THE Macau POST DAILY 澳門郵報

DIRECTOR: Harald Brüning | YEAR 22 | NO.5422 | WEDNESDAY November 4, 2026 | https://www.macaupostdaily.com | MOP 6.00

Sam vows cooperation with Guangdong & HK in building world-class bay area

Tony Wong

Chief Executive Sam Hou Fai delivered a speech via video link for yesterday afternoon's 2026 Global Investment Promotion Conference for the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area (GBA) in Guangzhou, pledging Macau's commitment to cooperating with Guangdong and Hong Kong in building the GBA into a world-class bay area and a world-class city cluster, according to a statement by the Macao Government Information Bureau (GCS) yesterday evening.

Launched in 2022, the conference has been held in Guangzhou every year.

The 11-member GBA consists of nine cities in Guangdong Province and the nation's two special administrative regions of Hong Kong and Macau.

In his speech via video link, according to the GCS statement, Sam underlined that Macau has remained focused on its positioning as one of the four core cities in the GBA and a core engine driving the GBA's development. Macau stands as both a pioneer and a beneficiary of the GBA's development in its process of developing itself into a World Centre of Tourism and Leisure, a commercial and trade cooperation service platform between China and Portuguese-speaking countries, and an exchange and cooperation base with Chinese culture as its mainstream and the coexistence of different cultures, he said.



Chief Executive Sam Hou Fai delivers a speech via video link for yesterday afternoon's 2026 Global Investment Promotion Conference for the GBA in Guangzhou. *– Photo: GCS*

Sam underlined the Macao Special Administrative Region (MSAR) Government's commitment to advancing Macau's appropriate economic diversification in compliance with its "1+4" model: consolidating and diversifying the development of the city's tourism and leisure industry, i.e., the "1" element, while putting special emphasis on promoting the development of four new key industries, i.e., the additional "4" elements, namely (+1) big health mainly driven by traditional Chinese medicine (TCM), (+2) modern finance, (+3) high-tech, and (+4) MICE and commerce as well as culture and sports.

Sam noted that in the high-quality development of the Guangdong-Macao In-Depth Cooperation Zone in Hengqin and the high-level promotion of cooperation across all sectors within the GBA, policy support and resource allocation have been strengthened, while efforts to align rules and mechanisms have been sustained. This has created favourable conditions for supporting enterprises in the GBA to "go global" and "bringing in" more enterprises and investment projects, he said.

Sam pointed out that, under the "One Country, Two Systems" principle, Macau enjoys the distinct geographical advantages of being backed by the motherland and connected to the world. Macau enjoys the status of a free port and a separate customs territory with a simple, low-tax system, making it one of the regions with the lowest corporate tax rates globally, he noted.

Continued on p.7



A choir performs the theme song "We Are Pandas" alongside the event's mascot at the Global Panda Partners Conference 2026 in Chengdu, capital of Sichuan Province, yesterday. The main forum of the conference opened yesterday in Chengdu, known as the "hometown of giant pandas," drawing experts and scholars from over 30 countries and regions. Under the theme of protecting giant panda habitats, building a beautiful world and sharing open opportunities, the event has gathered global guests to discuss biodiversity conservation and green development cooperation. (More on p.7) *– Xinhua*

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China's resolve to safeguard sovereignty, territorial integrity remains unwavering: Wang Yi

China's resolve to safeguard its sovereignty and territorial integrity and achieve national reunification remains unwavering, Foreign Minister Wang Yi said yesterday. *– Story on p. 7*

'Over a million' abuse images found on phone of UK man who drugged, raped wife: prosecutor

A man who drugged and raped his wife over two decades and allegedly invited strangers to participate had "over a million photographs and videos" on his phone cataloguing the abuse, a UK court has heard. *– Story on p. 11*

Ahead of COP31, Brazil offers global fossil fuel exit plan

Last year's UN climate summit host Brazil released yesterday a roadmap for countries to transition away from fossil fuels, saying the endeavour was "necessary, urgent and yet possible" as nations prepare for next week's COP31 conference. *– Story on p. 12*

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

The End of a Chapter, the Continuation of a Mission

Commentary by Manuel Silvério
Independent Public Policy and Regional Development Analyst
(Former senior public official with international experience and a long-standing commitment to public policy and sports development)

The opening of the Cultural and Sports Bureau (*Direcção dos Serviços de Cultura e Desporto;* 文化體育局) marks a new chapter for Macau. For someone who helped establish the Sports Bureau (*Instituto do Desporto – ID;* 體育局) and watched it grow, this is also an emotional moment: an institution to which I devoted a significant part of my life is reaching the end of its existence as a separate body.

I see this merger as an important step towards changing arrangements that needed to evolve. Supporting change does not, however, erase the sadness of seeing a chapter close. Both feelings can coexist, alongside gratitude for the journey and confidence that things can be done better.

I joined the civil service in 1979, in the Department of Tourism and Information, where Jorge Rangel was my first director. It is a connection I remember with particular affection. Eleven months later, I moved to the then Department of Education and Culture, which became a formative place of learning for me. I worked in youth affairs, school sport, and the sports association sector, while also contributing to cultural activities connected with that work and assisting the Culture Division. Through those different fields, and the people who brought them to life, I began to learn how to serve Macau.

Culture and sport then shared the same administrative home, before acquiring structures of their own. I experienced that evolution from within. The Cultural Institute was established in 1982 at the initiative of Jorge Rangel, then Under-Secretary for Education, Culture, and Tourism. Sport organised through associations gained an autonomous structure with the Sports Council (*Conselho dos Desportos;* 體育委員會) in 1986, succeeded by the Macau Sports Institute (*Instituto dos Desportos de Macau – IDM;* 澳門體育總署) in 1987. Rangel would later again oversee sport as Under-Secretary for Administration, Education, and Youth.

By a coincidence that touches me deeply, Jorge Rangel returned to Macau for the handover of the presidency of the International Institute of Macau on October 30. Nearly half a century after I entered public service, his passing of the baton and the end of the Sports Bureau's separate institutional existence fell within the same few days. Such are the coincidences of life – perhaps of fate. To me, they are above all a reminder that posts have their time, but lessons and friendships can stay with us for life.

I record these memories while they remain vivid, grateful to those who helped me learn. They are part of my own journey, but also of the history of a Macau built through the work of many people.

My career began with grassroots work in schools and associations and culminated in organising major events, developing new sports, and supporting facilities during the early years of the Macao SAR. Seeing culture and sport brought together again therefore has a deeply personal meaning for me.

That journey was built by public servants, association leaders, coaches, athletes, volunteers, and partners. Many took their experience into other responsibilities; others remained in sport. I, too, grew professionally and personally through the people I met, what I learned, and the opportunities to serve Macau, here and internationally. For all of this, I am grateful.

The road was not always easy. There were misunderstandings, differences in working styles, and moments of disappointment. None of that diminished my wish to contribute. The announcement of this reorganisation prompted me to write this commentary because I felt my experience and institutional memory might be useful at this moment. I am not writing in pursuit of a post or an appointment. I write because I still care about Macau and the opportunities available to future generations.

That was the purpose of the six articles I published in Portuguese and Chinese in the weekly *Plataforma* following the merger announcement. To place this reflection in context, I recall their titles here, translated from Portuguese:

"Reorganising Public Services Supports Macau's Continued Development"

"The Cultural and Sporting Merger: Between the Memory of the Past and Responsibility for the Future"

"An Unfinished Reform: Tourism, Culture, and Sport – The Real Challenge in Leading Macau towards a New Model"

"Linking School and Association Sport: The Structural Problem Macau Can No Longer Ignore"

"How Can Macau Develop a Sports Industry? – A Necessary Reflection"

"School and Association Sport in Macau: A Necessary Comparison with Hong Kong, Mainland China, and Portugal"

I thank everyone who read and commented on them. They were written out of civic duty and affection for Macau.

I recognise concerns raised in those articles in the new structure, from resource coordination and athlete development to sports science and the development of cultural and sports industries. Turning these intentions into results will depend above all on people, their competence, understanding, and ability to work together.

Simplification means more than reducing departments or combining responsibilities. It means making dialogue more direct, clarifying who is responsible, and preventing a matter from being passed between services without an answer. Residents and associations need to know whom to approach and to receive a timely response.

It is encouraging that Deland Leong Wai Man, when presenting the reform as president of the Cultural Affairs Bureau and the Sports Bureau, publicly acknowledged room to improve the criteria, procedures, and assessment factors for financial support. The new Cultural and Sports Fund offers an opportunity to put that commitment into practice.

Subsidies and access to sports facilities should be governed by consistent, publicly available criteria, defined deadlines, and reasoned decisions. Comparable situations should receive equivalent treatment. Simplification should mean making better decisions, fairly and in good time.

It was also to strengthen trust in the sports system that I proposed studying the establishment of an Independent Centre for Sports Mediation and Arbitration, suited to local needs. Supporting, funding, or participating in a decision is a different function from considering a dispute independently.

The Cultural Affairs Bureau and the Sports Bureau each leave a legacy of experience and programmes. Bringing them into a shared plan requires dialogue and clear rules for cooperation between public services and civil society.

From those earlier reflections, I retain three priorities: ensuring continuity for young people between schools and clubs, valuing community initiative in sport for all, and developing sports medicine and sports science through sound scientific foundations and qualified professionals.

I share these convictions with respect for those now taking on this responsibility. I have been, remain, and will continue to be available to collaborate, share experience, and help open opportunities for young people.

I hope the new structure will draw on accumulated knowledge and make room for new ideas and new people. The best recognition of the past will be to enable others to learn, grow, and do better.

The Sports Bureau ceases to exist as a separate institution. What it helped build remains in the people it developed, the capabilities Macau acquired, and the opportunities it created.

I wish the new Cultural and Sports Bureau every success in achieving the Government's objectives and serving Macau.

Institutional life has its ironies: I find myself offering a welcome and saying goodbye on the same occasion. Both are sincere, though the emotions are different.

Welcome to our new home. To the one I helped build, I offer my gratitude.

Farewell, ID. The mission continues.

Macau Weather

MAINLY CLOUDY.
A FEW RAIN PATCHES.
FORCE 3 TO 4 EAST TO SOUTHEASTERLY WINDS, OCCASIONALLY FORCE 5.
RELATIVE HUMIDITY WILL RANGE BETWEEN 75% AND 95%.

24ºC~27ºC

Source: SMG

Published since Aug 2004

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- Administrative Assistants – Ester Mak, Carl Leong
- Printed by Tipografia Welfare Lda., 82-86 Rua dos Pescadores
- Ai tools: DeepSeek, Gemini
- Wire services – AFP, Xinhua

Macau POST DAILY

House of Dancing Water doc reveals production challenges

Khalel Vallo

A documentary screening of "The Great Comeback: House of Dancing Water" was held at Studio City Cinema in Cotai yesterday, showing guests a behind-the-scenes look at the creative process, technical expertise and teamwork involved in producing the aquatic show at City of Dreams (COD) in Cotai.

