Greensmith Artists told Resident Advisor music magazine.

"So many years. So many stages. So many moments we'll never forget. And somehow, we always thought there would be more," Greensmith Artists said in an Instagram post, accompanied by a video of one of Atkins' past performances in a London nightclub.

Atkins began his music career in 1980, when he formed Cybotron with Richard Davis.

The duo released "Clear" in 1983, which became one of the defining records of the techno genre.

Born in 1962, Atkins and classmates Kevin Saunderson and Derrick May were known as the "Belleville Three" and are recognised as the founders of the genre.

Atkins is credited with coining the term "techno" with his 1988 track "Techno Music," part of the compilation album "Techno! The New Dance Sound Of Detroit."

"Juan was the originator of Techno, a true visionary who opened the door for so many of us, myself included," Saunderson said in a tribute on Facebook. *– AFP*

World Weather

CHINA	ASIA-PACIFIC	WORLD	LUSOPHONE
Beijing 4°C~18°C	Manila 24°C~33°C	New York 12°C~22°C	Lisbon 10°C~23°C
Shanghai 16°C~21°C	Bangkok 24°C~35°C	London 8°C~13°C	Rio de Janeiro 21°C~30°C
Hong Kong 23°C~28°C	Tokyo 11°C~19°C	Frankfurt 3°C~10°C	Luanda 23°C~28°C
Taipei 20°C~26°C	Singapore 25°C~33°C	Vancouver 5°C~12°C	Maputo 21°C~31°C
Guangzhou 21°C~30°C	Kuala Lumpur 23°C~33°C	Paris 2°C~11°C	Dili 23°C~33°C
Nanjing 13°C~19°C	Jakarta 24°C~34°C	Moscow 1°C~4°C	São Tomé 25°C~32°C
Guilin 18°C~23°C	Seoul 6°C~17°C	Las Vegas 9°C~19°C	Praia 23°C~30°C
Xi'an 8°C~14°C	Sydney 17°C~25°C	Monte Carlo 12°C~19°C	Bissau 24°C~33°C

Buzzy Holmes doc wins slow Halloween box office in N America

LOS ANGELES – "You Can See Everything," the documentary about jailed biotech fraudster Elizabeth Holmes that is generating major Oscars buzz, prevailed in a slow weekend at the Halloween box office in North America, industry estimates showed on Sunday.

The three-hour A24 documentary, co-directed by comedian Nathan Fielder and Lance Oppenheim, earned US$10.6 million in the United States and Canada, Exhibitor Relations said.

The film follows the Theranos founder and her family for a month before she began an 11-year prison sentence in 2023 for fraud and conspiracy, after making lofty promises about innovations in medical testing, on which she failed to deliver.

The scandal fuelled a media circus and was chronicled in a book, multiple podcasts, and the biographical mini-series "The Dropout," starring Amanda Seyfried – who has sparked some awards chatter with her surprise cameo in "You Can See Everything."

The film has even entered the best picture Oscar conversation.

"Clayface," a gory Batman villain origin story from Warner Bros. and DC Comics, finished a close second with US$10.4 million.

"Wildwood," a stop-motion animation tale from Laika Studios about a young girl who ventures into an enchanted forest to rescue her kidnapped brother, held in third place with US$7.5 million.

"This weekend's numbers are weak. Last Halloween had the same trouble, and this one looks like it's coming in below that," said David A. Gross of Franchise Entertainment Research.

"'Clayface' and 'Wildwood' would be doing significantly better if kids, teens and young adults weren't focused on costumes, candy and trick-or-treating – 'Wildwood' especially."

Fourth place went to Black Bear's "Wicker" at US$4.1 million.

The film stars Olivia Colman as a lonely fisherwoman and Alexander Skarsgard as her fantastical husband made out of wicker, whose housework – and bedroom skills – quickly become the talk of the town.

In fifth place, dropping a spot from last week, was Paramount's video game adaptation "Street Fighter" at US$3.2 million. *– AFP*

Martha Stewart sorry for 'insensitive' homeless Halloween costume

NEW YORK – American lifestyle guru Martha Stewart apologised on Sunday for an "insensitive and not funny" Halloween costume after she appeared to dress up as a homeless person.

"It's hard to admit when you've really screwed up," the billionaire, 85, wrote on Instagram after she deleted a photo of herself in ripped jeans, a torn sweater and a dirtied face.

Stewart also held a clipboard that read "I Am Hungry Help Me!!" Social media users quickly slammed her as out of touch.

"I know many people are suffering economically. Wearing a costume like I did was insensitive and not funny. I am very sorry," Stewart said in a statement.

She also acknowledged that an earlier explanation to US media, claiming she had intended to raise awareness of homelessness through her costume, "didn't go far enough."

Stewart built her success in the homemaking and lifestyle industries.

Through her cookbooks, magazines, television shows and retail housewares, Stewart became the personification of gracious living and America's most high-profile lifestyle expert. *– AFP*



Gold medal winners, Su Juntao/Liu Lili (right) of China compete during the mixed double sculls last 16 knockout 2 match of the rowing coastal beach sprints between Su Juntao/Liu Lilin of China and Frida Wever Lozano/Enrique Cristiano Morelos Olivares of Mexico at the Dakar 2026 Summer Youth Olympic Games in Saly, south of Dakar, Senegal, on Sunday. – Xinhua



Egypt's Sondos Sonbol competes during the Wushu Taolu Women's Changquan Combined Preliminary Round Gunshu at Dakar Expo Centre (CICAD) in Diamniadio, Dakar, Senegal on Sunday. – AFP



Zhang Cuijing (bottom) of China vies with Shaheen Sada (first right) of Kenya during the rugby sevens women's pool A match between China and Kenya at Dakar 2026 Summer Youth Olympic Games in Dakar, Senegal, yesterday. – Xinhua



Li Hechen of China competes during the men's singles group match of table tennis against Aylan Goudjil of Algeria at the Dakar 2026 Youth Olympic Games in Diamniadio, Senegal, yesterday. – Xinhua



Philippines' Angel Polo competes at the Women's Taijiquan Combined Preliminary Round Taijiquan during the Dakar 2026 Youth Olympic Games at Dakar Expo Centre (CICAD) in Diamniadio, Senegal yesterday. – AFP



Marieme Diallo of Senegal reacts during the women's singles group match of table tennis against Yao Ruixuan of China at the Dakar 2026 Youth Olympic Games in Diamniadio, Senegal, yesterday. – Xinhua