Melco Resorts & Entertainment Chairman and CEO Lawrence Ho Yau Lung attended the screening with media representatives and key opinion leaders (KOLs) from the Chinese mainland, Hong Kong and Macau.

Addressing the event, Ho said that since returning with a new chapter in May 2025, House of Dancing Water has welcomed more than one million spectators and staged over 600 performances.

"It has become a must-see attraction showcasing Macau's distinctive cultural appeal and diverse tourism offerings, as well as a landmark entertainment supporting Macau's development as a 'World Centre of Tourism and Leisure'", Ho added.

Ho also noted the show's industry recognition, including the team receiving the Medal of Merit in Tourism from the local government and the production being named Best IR (Integrated Resort) Attraction at the 2026 IAG Academy IR Awards. IAG stands for Inside Asian Gaming. He thanked the production team, performers and backstage crew for their contributions.

The near 80-minute documentary follows the people behind the production, from stunt performers undertaking demanding feats to costume designers balancing artistic vision with the practical requirements of aquatic performances. It also highlights the resilience and coordination of performers and the integration of stage technology with artistic expression.

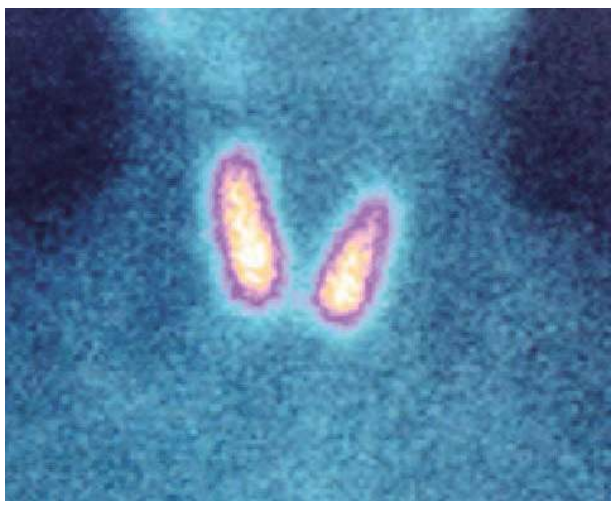
The show was recreated and reimagined by Giuliano Peparini, artistic director of Rome-based Peparini Studios, and produced by Our Legacy Creations (OLC). It combines aerial acrobatics, dramatic storytelling and stage technology.



"The Great Comeback: House of Dancing Water" documentary is shown at Studio City Cinema in Cotai yesterday afternoon. – Photo: Khalel Vallo

According to a statement by Melco yesterday, "The Great Comeback: House of Dancing Water" is available on Tencent Video in the Chinese mainland, Apple TV in 65 countries and regions, including the United States and the United Kingdom, and Discovery in Asian markets. Further international platform releases are planned. ■

Macao Union Hospital launches iodine-131 services



According to Gemini, this image shows an iodine-131 scan (or a thyroid scan using radioactive iodine-131). It depicts the uptake of the radioactive isotope in the thyroid gland. – Image courtesy of Singapore's Farrer Park Hospital

Khalel Vallo

The public Macao Union Hospital in Cotai began offering iodine-131* diagnostic and treatment services this month, allowing patients with thyroid** diseases to undergo assessment, examinations, treatment and follow-up in Macau, according to a statement by the hospital yesterday.

The large-scale healthcare complex in Cotai is officially known as Islands Healthcare Complex – Macao Medical Centre of Peking Union Medical College Hospital (CMM-PUMCH). It is jointly operated by the internationally renowned Peking Union Medical College Hospital (PUMCH) in Beijing and the Macau government thanks to the Central People's Government's support.

Colloquially, it is known as "Hip Woh" in Cantonese.

"Islands" is the official term referring to Taipa, Coloane, and Cotai.

The centre's nuclear medicine department launched the services on Sunday, with an initial focus on thyroid iodine-131 uptake testing, radioactive iodine treatment for hyperthyroidism*** and post-operative whole-body SPECT-CT imaging**** for thyroid cancer patients.

The statement said that it has procured iodine-131 capsules and established the required supply and clinical application procedures, laying the groundwork for further services, adding that thyroid conditions such as hyperthyroidism, post-operative assessment of differentiated thyroid cancer and the functional evaluation of certain thyroid nodules may require iodine-131 for measurement, imaging or treatment.

The new services are intended to reduce the need for patients to travel outside Macau for care, as well as address lengthy appointment waits, difficulties with cross-border follow-up and discontinuity in post-treatment monitoring, the statement noted.

Drawing on the expertise and technical resources of Peking Union Medical College Hospital's nuclear medicine department, the Macao Union Hospital has nuclear medicine imaging equipment, dedicated thyroid function testing devices and standardised procedures for radioactive medicines, the statement underlined.

Its one-stop service covers specialist assessment, iodine uptake measurement, imaging, dosage calculation, oral administration of iodine-131 capsules, radiation protection guidance and subsequent follow-up, the statement said, adding that iodine-131 uptake testing helps assess thyroid function and distinguish hyperthyroidism from conditions such as thyroiditis, while also informing treatment planning.

Radioactive iodine treatment works by being selectively absorbed by thyroid tissue and releasing beta radiation to destroy part of the tissue, the statement noted, pointing out that the non-invasive treatment allows individualised dosage adjustment and may be suitable for some patients whose hyperthyroidism responds poorly to medication, recurs or cannot be treated surgically.

Post-operative whole-body SPECT-CT imaging can assess residual thyroid tissue, local recurrence or metastatic lesions, and is an important tool in the management and long-term follow-up of differentiated thyroid cancer, the statement noted, adding that the launch would help strengthen Macau's nuclear medicine services and improve the standardised diagnosis and treatment of thyroid diseases, enabling more patients to receive appropriate care locally and supporting the development of precision and specialist medicine. ■

**Iodine-131 (I-131) is a radioactive form of the element iodine that is widely used in medicine to diagnose and treat certain health conditions, particularly those involving the thyroid gland. – Gemini*

***The thyroid is a small, butterfly-shaped gland located at the front of your lower neck, just below your voice box. – Gemini*

****Hyperthyroidism (overactive thyroid) happens when your thyroid gland makes too much thyroid hormone. – Gemini*

*****A SPECT-CT imaging scan is a two-in-one medical test that combines a SPECT scan (which shows how your organs and tissues are working) with a CT scan (which shows what your organs and bones look like). – Gemini*

Group urges nurses' paid study leave due to specialist shortage

Ida Cheong

With Macau facing a critical shortage of specialist nurses, the government should provide paid study leave for nurses and allocate more resources to community nursing, Nurses Association of Macau (NAOM) Chairperson Che Sio Ieng said on the sidelines of a symposium yesterday.

The one-day symposium, themed "The Power of Nursing to Keep Changing the World," was held at The Plaza Restaurant in Nape. The symposium was hosted by International Council of Nurses (ICN) Chief Executive Officer Howard Catton, who spoke about how health systems can make nursing a career people want to enter and stay in, the role of international recruitment, and why investment in nurses matters to patients and families.

Che noted that nursing in Macau is divided into two categories: general nurses and specialist nurses. General nurses are responsible for routine clinical care, whereas specialist nurses deliver targeted care for specific diseases and organs across areas such as geriatrics and palliative care, she said.

In order to qualify for specialist nurse training, candidates must possess three years of clinical experience as a general nurse, followed by a 2.5- to 3-year training cycle, Che said, adding that constrained by limited teaching faculty and resources, only one to two new specialist training programmes can be added each year.

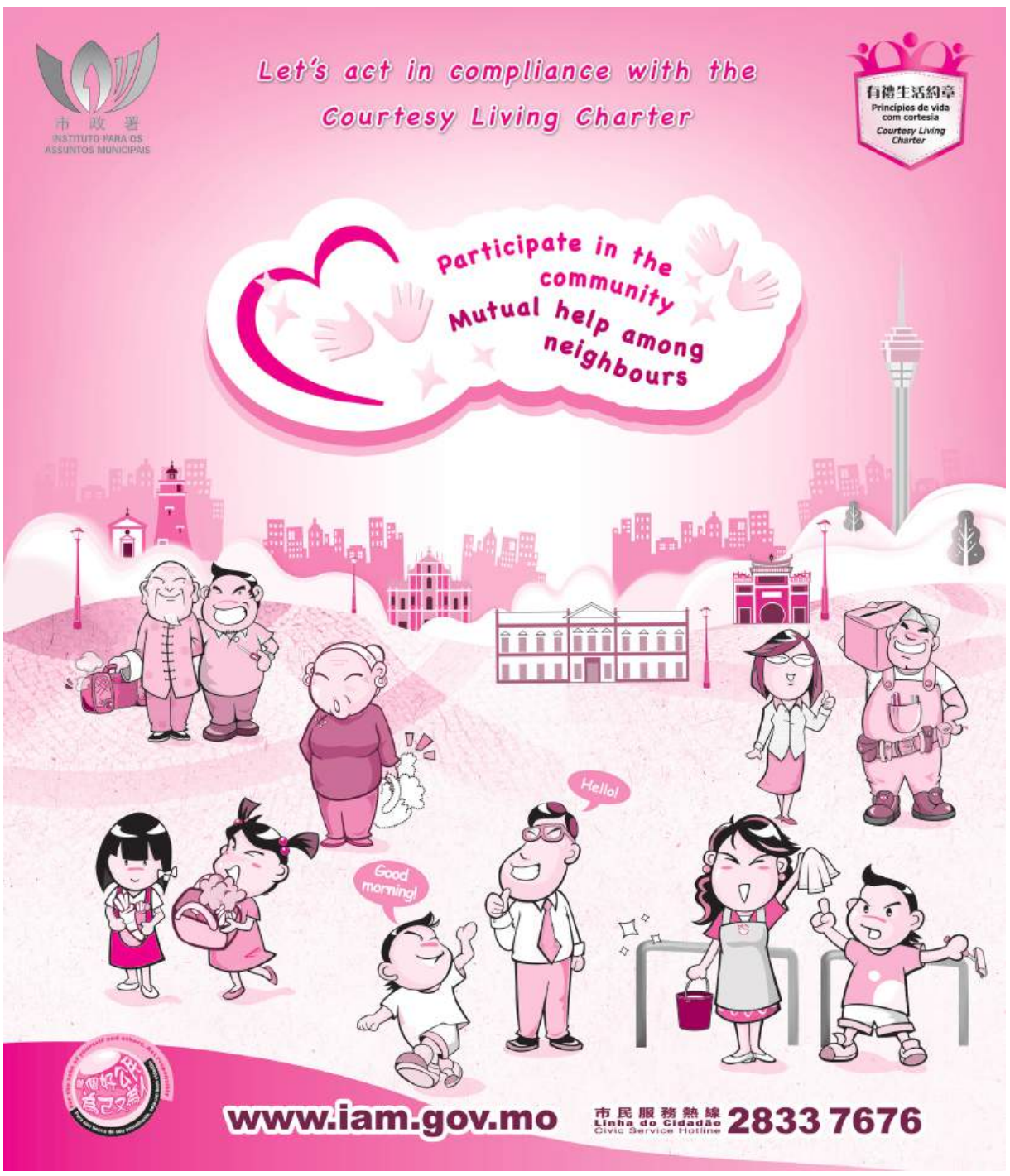


Nurses Association of Macau Chairperson Che Sio Ieng speaks to reporters on the sidelines of yesterday's one-day symposium, themed "The Power of Nursing to Keep Changing the World," at The Plaza Restaurant in Nape. – Photo: Ida Cheong

Meanwhile, the specialist nurses supply gap remains substantial. Although no official statistics are available, Che suggested the government provide paid study leave for enrolled nurses, with training priorities aligned with societal needs to ease the financial burden of full-time study, she said.

Moreover, according to Che, Macau currently has 4.4 nurses per 1,000 people, trailing neighbouring regions and countries such as Hong Kong and Singapore, which range between 5 and 7.

In line with the ICN philosophy of prioritising quality over quantity, experts advise against blind expansion, Che said, adding that, instead, the focus should remain on matching talent with job requirements. She also advised the government to increase resource allocation—particularly to address the talent deficit in community nursing. ■



MyLand Culture's 'MACAO&' series marks Shenzhen debut

Rui Pastorin

Macau artist Joein Leong Chou In's wax sculptures accompanied by the work of sound artist Zen Lu are being showcased in an exhibition in Shenzhen that marks the second edition of MyLand Culture's "MACAO&" series.

The "MACAO&" series made its debut* back in September in Lisbon, with the inaugural exhibition featuring photos taken by Macau's Tang Kuok Ho and featuring the kinaesthetic audio** scores of Lisbon dancer, educator and researcher Inês Zinho Pinheiro.

The latest cross-disciplinary dual showcase is entitled "MACAO&Series: Shenzhen & Macao 2026 - Before the Candle's Crackle Fades" and is this time set up at the ecooL Space in Nanhai E-Cool on Shenzhen's Xingquan 4th Road, Nanshan District. It kicked off its run last Wednesday, with the showcase taking place through November 15 before making its way to another core city within the Greater Bay Area*** (GBA): Macau, with that edition opening on December 2.

The event is organised by the Macau-based MyLand Culture, a non-profit art organisation set up in 2013, in conjunction with the Macao New Media Arts Association. Curation is meanwhile done by MyLand Culture's founder Pal Lok Chok and Macau curator Kathine Cheong Weng Lam.

The showcase uses its exhibits to explore the human condition, which are presented through a combination of seven wax sculptures crafted by Leong and the seven soundscapes created by Lu.

Highlighting the exhibition's title, a recent statement by the organisers noted that it refers to "a state of continual approach, a condition that is constantly approaching, irreplaceable by others, and impossible to experience in advance".

Regarding the exhibits, the statement said that Leong mainly utilised wax in creating the sculptures, noting that it is a material that carries traces of organic matter, time, and temperature.

Inspired by the wrought-iron balcony grilles of Macau homes, the statement said that Leong's wax sculptures use these structural lines to represent both spatial boundaries and life-sustaining blood vessels. By weaving together themes of female ovulation, the passage of time, tenement architecture, and delayed heartbreak, the artist transforms intangible concepts of temporal decay and death into physical, twisted wax forms, the statement noted.

Lu, who the statement said is a key figure in Shenzhen's music and sound art scene, meanwhile composed dedicated sound parts for each of Leong's sculptures, each coming together and interacting at the venue, while connecting with the central theme of the artworks.

"Standing in the exhibition space, all seven sound layers weave together – wrapping listeners in a blend of joy, melancholy, nostalgia, and acceptance, releasing the latent emotions and philosophical reflections beneath the silent forms into the air", the statement pointed out.

Altogether, visitors are guided to "to confront the irreversible boundaries of existence and experience the weight of "being toward death" through audio-visual resonance".

Exhibitiongoers in Shenzhen may visit the exhibition from 11:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. daily.

For locals eager to view the works, the Macau stop of the exhibition will be open from December 2 to December 20, with the venue to be located on Rua De S. Roque. During the period, it will be open from 12:00 noon to 7:00 p.m.

Aside from the exhibition, the Macau event will also include a workshop and panel talk.

**Read more in a* Post *interview on:* https://www.macaupostdaily.com/news/29464

***Kinaesthetic audio (or kinetic audio) refers to audio design or media that translates sound into physical sensation, spatial movement, or interactive body action.* - Gemini

****The Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area comprises two special administrative regions (Hong Kong and Macao) and nine cities in Guangdong Province – Dongguan, Foshan, Guangzhou, Huizhou, Jiangmen, Shenzhen, Zhaoqing Zhongshan, and Zhuhai (collectively aka "9+2").*





Macau artist Joein Leong Chou In (seated, right) and Zen Lu (seated, left) pose with curators Pal Lok Chok (standing, left) and Kathin Cheong Weng Lam (standing, right) at the recently opened exhibition Before the Candle's Crackle Fades in Shenzhen. – Photos provided by MyLand Culture.









Fraud case numbers drop, but losses rise: police

Armindo Neves

Taipa and Coloane Community Service Consultative Council Deputy Convenor Li Yongjian announced yesterday that the number of fraud cases decreased in the first three quarters of this year, but total financial losses increased.

The government-appointed Taipa and Coloane Community Service Consultative Council held its regular monthly meeting at the Seac Pai Van Community Complex in Coloane yesterday. During the closed-door meeting, Judiciary Police (PJ) IT Crimes Division senior officer Li Chi Wai gave a presentation on measures to prevent telephone and telecommunications network fraud.

The meeting took place behind closed doors.

During a post-meeting press briefing, Li Yongjian cited a PJ statement provided to councillors, which revealed that while the number of fraud cases decreased year-on-year in the first three quarters of 2026, total losses exceeded 200 million patacas, with investment fraud resulting in particularly high losses.

He pointed out that the main types of fraud included phone scams impersonating mainland law enforcement and judicial authorities, scams impersonating platform customer service staff (such those masquerading as Douyin personnel), MPay phishing text messages, scams impersonating schools placing orders, and online investment fraud, among others – with scammers constantly updating their methods.

Douyin is known as TikTok overseas. Literally translated from Chinese, Douyin means "shaking sound".

Li also said that the Judiciary Police use an integrated model that runs prevention, recovery, and enforcement in parallel. He added that PJ officers have carried out community and school outreach activities, launched an anti-fraud WeChat mini-programme, worked with the banking and telecom sectors to freeze payments and dissuade victims from proceeding with transactions, and strengthened cross-border cooperation to crack down on fraud syndicates.



Taipa and Coloane Community Service Consultative Council Deputy Convenor Li Yongjian (left) and Councillor Hoi Kit Leng pose during yesterday's press briefing after the government-appointed council's closed-door meeting at the Seac Pai Van Community Complex in Coloane. – Photo: Armindo Neves

Councillor Hoi Kit Leng noted that in the first three quarters, the Judiciary Police held a total of 515 anti-fraud publicity events, reaching 79,000 person-times, approximately 41,000 of whom were young people and students. Working alongside banks and relevant departments, they successfully intervened in 592 cases involving approximately 128 million patacas, according to Hoi.

A total of 73 suspects linked to fraud syndicates were arrested, she said, adding that the anti-fraud mini-programme recorded 21,000 visits and identified around 2,200 high-risk enquiries.

Li Yongjian also highlighted councillors' concerns that, despite the fall in fraud cases, the monetary losses have risen. Councillors expressed hope that the Judiciary Police will continue to strengthen the use of technology, cross-border cooperation, and targeted community engagement campaigns, as well as reach out further to communities, schools, and chambers of commerce to raise public awareness.

He noted that the Judiciary Police have established a cross-sector coordination mechanism, optimised the layout of banking text messages by adding anti-fraud reminders, and are using data analysis to issue proactive warnings and visit high-risk members of the public in person to alert them to the risk of fraud. ■

Over 4,800 fined for smoking, alcohol offences in Macau in Jan-Sept

Ida Cheong

The Health Bureau (SSM) announced in a statement yesterday that its staff carried out a total of 199,685 venue inspections during the first three quarters of this year, recording 4,859 violations of the tobacco and alcohol control laws.

Regarding tobacco control, joint operations conducted by the Health Bureau alongside the Public Security Police (PSP), the Municipal Affairs Bureau (IAM), the Gaming Inspection and Coordination Bureau (DICJ), and Macao Customs Services discovered 4,226 cases of illegal smoking, 560 cases of carrying e-cigarettes into or out of Macau, and 68 cases involving other suspected violations of the tobacco control law, including failure to display statutory no-smoking signs and failure to post notices prohibiting the sale of tobacco products to minors under 18 years of age at retail outlets, according to the statement.

The statement pointed out that eateries were the most frequent site for illegal smoking violations, accounting for 786 cases (18.6 percent), followed by public transport stops, which accounted for 523 cases (12.4 percent), adding that during the same period, joint inspections conducted by the Health Bureau and the Gaming Inspection and Coordination Bureau across local casinos totalled 462 visits, leading to the detection of 494 illegal smoking cases.

Regarding alcohol control, five suspected violations were recorded in the first three quarters, the statement said, adding that in one instance, discovered during a routine inspection, officers caught an individual offering beer to a young child; Health Bureau officers immediately identified themselves, stopped the violation, and opened a formal investigation.

Under the relevant law, providing alcoholic beverages to minors for non-commercial purposes carries a maximum fine of 20,000 patacas, according to the statement.

The Health Bureau highlighted that because adolescents' brains are not yet fully developed, consuming alcohol can impair brain development and easily lead to addiction, urging the public never to supply alcohol to minors. ■



This undated handout photo provided by the Health Bureau (SSM) yesterday shows its inspectors, in collaboration with the Public Security Police Force (PSP) and the Macao Government Tourism Office (MGTO), conducting a joint operation.

Woman cheats gambler out of HK$770,000 using fake bank transfer records: police



This undated handout photo provided by the Judiciary Police (PJ) yesterday shows the suspect's smartphone and casino chips worth HK$40,000.

Sherwin Hng

A woman from the Chinese mainland has been arrested for defrauding a female gambler of HK$770,000 by showing her forged bank deposit and transfer records at a Cotai casino, Judiciary Police (PJ) spokeswoman Leong Sok Man said during a regular press conference yesterday.

Leong said that the suspect, a 36-year-old surnamed Ji, said that she is unemployed.

According to Leong, Ji met the middle-aged female victim from the Chinese mainland at a casino in Cotai on Sunday and claimed that she had more than three million yuan in her bank account. Ji showed the victim a fake bank deposit screen to gain her trust.

The victim subsequently lent Ji HK$570,000, which the suspect gambled away. Ji then asked for another loan, claiming that she needed money to recover her losses. To convince the victim that she had repaid the earlier loan, Ji showed her forged bank transfer records and a fake transaction confirmation screenshot.

Trusting the records, the victim lent Ji a further HK$200,000, Leong added.

However, when the victim checked her bank account in the early hours of the following day, she discovered that no repayment had been received. Casino security personnel assisted her in reporting the case to the police, according to Leong.

PJ officers investigated and confirmed that the bank deposit and transfer screenshots were forged. They seized the suspect's mobile phone and HK$40,000 worth of casino chips.

The victim reported a total loss equivalent to approximately 794,000 patacas.

Ji has been transferred to the Public Prosecutions Office (MP), facing charges of fraud and computer forgery. ■

Gongbei Customs seizes 6.8 kg of endangered blue shark fins

Sherwin Hng

Zhuhai's Gongbei Customs announced in a statement yesterday that its officers seized 6.8 kg of endangered blue shark fins at the Hengqin checkpoint on September 3.

According to the statement, a Macau single-plate vehicle entered the Chinese mainland through the checkpoint at around noon on that day without declaring any goods to Customs officers.

During a routine inspection, officers discovered a batch of suspected endangered shark fins on the vehicle's rear seats and floor.

The statement noted that the Gongbei Customs Technology Centre identified the items as products of blue sharks, comprising 180 pieces with a net total weight of 6.8 kilograms.

The blue shark (Carcharhinidae) belongs to the requiem shark family and is listed in Appendix II of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES).

Gongbei Customs reminded the public that under CITES and mainland regulations on the import and export of endangered wild animals and plants, trading, carrying, or mailing endangered species and their products across the border is prohibited without a valid official import or export certificate. Serious violations that constitute criminal offences will lead to criminal prosecution, Gongbei Customs said. ■



This undated handout photo provided by Gongbei Customs yesterday shows a batch of 180 endangered blue shark fins, weighing a net total of 6.8 kilograms, seized from a Macau single-plate vehicle by customs officers at Hengqin checkpoint on September 3.

Dora Ng seeks central govt's support for Macau's development

Tony Wong

Secretary for Economy and Finance Dora Ng Wai Han led a delegation to Beijing in the second half of last month to visit various ministries and commissions of the Central People's Government, with the aim of listening to their respective guidance and opinions regarding Macau's ongoing initiatives to advance appropriate economic diversification, deepen Macau-Hengqin integration, align its development with the nation's 15th Five-Year Plan, and better integrate into the nation's overall development, according to a statement by her office yesterday.

The central government entities Ng's delegation visited comprised the National Development and Reform Commission (NDRC), the Ministry of Science and Technology (MOST), the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology (MIIT), the Ministry of Commerce (MOFCOM), and the National Financial Regulatory Administration (NFRA).

The statement by the Secretariat for Economy and Finance (GSEF) said that members of Ng's delegation conducted in-depth exchanges of views on various topics with the ministries and commissions during their visit to the nation's capital.



Secretary for Economy and Finance Dora Ng Wai Han (centre) listens to a briefing during her visit to the Zhongguancun Science Park in Xiong'an New Area last month. – Photo: GSEF

5 major aspects

The statement laid out five major aspects addressed during the delegation's visits to the central government entities.

In the field of sci-tech innovation and industrial development, discussions covered supporting the upcoming construction of the Macao Science and Technology Research and Development Industrial Park and the ongoing operation of the Macao International Technology Industry Centre (MITIC), strengthening Macau's platform role between China and Portuguese-speaking countries, and planning and developing national-level sci-tech research and development platforms in Macau and Hengqin, the statement said.

The Macao International Technology Industry Centre, which was inaugurated on June 30, is housed in a podium office space in the Carat luxury residential estate, located near the Kun Iam statue on the Nape waterfront.

In the field of cutting-edge technology and digital infrastructure, views were exchanged on optimising computing power allocation, promoting the RISC-V* industrial ecosystem, and improving cross-border fibre-optic cables. Vice Minister of Industry and Information Technology Xiong Jijun provided guidance on promoting the transformation of sci-tech research results and the integrated development between technological innovation and industrial innovation, the statement said.

In the field of institutional alignment between Macau and Hengqin, discussions addressed facilitating direct outbound investment by enterprises, cross-border financing for mainland Chinese enterprises, constructing a "computed in the mainland, used outside the mainland" computing power platform orientated towards Macau, Macau's government guidance funds, and drafting special administrative regulations for Hengqin. Zhao Kun, a deputy department chief in the National Development and Reform Commission, expressed support for high-quality mainland sci-tech enterprises investing in Macau and for providing facilities for bond issuance by high-quality enterprises in Macau, the statement said.

In the field of modern/specialised finance, views were exchanged on expanding the business activities of mainland Chinese-funded banks and insurance institutions in Macau, bilateral supervisory cooperation, talent exchange, and the development of specialised finance. National Financial Regulatory Administration Minister Ding Xiangqun expressed support for mainland Chinese-funded banks in Macau conducting bond underwriting and custody services, the statement said.

In the field of trade, conventions, and exhibitions, in-depth communications took place regarding the upgrading of CEPA, the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area (GBA) and the Macau-Hengqin integration, supporting Macau in concluding free trade agreements with Southeast Asian countries, guaranteeing the supply of helium, and developing the convention and exhibition industry. Assistant Minister of Commerce Yuan Xiaoming stated that support will be provided for Macau to expand its development space with reference to the "RCEP" model and to guarantee the supply of strategic materials through a "case-by-case" mechanism.

Meanwhile, Ng's delegation also paid a fact-finding visit to Xiong'an New Area.

Xiong'an New Area is a state-level new area in Hebei Province. The new area is located about 100 kilometres southwest of central Beijing.

Ng also addressed the 20th Meeting of the Mainland-Macao Science and Technology Cooperation Committee held in Xiong'an New Area. Together with Vice Minister of Science and Technology Zhang Guangjun, she signed the Memorandum of Understanding on Cooperation in Encouraging and Supporting Macao's Participation in the "Belt and Road" Sci-Tech Innovation Action Plan, supporting Macau in deepening sci-tech exchanges and cooperation with countries along the nation's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). ■

** RISC-V is an open-source hardware instruction set architecture (ISA) based on the principles of reduced instruction set computing (RISC), with the Roman numeral "V" representing Berkeley's fifth major RISC architecture generation. RISC-V is designed to be simple, efficient, and extensible, making it suitable for a wide range of computing applications, from embedded systems to high-performance computing. – Gemini*

Walk for a Million to set off Dec 13

Armindo Neves

The Charity Fund from the Readers of Macao Daily News held a press conference yesterday at Federal Restaurant in Zape to announce that its annual Walk for a Million will be held on December 13.

According to a statement released during the press conference, the starting point will be set up in front of Kun Iam Statue on Avenida Dr. Sun Yat-Sen (孫逸仙大馬路), with the route following Avenida Panorâmica do Lago Sai Van (西灣湖景大馬路) to the finishing point in front of A-Ma Temple. The route is approximately three kilometres long, and walking the entire distance at a leisurely pace takes about one hour, the statement said.

Tina Ho Teng Iat, chairwoman of the fund, said that in response to Macau's ageing population and the diverse living needs of low-income families, the charitable foundation will continue to focus on residents' needs and pay attention to the practical difficulties faced by vulnerable groups, weaving a tighter social safety net for public welfare. The fund will continue to increase investment across various charitable areas – including poverty alleviation, emergency relief, care for the elderly, and educational support and talent cultivation – so that every contribution of goodwill is put to concrete use and directly reaches every Macau resident in need, Ho said.



Charity Fund from the Readers of Macao Daily News Chairwoman Tina Ho Teng Iat addresses yesterday's press conference at Federal Restaurant in Zape. – Photo: MPDG

According to the statement, as in previous years, the registration fees for the charity walk are as follows: 10 patacas for student participants; 50 patacas for individual participants; 2,000 patacas for community associations and government bodies taking part with groups of 40 each, plus 50 patacas for each additional person; and 3,000 patacas for corporate sponsors participating with groups of 30 each, plus 50 patacas for each additional person. ■

2026 Bocuse d'Or Asia-Pacific concludes, 5 teams chosen for grand final

Rui Pastorin

Following two days of competition and culinary challenges, the Bocuse d'Or Asia-Pacific 2026 concluded on Monday, with the teams, along with their lead chefs, from Japan, Thailand and China taking the top three spots, while New Zealand and Malaysia came in fourth and fifth respectively.

The event, internationally regarded as the "Olympics of Gastronomy" and held in Macau for the first time from Sunday through Monday, had a total of eight competing teams from China, India, Japan, Malaysia, New Zealand, Sri Lanka, Thailand and Vietnam, according to a statement from the Macao Government Tourism Office (MGTO) on Monday

The five winning teams are set to compete at the Grand Final at Sirha Lyon in France in January 2027.

According to its website, the Sirha Lyon is the world's leading food service trade show, with the 2027 edition slated for a five-day run form January 21-25 at Eurexpo Lyon.

During the award ceremony at The Venetian Macao in Cotai that night, the statement said that MGTO Acting Director Cheng Wai Tong noted in his speech that gastronomy is a key ingredient for Macau's success as a World Centre of Tourism and Leisure.

He added that as Macau prepares to celebrate the 10th anniversary of its designation as a UNESCO Creative City of Gastronomy next year, "this 'Olympics of gastronomy' has further inspired the city to strive for excellence, innovate, embrace its uniqueness and aim for sustainable development".

According to the statement, the Bocuse d'Or, founded in 1987 by French chef Paul Bocuse (1926-2018), is a rigorous biennial global chef championship, with this edition having over 70 teams joining to compete across national and continental selections before entering the global Grand Final over a two-year period, culminating in 24 teams moving on to the Grand Final in January 2027, the statement said. ■



This undated handout photo provided on Monday shows teams competing during the recent 2026 Bocuse d'Or Asia-Pacific.

Sam vows cooperation with Guangdong & HK in building world-class bay area

Continued from p.1

Sam said that as the only region in the world where both Chinese and Portuguese are official languages, Macau is not only a "precise connector" for trade and economic cooperation between China and the nine Portuguese-speaking countries, but is also vigorously extending its role as a bridge to Spanish-speaking countries, while maintaining stable economic and trade relations with numerous other countries and regions around the world.

Moreover, Sam said, Hengqin's innovation hubs and the GBA's advantages of having comprehensive industrial and supply chains have laid a solid foundation for Macau to cultivate new quality productive forces, accelerate the gathering of talent, and promote appropriate economic diversification.

Sam noted that the GBA is one of the most open and economically dynamic regions in China, characterised by a well-developed manufacturing sector, a comprehensive industrial chain, a well-established supply chain, and a concentration of factors conducive to technological innovation.

Sam said that under the operational mechanism and framework of "One Country, Two Systems" and as three separate customs territories, the GBA's total economic output exceeded 15 trillion yuan in 2025. Its business environment has continued to improve, with opportunities driven by innovation growing by the day. It is playing an increasingly important supporting and leading role in the nation's economic development and high-level opening up. ■



An attendee selects panda-themed cultural and creative products at a fair during the Global Panda Partners Conference 2026 in Chengdu, capital of Sichuan Province, yesterday. The main forum of the Global Panda Partners Conference 2026 opened yesterday. The fair featuring a variety of panda-themed cultural and creative products is being held on the sidelines of the forum. – Xinhua

China's resolve to safeguard sovereignty, territorial integrity remains unwavering: Wang Yi

BEIJING – China's resolve to safeguard its sovereignty and territorial integrity and achieve national reunification remains unwavering, Foreign Minister Wang Yi said yesterday.

During a phone conversation with Philippine Foreign Affairs Secretary Ma. Theresa Lazaro, Wang, also a member of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Committee, urged the Philippine side to faithfully implement its one-China policy and exercise prudence in its words and actions on maritime issues.

Noting that China-Philippines relations are facing malicious interference at present, Wang said that a few Philippine politicians, out of political prejudice and self-interest, have repeatedly attacked and smeared China.

Such deeds crossed China's red lines, politicized normal economic, trade and people-to-people exchanges, and infringed upon the legitimate rights and interests of Chinese personnel and institutions in the Philippines, Wang said.

Such deeds are irrational and intolerable, and damaging to the Philippines' own international image, Wang said, adding that Manila should exercise greater restraint over the individuals concerned and ensure that its policy toward China reflects a rational and unified voice.

For her part, Lazaro said that the Philippines attaches great importance to its relations with China and hopes to develop a stable and predictable bilateral relationship.

Given the challenges that countries currently face in areas such as economy and energy, communication between the Philippines and China is conducive to managing differences, improving bilateral ties, and promoting regional peace and stability, Lazaro said.

The Philippines, she added, remains committed to the one-China policy, a position that will not change, and is also prepared to address maritime and other issues appropriately through dialogue and consultation.

As the ASEAN rotating chair, the Philippines appreciates and looks forward to China playing a greater role in advancing the ASEAN-China Comprehensive Strategic Partnership to achieve further results, she said.

The two sides reached basic consensus on improving and developing China-Philippines relations. They agreed that healthy and stable bilateral relations serve the interests of both sides and meet regional expectations, and they agreed to maintain diplomatic dialogue to that end.

They agreed that the two countries should work together to eliminate all internal and external interference, and oppose any malicious provocation or behavior aimed at undermining their diplomatic engagement.

They also agreed that both sides should responsibly manage their differences, stabilize the situation and seek to expand their shared interests.

Wang and Lazaro also exchanged views on the leaders' meetings on East Asian cooperation to be held in the Philippines, as well as the APEC Economic Leaders' Meeting to be held subsequently in Shenzhen. *– Xinhua*

CPC charts course for tougher action against corruption, stronger self-governance

Commentary

BEIJING – As China enters a critical period in its modernization drive, the ruling Communist Party of China (CPC) has charted the course for tougher action against corruption and stronger self-governance in the years ahead.

Last week, the fifth plenary session of the 20th CPC Central Committee adopted a resolution on persevering with full and rigorous Party self-governance, underscoring the need to step up the fight against corruption and strengthen checks on and oversight over the exercise of power.

In doing so, the CPC, the largest political party in the world with more than 100 million members, is seeking to overcome the unique challenges facing a party of its size.

These challenges, as outlined by Xi Jinping, general secretary of the CPC Central Committee, include how to maintain the Party's strong governance and leadership capacity, and sustain a clean and upright political environment.

"It is now both imperative and timely for the Party to study issues concerning persevering with full and rigorous self-governance," Xi said in a January meeting of the Political Bureau of the CPC Central Committee that set the agenda of the plenum.

IMPERATIVE THEME

At the January meeting, Xi said the decision to focus the plenary session on Party self-governance had been made after thorough deliberation.

Since it was founded in 1921, the Party has attached great importance to its self-supervision and self-governance. Today, the CPC's membership and ranks of officials have undergone structural changes, presenting new challenges for Party building.

In response to these challenges, Xi has repeatedly stressed the need for an unwavering commitment to strict Party self-governance, sending a clear signal that discipline will be enforced ever more strictly.

"It was with this in mind that the CPC Central Committee decided to make persevering with full and rigorous self-governance the plenum's agenda," he noted.

Explaining the resolution at the plenary session, Xi emphasized that persevering with full and rigorous self-governance is essential for maintaining the Party's advanced nature and integrity and consolidating its long-term governing position.

This year marks the beginning of China's 15th Five-Year Plan (2026-2030), a critical period for achieving the goal of basically realizing socialist modernization by 2035.

"To successfully achieve the goals and tasks of the 15th Five-Year Plan, it is imperative to focus on enhancing the ability and competence of the Party in leading economic and social development," Xi told senior provincial- and ministerial-level officials attending a study session at the Party School of the CPC Central Committee earlier this year.

HOW RESOLUTION TAKES SHAPE

In January 2026, a drafting group was set up to prepare the resolution, with Xi at its helm.

Throughout the drafting process, he played a decisive role, chairing multiple meetings, delivering important speeches and issuing instructions to guide the work.

On Feborary 6, Xi chaired the group's first plenary meeting, where he outlined the key principles for the drafting of the resolution.

He called for strict measures to address misconduct and corruption, while stressing that Party building should be pursued as a coordinated whole and integrated with the country's broader development goals.

At the same meeting, Xi identified 39 key issues for further study, covering the full scope of Party building and governance.

On May 6, Xi chaired a meeting in Shanghai on persevering with full and rigorous Party self-governance, setting out further requirements for the drafting of the resolution. He called for a problem-oriented approach, stressing the need for firm action to tackle prominent problems.

As the preparation of the document was underway, Xi stressed the importance of broad consultation and drawing on a wide range of views. He called on non-CPC parties and personages without party affiliation to speak candidly and offer constructive suggestions.

During consultation on the draft resolution, 1,173 suggestions for revisions were received from localities, departments and various sectors. After careful consideration, the drafting group incorporated 208 suggestions.

The document took shape over more than eight months, with the drafting group holding five plenary meetings and 35 specialized meetings.

During the plenary session last week, participants held in-depth discussions and exchanged views, putting forward suggestions that led to 13 revisions to the draft resolution before it was finally adopted on October 29.

WHY RESOLUTION MATTERS

The resolution examines new circumstances, challenges and tasks facing the Party as it advances full and rigorous Party self-governance.

It identifies three increasingly arduous tasks for the CPC: safeguarding China's sovereignty, security and development interests amid a changing international environment; advancing reform and development while maintaining social harmony and stability at home; and preserving the Party's advanced nature and integrity.

It also warns that, under new circumstances marked by profound changes, the Party faces challenges to its governance and leadership capacity, the quality of its membership, and its resistance against corruption and moral decline.

The resolution has established a problem-oriented approach as one of the guiding principles for persevering with full and rigorous Party self-governance.

It places particular emphasis on strengthening Party spirit among CPC members, as problems in Party conduct and discipline often stem from a lack of strong Party spirit. The resolution sets out specific measures to ensure that Party members and officials remain loyal, upright, and responsible.

Another focus is eliminating hidden rules and curbing malpractices such as cultivating connections and making back-room deals. The resolution sets out concrete measures to root out such practices.

The more than 200 measures outlined in the resolution combine the reinforcement of existing requirements with new responses to emerging challenges. *– Xinhua*

Philippine island fights rising seas with nature, not concrete

Pam Castro

MALOS, Philippines – For years, residents of a flood-prone Philippine island north of Manila have elevated their homes atop layer upon layer of concrete, only to see floodwaters threaten them again.

Burdened by strong storm surges, land subsidence and rising seas exacerbated by climate change, the 3,000 residents of tiny Pamarawan Island have turned to bamboo poles and discarded oyster shells to build a barrier aimed at weakening waves and managing floods.

The unusual approach offers a nature-based alternative for a country still grappling with a multibillion-dollar scandal that drove public fury over substandard – and at times non-existent – concrete flood-control projects.

"We were terrified whenever there were typhoons. We couldn't sleep at night," fisherman Edgar Javier told AFP on a recent visit, recalling how strong waves once brought down one of his home's concrete walls.

"Whenever the waves hit, the wall shakes."

The project began when the city government of Malolos, home to the island, launched a study with a Dutch engineering consultancy.

"(Concrete infrastructure) projects won't suffice," Mayor Christian Natividad told AFP.

While the project, the first of its kind in the country, initially faced resistance from officials and residents working without a blueprint, Natividad said they had "nothing to lose".

"It's like you accept daily flooding or you do something else with risk," he said.

"I chose risk."



An aerial photo taken on October 13 shows bamboo sediment traps designed to slow water flow next to houses at Pamarawan Island in Malolos City, Bulacan province, Philippines. – AFP

Slowing the waves

By May last year, workers, many of them residents, had begun installing bamboo poles packed with brushwood along the coast. They are designed to slow water flow and trap sediment, with the goal of gradually raising the seabed and supporting mangrove growth.

When AFP journalists visited the site, workers were building an oyster-shell breakwater about 100 metres offshore.

Under the searing heat, men in caps pounded wooden stakes used to secure coconut-fibre bags filled with shells on an artificial shore first created with sea sand.

"This breakwater's main purpose is to lessen the impact of the wave before it can reach the community," project manager Lyana Galang told AFP, adding that the oyster-shell barriers work in concert with bamboo sediment traps.

Filipino scientist Antonio Contreras said the Philippines had long relied heavily on concrete dykes and seawalls, many undertaken without adequate study.

"We have altered the environment so much that we tend to work against nature when in fact we should work with it," Contreras told AFP, noting that some design flaws linked to corruption had cost lives.

But nature-based solutions were not a universal answer, he warned, particularly during catastrophic floods, and should complement conventional infrastructure.

Contreras said the approach in Pamarawan could be replicated elsewhere, provided local environmental conditions were carefully taken into account.

Bamboo and oyster shells also need to be sourced sustainably, he warned, as bamboo deteriorates over time and releases carbon as it decomposes.

The nature-based installations, which cover about 14 hectares along Manila Bay, cost 70 million pesos (US$1.1 million), including maintenance, compared with around 90 million pesos for a concrete seawall, Mayor Natividad said.

He estimated bamboo will need to be replaced once every five years.

'Our feet are dry'

With its first phase completed in late 2025, the installation has already brought some comfort to residents.

Fisherman Edgar Javier said the breakwaters had softened waves and helped keep floodwaters at bay during typhoons and monsoon rains this year.

"This has made a huge difference for us. We can still feel the waves, but they have significantly weakened. (They're) almost nothing now," he said.

Arsenia Cabigao, 58, said flooding had previously disrupted her livelihood by submerging areas where she dried fish.

"Our feet are dry at last. They weren't before," she told AFP as she sliced small fish in a narrow Pamarawan alley.

The project's long-term effectiveness remains uncertain, with a scientific assessment due next year to determine if mangrove planting can begin, Natividad said.

Its success, he added, would become more tangible over the next decade as accumulated sediment stabilised the seabed and allowed for the growth of mangroves, which would provide another natural barrier.

Vince Dizon, head of the public works department before a recent reassignment, said he hoped the Pamarawan project could be replicated in other flood-prone areas.

"We need to study this, and learn from those who know and have already done this correctly, so we won't waste public funds again," Dizon told reporters on a visit to the island.

For residents who fear being driven from their longtime home, the ultimate test will be whether their houses remain upright when typhoons and monsoon rains strike.

"It's hard to fight water. Now we're trying to live with water," Natividad told AFP.

"We're building with nature."

– AFP

Thai opposition leader targeted in spyware attack: party

BANGKOK – Thailand's opposition leader was targeted by a spyware attack, his party said yesterday, but a government spokesman denied a claim that the state could be behind the attempted surveillance.

Natthaphong Ruengpanyawut, whose progressive People's Party came second in February's election, shared in a social media post yesterday screenshots from his device of a "threat notification" from Apple.

"Apple detected that you are being targeted by a mercenary spyware attack that is trying to remotely compromise the iPhone associated with your Apple Account," the notification said.

"This attack is likely targeting you specifically because of who you are or what you do."

It said the notification was sent to "targeted users in 110 countries" and did not identify the attackers.

A cybersecurity watchdog said in 2022 dozens of Thai democracy activists were targeted by spyware known as Pegasus during the height of anti-government protests two years earlier.

Pegasus software, created by Israeli firm NSO Group, can extract data and activate cameras or microphones once it has successfully infiltrated a mobile device.

People's Party deputy spokesperson Napath Narangsiya told AFP that Natthaphong was the only party member who received the warning from Apple yesterday.

However, he said other lawmakers and staffers from their political movement received similar notices during the military-backed government of former prime minister Prayut Chan-o-cha, who came to power after a 2014 coup.

It was not confirmed which spyware was used or who was behind the recent attack, according to Napath, though he said the list of suspects was short.

"If the spyware is developed and deployed similarly to Pegasus, then it has to be a state actor," he told AFP.

"We don't think there are any other countries (except Thailand) that would target the Thai opposition leader."

Government spokesman Ekkapob Pianpises said the opposition's insinuations were "baseless".

While government agencies have made budget requests to procure Pegasus spyware during previous administrations, he said no such budget was allocated in the current or previous financial year.

Both Apple and the NSO Group did not respond to emailed questions from AFP yesterday.

But NSO Group has said it only sells its cyberintelligence technologies to government agencies to combat terrorism and other crimes.

Apple said in a statement in August that targeted spyware attacks "have historically been associated with state actors".

Democrat Party spokesman Pongsakorn Kwanmuang told AFP that party leader and former prime minister Abhisit Vejjajiva also recently received a spyware notification from Apple but his mobile phone was not compromised. *– AFP*

Indonesia arrests 3 for tapping president's phone: police

JAKARTA – Indonesian authorities have arrested three people for allegedly tapping President Prabowo Subianto's phone, police said yesterday, with media reports suggesting one of the suspects may be a senior official.

Prabowo, who took office in 2024, has come under increasing pressure for his government's handling of the economy and destructive wildfires in the Southeast Asian archipelago.

Top detective Asep Safrudin identified the suspects only by their initials, LSP, ASN, and EH, and said they were under investigation for allegedly tapping "the telephone number of the President of the Republic of Indonesia" and other prominent figures.

The other alleged victims include government officials and politicians, journalists, NGO representatives and businesspeople.

Asep said numbers including Prabowo's were "tapped without any legal basis or without any investigative or inquiry process in accordance with applicable laws".

A police officer who became aware of the alleged crime filed a report on Friday, Asep told reporters in Jakarta.

Since then, police have examined 10 witnesses and three expert witnesses and seized evidence in the form of 11 mobile phones, an iPad and four flash drives.

If convicted, the suspects could face up to 10 years in prison.

In a separate news conference, Justice Minister Yusril Ihza Mahendra identified LSP as an active general.

Indonesian media said it was thought to be Listyo Sigit Prabowo – no relation to the president – who was appointed his chief of staff a month ago, after serving as national police chief for five years.

He holds the rank of general.

– AFP

Stolen watch worth US$290,000 returned to Japanese shop with sorry note

TOKYO – A Swiss luxury watch worth about US$290,000 that was stolen from a Tokyo shop last week has been returned with an apology note, according to local media.

The theft occurred when a man posing as a customer tried on the Audemars Piguet timepiece and then fled the shop in the Japanese capital while it was still on his wrist.

But the case took a twist when the shop received a package containing the watch – and a handwritten note saying sorry, the *Asahi Shimbun* newspaper and other media reported on Monday, citing unnamed investigative sources.

The watch's serial number reportedly identified it as the stolen item.

The shop declined to comment when contacted by AFP.

Tokyo police are still searching for the man on suspicion of theft, according to the Asahi.

In August, four luxury watches worth 200 million yen (US$1.3 million) were stolen from another shop in the same shopping complex.

– AFP

Nepal helicopter collision kills Indian tourist

KATHMANDU – An Indian tourist was killed and a New Zealand national injured when two helicopters collided and crashed while attempting to land in Nepal's Everest region yesterday, police told AFP.

Small helicopters are widely used in the Himalayan nation to transport tourists, climbers and supplies, as well as to carry out emergency evacuations.

The country's challenging terrain and rapidly changing weather conditions make aviation operations particularly hazardous.

The small helicopters operated by Fishtail Air and Air Dynasty crashed into each other as both came into land on a snowy site in Solukhumbu district yesterday morning.

"The 47-year-old Indian tourist died on the spot," Nabin Raja Budhathoki, in charge of Solukhumbu District Police, told AFP.

"The injured 53-year-old citizen... from New Zealand has been airlifted to Kathmandu for further treatment," he added.

Arrangements were also being made to airlift the body of the deceased to the capital Kathmandu.

Both of the pilots survived the accident.

Nepal is home to eight of the world's 14 highest mountains, including Everest, and attracts thousands of foreign climbers and trekkers every year. – *AFP*

N Korea test fires strategic cruise missiles: KCNA

SEOUL – North Korea test-fired strategic cruise missiles, state media reported yesterday, in the latest display of its weapons capabilities as tensions persist on the Korean peninsula.

The Monday launch came a day after North Korea tested cluster bomb warheads, as tensions with Seoul have risen after a landmine blast along their heavily fortified border wounded three South Korean soldiers.

"The middle-sized dispersal warhead tipped on the cruise missile is capable of turning into ashes a target area of 5 to 6 hectares with its highest-density power," the official Korean Central News Agency reported yesterday.

The test "perfected the capability to deliver a vertical strike against the target by improving the terminal manoeuvrability of the cruise missile," KCNA said, "taking into consideration the natural and geographical characteristics of the targeted area."

A North Korean official was quoted as saying the test was conducted "because our armed forces should defend the security of the country and deter all sorts of threats."

"Various combat functions of such strongest weapon system will help defend the DPRK from potential threats from outside and renew the military capabilities of the state," the general director of the Missile Administration said, using the acronym for North Korea's official name.

The nuclear-armed North recently trialled a range of weaponry including attack drones, a new precision-guided torpedo system and an intermediate-range hypersonic missile.

South Korea's military did not announce the cruise missile launch, as it had also not done with Sunday's test.

Unlike ballistic missile launches, North Korean cruise missile tests are not prohibited by UN Security Council sanctions.

Asked Monday about Sunday's reported test, Joint Chiefs of Staff spokesperson Jang Do-young said South Korea and the United States were "closely coordinating and conducting a highly detailed analysis of its characteristics and specifications".

"Our military does not announce all projectiles launched by North Korea," said Jang.

"Whether to make an announcement is determined through a comprehensive military assessment, taking into account the protection of surveillance and reconnaissance assets and capabilities, operational security and other factors," he added. – *AFP*



Taliban security personnel stand guard as Afghan workers load trucks with expired medicines in Kandahar Monday. – AFP

S Korea orders church leader back to prison over bail violation

SEOUL – A South Korean court revoked the Unification Church leader's bail in a bribery case yesterday after footage emerged of her visiting the secretive movement's headquarters in breach of release conditions.

Han Hak-ja, 83, was sentenced to two years in prison in August for providing luxury items, including a designer handbag, to former first lady Kim Keon Hee while her husband Yoon Suk Yeol was president, in an attempt to secure policy favours.

She was granted bail two months later on health grounds, on condition that she reside at a Seoul hospital.

Footage aired on Monday by local broadcaster JTBC showed Han being driven from the hospital to the church headquarters known as Cheonjeonggung Palace.

Han would leave for the headquarters in Gapyeong County, east of Seoul, early in the morning and return to the hospital in the evening, according to the report, which prompted a review of her bail.

"The Seoul High Court yesterday revoked bail for defendant Han," the court said in a brief statement.

"The court also ordered the forfeiture of Han's bail bond," it added.

Yonhap news agency reported that the decision was made "over her visits to Cheonjeonggung Palace".

The Unification Church has significant business interests spanning media, education and food distribution, and has long drawn scrutiny over its political ties in South Korea.

The church has denied wrongdoing, with a spokesman telling AFP before the court's decision that "Han's outings were in accordance with doctors' advice" and did "not constitute a violation of the bail terms".

Founded in 1954 by Han's late husband, Moon Sun-myung, the Unification Church has long drawn controversy over teachings that present Moon as the Second Coming of Jesus Christ.

Han, revered by church members as the "True Mother", took the helm of the church after Moon's death in 2012. She was arrested in September 2025 in connection with the bribery case involving the former first lady.

The Unification Church, which claims to have 10 million followers worldwide, is best known for its mass wedding ceremonies, in which couples of different nationalities are matched, held at its headquarters in South Korea. – *AFP*



Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) supporters patrol during protests by garment workers demanding higher minimum wages, in Dhaka yesterday. Thousands of Bangladeshi garment workers blocked a major highway and clashed with police on Monday, demanding a monthly minimum wage more than double current pay, as protests spread across industrial hubs. – AFP

Gunmen kill 2 police officers escorting polio workers in Pakistan

PESHAWAR – Gunmen attacked a police vehicle assigned to protect a polio vaccination team, killing two officers and wounding another in Pakistan's northwest Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province yesterday, a police official told AFP.

Militants opened fire on the officers' vehicle while it was travelling near the Afghan border in Mohmand district, police official Ali Rehman Khan said, without specifying which group they believed was behind the attack.

"Two police personnel were martyred and another was injured in the attack. However, no polio vaccination staff were present in the police vehicle," he said.

No group immediately claimed responsibility for the shooting in the border province where security forces are battling an intensifying militancy they say emanates from Afghanistan – an accusation its Taliban government denies.

In a separate incident in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's Tank district, four police officers on their way to provide security for a polio vaccination team were abducted on Monday and efforts were underway to recover them, district police official Abdul Samad told AFP.

Pakistan is one of two countries, along with Afghanistan, where polio remains endemic, but militants have killed hundreds of police officers and health workers over the past decade as part of a campaign against the Pakistani state.

Polio, a highly infectious disease mainly affecting children under five, can result in lifelong paralysis but is easily prevented by the oral administration of a few drops of a vaccine.

Misinformation about the vaccine is widespread in rural Pakistan, including false claims that it is part of a CIA plot to prevent Muslims from having children.

Attacks on polio vaccination workers and their police escorts have previously been claimed by the Pakistani Taliban and other militant groups it is linked to. – *AFP*

S Korea investigates online leak of president's passport details

SEOUL – South Korea is investigating an online leak of passport details belonging to President Lee Jae Myung and more than 160 other officials, a government minister said yesterday.

Local media reported on Monday that a computer file containing personal details, including the passport numbers and dates of birth of the first couple and senior officials accompanying Lee on an overseas trip, had been uploaded to a website in June.

The file was reportedly uploaded to VirusTotal, a malware-scanning platform, ahead of Lee's visit to Europe, and remained accessible for nearly five months.

It remains unclear who uploaded it and why.

The foreign ministry has since renewed the passports of all those affected, including Lee, and had the exposed information removed from the website, ministry spokesman Park Doo-soon said at a news briefing yesterday.

"The foreign ministry is now working with the National Police Agency and other agencies to determine how the information was leaked," he said.

Park said the ministry was treating the incident as a data leak rather than a hacking attack, and was examining computers and email accounts used to prepare the presidential trip.

The leak was a "serious matter that must not be taken lightly", Presidential Chief of Staff Lim Kwang-hyun told an emergency meeting on the breach, according to Lee's office.

The incident has raised "need for a thorough investigation into how the leak occurred, the extent of the information exposed and whether any actual harm had resulted", he said. – *AFP*

Students blockade dozens of French schools and universities

Aurelie Mayembo

PARIS – Students blockaded dozens of high schools and universities across France yesterday to maintain pressure on the government over education reforms as trade unions prepared for a nationwide strike.

After returning from a two-week autumn break, some students resumed their protest campaign on Monday, calling on the authorities to renovate dilapidated schools, reduce class sizes and create more university places.

Authorities said yesterday that 48 out of France's 3,700 high schools were blocked amid tight security, including in Paris, Rennes and Lyon. The USL student union said 500 schools were blocked.

Fifty-one higher education institutions out of 184 were also disrupted, officials said.

The USL union denounced what it called heavy-handed tactics, with "young people pinned against walls and riot police units deployed" outside schools.

A union representative said the authorities appeared to want to blunt a new day of blockades tomorrow when trade unions have called a nationwide strike.

"We don't even have the right to vote, we can't do anything, so this is our only way of expressing ourselves," a high school student in northwestern Paris said on condition of anonymity.

Thousands of students also marched in Paris and several other cities.

'Nothing else worked'

Education Minister Edouard Geffray spoke out against the action, saying students needed to study and prepare for exams.

"Preventing them from entering their school deprives them of a fundamental right: the right to an education," he said on X, adding that some staff members had "once again been subjected to violence".



Protestors hold a flag reading "Young Ccommunist" as they participate in a demonstration organised by high-school students, at La Sorbonne street in Paris, yesterday, as part of a nationwide blockade to ask for a 10 billion euro investment in education and higher education and the repeal of the country's university entry system. *– AFP*

In the northwestern city of Rennes, around 30 students blocked the Brequigny High School, one of the country's largest secondary schools.

Tensions quickly flared between students and the school administration.

"You are not the majority," a staff member protested.

"If we're doing this, it's because everything we've tried before hasn't worked," a student replied.

At a school in the southwestern city of Toulouse, students brandished placards, one saying "Angry, not far right".

"Young people are sticking it to the education system," read another, in a nod to the lyrics of a popular protest song against the far right.

The school protests have fuelled a nationwide movement against soaring prices and inadequate public services, which has drawn hundreds of thousands of people onto the streets over the past three weekends.

On October 17, it also led to some of the worst unrest seen in France in years.

The school movement has inspired students in other European countries, including Italy and Spain, where the French word "blocus" (blockade) has become a hashtag.

Last week, the French government unveiled measures aimed at addressing some of the students' demands, including the replacement of the university admissions platform, which has been criticised for a lack of transparency.

Students say the proposals do not go far enough, demanding 10 billion euros (US$11.2 billion) in investment.

3 minors arrested

With the European Union's second-largest economy on the brink of recession and under pressure to reduce its debt, authorities have little room to quell student anger with additional spending.

Student union L'Union Étudiante said one university in two was affected yesterday and that over 50 campuses had been blockaded.

At the University of Lille in the north, around 40 students used bicycles and trash bins to block the campus, leading to the cancellation of classes.

"There's a massive national mobilisation under way," said Gauthier Capiez, a third-year political science student.

"If next year we manage to get rid of Parcoursup, among other things, then it will all have been worth it," he said, referring to the university admissions platform.

Some schools have been damaged since the student movement emerged in September.

Authorities said yesterday that three minors had been arrested after a school in the western city of Nantes was set on fire in October, on the margins of the protests.

– AFP

Trump says US cutting US$3.8 billion annual security assistance to Israel

WASHINGTON, DC – US President Donald Trump said yesterday that Washington is ending a 10-year security assistance accord with Israel that allowed US$3.8 billion in annual assistance to its ally until 2028.

Trump said Israel was "fine" with him ending the assistance, which began in 2019 and was signed under his predecessor, Barack Obama, three years earlier.

"We'll help Israel if they need it," Trump added in an interview on "Fox and Friends," saying that he had agreed with Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to cut the assistance.

"Israel's our number one; we give them more than anybody else, and they no longer need it ... If they did need it, I would say keep it going," Trump added.

Under the deal, Israel receives financial assistance for the purchase of around US$3.8 billion in weapons a year.

Since its founding in 1948, Israel has received more than US$300 billion, adjusted for inflation, in US economic and military assistance, according to the Council on Foreign Relations, far more than any other country since 1946.

The Israeli premier has said he wanted to end Israel's reliance on US support.

In June, Netanyahu called for his country to increase its military autonomy and reduce its reliance on Washington.

In January he told *The Economist* that he hoped to do so within a decade, while in May he told CBS that he wanted support to reach "zero".

Yesterday's announcement was nonetheless met with backlash from Israeli opposition candidate Gadi Eisenkot, who said it showed that Netanyahu must go.

"The fact that Israel's defence establishment is learning of a shift in our strategic relationship through the media, at the same time as the Israeli public, shows just how dangerous Benjamin Netanyahu's conduct is," Eisenkot said in a statement.

"He can no longer be trusted and must be replaced."

Ysterday, Trump cited attacks by leftist Democrat Abdul El-Sayed, who was running for the US Senate yesterday's midterm elections after harnessing popular discontent and anti-Israel sentiment, as part of the reasoning behind the decision to end aid.

"Why should we suffer the slings from lunatics like an El-Sayed when they don't need it?" he said on Fox, referring to Israel and the assistance. *– AFP*

Thousands join Czech protest against public media financing plan

Jan Flemr

PRAGUE – Thousands rallied across the Czech Republic and media workers went on strike yesterday over a government plan to change the way public broadcasting is funded.

The protesters say they fear the plan to switch from a licence fee paid by individuals to direct financing from the state budget will enable the government to stifle media freedom.

The coalition government led by billionaire Prime Minister Andrej Babis, however, argues that the broadcasters need to cut costs and insists the plan will have no impact on editorial independence or programme content.

Jakub Szanto, a reporter for the public Czech TV channel, told AFP the government had taken a "radical step" by trying to force through its changes without any wider debate.

"We firmly hope the government will understand that when something's working, you don't have to change it," he said.

Both Czech TV and Czech Radio reduced their programming yesterday with thousands of employees joining the protest.

The staff marched from the media headquarters to a central square in Prague, where they were joined by university students and other protesters.

Many wore triangular paper hats similar to a popular animated character from Czech TV that has become a symbol of the protest.

'Think twice'

"We hope this will make politicians think twice... we hope they will withdraw the bill," Czech TV sports reporter Zaneta Perinova told AFP.

The Czech parliament dominated by Babis's three-party rightwing coalition rushed the bill through the first of three readings in a controversial overnight session last month.

Babis said this week that the second reading could happen in January.

Critics have accused Babis of mirroring the muzzling of public media carried out by his allies in other countries, notably Slovak Prime Minister Robert Fico and Hungary's ex-leader Viktor Orban.

The Babis government wants to reduce the budgets of the two outlets, in effect reversing raises awarded by the previous centre-right government last year.

Babis said on Monday that "nobody wants to control public media, let alone nationalise them" and that "none of what the people are protesting against... is true".

The plan has drawn international criticism from the European Broadcasting Union, the European Federation of Journalists, Reporters Without Borders, and the International Press Institute.

Thousands already rallied in Prague on October 25, and a larger demonstration is planned in the Czech capital on November 15.

– AFP

Baghdad's first Jewish museum opens

Salam Faraj

BAGHDAD – Dozens of visitors have begun flocking to a new museum opened by Iraq's Jewish community, the first of its kind, amid ongoing efforts by the minority to preserve its heritage.

Last month, the Shamash Jewish Museum opened inside a former Jewish school that was founded in 1928 on Baghdad's al-Rashid street, in the heart of the capital.

"It's the only museum in Iraq belonging to the Jewish community," Ammar al-Tamimi, lawyer for the committee of Iraqi Jews that manages the community's properties, told AFP.

The Jewish community in Iraq was once one of the largest in the Middle East, numbering more than 130,000 people in the 1940s, and traces its history back 2,600 years.

But today there are only a few dozen Jewish residents remaining, most of them in the Kurdistan region.

The museum, with its large wooden entrance topped by menorahs and stained-glass geometric patterns, consists of a hall displaying antique documents and photographs of Iraqi Jews, along with old school certificates, and has begun to attract local and foreign visitors.

Its walls are adorned with photos of prominent Jewish figures, including Iraq's first finance minister Sassoon Eskell (1860–1932) and physician Dhafer Fouad Eliyahu (1960–2021), who was well known in Iraq for providing free services.

The Shamash Jewish School, started by Yaqub Shlomo Shamash nearly a century ago, offered an English-language curriculum to students from various communities, and in particular Jews.

The government confiscated the property in the 1970s and converted it into a public school, until a court ruling returned it to the community in 1992, according to Tamimi.

Efforts to revive the school faced successive setbacks: sanctions in the 1990s, the US invasion of 2003, sectarian clashes in 2006 and 2007, and the rise of the Islamic State (IS) group between 2014 and 2017.

But as Iraq finally begins to experience relative stability, accompanied by a growing thirst for culture and entertainment, Jewish community leaders led by Khalida Fouad Eliyahu, 63, have started bringing their sites back to life.

Restoration efforts

Visiting the museum, which he described as "important for remembering Jewish history and civilisation", 74-year-old Ramzi al-Saadi recalled his Jewish neighbours as a child on Baghdad's al-Kifah Street.

"They were kind, simple people who never harmed anyone," he told AFP.

Today, fewer than 50 synagogues and Jewish sites remain in Iraq, most of them in Baghdad and Hilla, the capital of Babylon Province, to which large numbers of Jews were forcibly taken in what became known as the Babylonian Captivity in the sixth century BC.

Tens of thousands of Jews left the country following a deadly 1941 massacre known as the Farhud, when mobs killed over 100 Iraqi Jews, and after the establishment of the state of Israel in 1948.

For years the Iraqi Jewish community has been working to restore its shrines and synagogues, which have suffered from severe neglect, and many of which were turned into warehouses or destroyed during the wars that have plagued Iraq. – *AFP*

'Over a million' abuse images found on phone of UK man who drugged, raped wife: prosecutor

LONDON – A man who drugged and raped his wife over two decades and allegedly invited strangers to participate had "over a million photographs and videos" on his phone cataloguing the abuse, a UK court has heard.

The court in Manchester, northwest England, is hearing the trial of nine men accused of various sexual offences against a woman who was abused by her husband – a man in his 60s who cannot be named to protect the victim's identity.

The husband filmed and shared images of the abuse on the "internet and social media applications" with "other like-minded men", prosecutor Louise Oakley told the court on Monday.

Some of the defendants allegedly "hid behind a screen" and conspired with the husband over the years to administer substances to the woman so she could be "used and abused".

And starting 2023, the prosecutor said, the husband began inviting men around to their home and filmed himself and others raping her while she was unconscious.

It is the second case involving a man accused of inviting strangers to take part in abusing his wife currently being heard in Britain. A trial in Winchester in the south involving four men opened last week.

Global awareness of the crime, known as organised drug-facilitated sexual assault (DFSA), has grown following the high-profile conviction in France of Dominique Pelicot, who drugged and raped his then-wife Gisele for nearly a decade alongside strangers.

Oakley told the jury in Manchester that the husband's phone, which was seized when he was arrested, was like a "confession booth" including "barbaric sexual fantasies" going back to 2004.

"There were over a million photographs and videos cataloguing not only his abuse of his wife but abuse on her committed by others, including those in the dock today," Oakley said.

"There is no doubt he lived a double life masked in respectability," the prosecutor said.

The husband pleaded guilty in September to some 60 sexual offences against his wife including administering a substance with intent to stupefy or overpower her.

He and 13 other men are accused of conspiring to abuse the woman. Four of the men have since pleaded guilty to various offences.

The remaining nine men, aged between 28 and 70, deny various charges including rape, sexual assault and conspiracy to administer a statement substance with intent.

They include a taxi driver, a recruitment agency worker, a building supplies worker and a senior medic. – *AFP*



Pope Leo XIV celebrates a Mass for the feast of All Souls' Day at Verano Cemetery in Rome on Monday. – *AFP*

Jordan charges church attack suspects with terrorism

AMMAN – Jordanian prosecutors yesterday charged three men with terrorism-related offences over a deadly gun attack last month on a church in the kingdom's south.

On October 23, gunmen killed nine people and wounded 25 others when they stormed a funeral at a Greek Orthodox church in Hammoud village, in Jordan's Karak governorate.

Authorities said the suspected gunmen, two Jordanian brothers and their relative by marriage, fled after the attack but were arrested three days later.

According to a statement from Jordan's state security prosecutor, "the public prosecution has completed all investigative procedures... related to the terrorist attack carried out at Saint George Church".

The seven charges include "committing terrorist acts resulting in the death of a person, carrying out terrorist acts using weapons and ammunition, possessing weapons and ammunition for terrorist purposes, conspiring to carry out terrorist acts and promoting the ideology of a terrorist group".

Under Jordan's anti-terrorism law, a conviction on the most serious charge – carrying out terrorist acts resulting in death – is punishable by death.

Authorities have described the suspects as followers of a hardline Islamist ideology.

The attack shocked the kingdom, where Christians make up around three percent of Jordan's Muslim-majority population.

Jordan retaliated by launching deadly strikes on "terrorist organisations" in Syria, claiming to have killed more than 20 jihadists, but sparking a brief diplomatic crisis with its neighbour. – *AFP*

Pope 'so excited' about return to Peru: Vatican

VATICAN CITY – Pope Leo XIV is "so excited" to return to Peru and refused to cut anything from his packed South America schedule despite his recent lung operation, the Vatican said yesterday.

"He is so excited. He personally confirmed this trip with no changes," María Montserrat Alvarado, the Vatican's new head of communications, told journalists.

The 71-year-old head of the Catholic Church, who underwent an operation fewer than three weeks ago to remove a cancerous tumour, was "so grateful" for concern over his health, she said at a briefing ahead of the November 6 to 17 trip.

But the US pope insists he is fit enough for what will be one of the most ambitious papal foreign trips in decades, touring Uruguay, Argentina and Peru, she said.

Before becoming Leo XIV, Robert Francis Prevost served for nearly two decades in the Andean country, including as bishop, and he holds Peruvian citizenship.

"The homecoming piece is very important to him," Alvarado said.

"He feels that very deeply. This is a place that gave him his ministry and inspired who he is as a pastor, and certainly the way that he views encounter, and the diverse needs of the Church.

"So it opened his eyes in a way that is new and different," she said.

Millions of faithful are expected to flock to see Leo, who will lead over 50 events during his trip, delivering speeches to leaders including Argentine President Javier Milei, and meeting indigenous peoples in the Amazon, clerical abuse victims, and the elderly, poor, and disabled.

The tour includes 12 flights, two helicopter trips, and a high-altitude prayer in the Andes, which has fuelled concern it may be too much for the pontiff.

Vatican spokesman Matteo Bruni said the pope's cancerous tumour was "not a permanent condition, we're talking about something that you heal from".

"The pope is a 71-year-old man who has no chronic medical condition. Having undergone a surgical procedure – from which he has recovered – he is once again a 71-year-old man in excellent health," he said. – *AFP*

Ahead of COP31, Brazil offers a global fossil fuel exit plan

PARIS – Last year's UN climate summit host Brazil released yesterday a roadmap for countries to transition away from fossil fuels, saying the endeavour was "necessary, urgent and yet possible" as nations prepare for next week's COP31 conference.

The COP30 conference in the Amazon city of Belem in 2025 ended with a final agreement that failed to explicitly mention fossil fuels after fierce opposition from major oil producers such as Saudi Arabia and Russia.

As an alternative, the Brazilian hosts offered to launch a roadmap for countries to shift away from oil, gas and goal on a voluntary basis.

"Taken together, the evidence and analysis in this Roadmap lead the COP30 Presidency to a clear conclusion that transitioning away from fossil fuels is urgent, inevitable and yet possible," the text released yesterday said.

The document, however, acknowledged that "there is no unique solution for this complex puzzle" and suggested that countries tailor measures suited to their circumstances.

The roadmap proposes a "collective agenda" in three phases, from 2028 to 2033, during which countries should draw up plans and transform their energy systems.

"Countries differ in how fast they can move and in the support they need, but every country gains from immediately planning its transition away from fossil fuels," the document said.

Brazil also published a roadmap on halting deforestation by 2030.

Nearly 200 nations adopted a landmark text at the COP28 summit in Dubai in 2023 that called for "transitioning away from fossil fuels in energy systems".

"The transition is inevitable, so start planning now and as soon as possible, because this will be good for your country, for your society, for your economy," COP30 chief executive Ana Toni said in a media briefing.

But current policies and plans that have been announced so far "still leave the world short of the energy outcomes agreed in Dubai", the COP30 presidency document said.

'Act now'

A new agreement on fossils is unlikely at the two-week COP31 conference, which begins next Monday in Turkish Mediterranean resort Antalya.

Instead, COP31 president Turkey and Australia, which is steering the negotiations, are championing a voluntary programme aimed at boosting "electrification" in efforts to cut heat-trapping emissions.

While Toni said the fossil fuel roadmap would be discussed in Antalya on November 10, Brazilian officials stressed that their initiative was a call to action, not a document to be negotiated at COP31.

"We are not suggesting negotiations," COP30 president Andre Correa do Lago said.

"Everyone can start to act now," he said, noting that the knowledge and technology are already available. "The agreements already exist. What's important is to implement them."

Climate campaigners welcome the Brazilian initiatives.

"The roadmap must not end up as just another report gathering dust on a shelf," said Fanny Petitbon, a policy analyst at 350.org.

"COP31 must be the moment when governments take this work forward, with clear commitments, timelines and the resources to deliver a fair and orderly exit from coal, oil and gas," Petitbon said.

– AFP



Cleaners remove tents and other debris after police evicted protesters and dismantled a sprawling camp which spearheaded protests over Spain's housing crisis in the emblematic Puerta del Sol ("Sun Gate") square in central Madrid yesterday. Officers closed off much of the Spanish capital's Puerta del Sol square in the morning as municipal cleaning staff swept away tents and debris. The central government's delegation in the Madrid region said the eviction took place overnight "without incident or episodes of violence", reporting that 334 protesters were removed and two arrested. – AFP

Cuban Olympic medallist defects in Mexico

HAVANA – A Cuban wrestler who won silver for her country at the 2024 Paris Olympics defected while in Mexico, a source close to Cuba's wrestling federation has told AFP.

Yusneylis Guzmán left the wrestling delegation with which she was travelling to Brazil during a stopover in Mexico, the source said on Monday.

Guzmán, 30, was the first Cuban woman to win an Olympic medal in wrestling when she took silver in the freestyle 50kg event in Paris.

After her win she was named Cuba's best sportswoman.

She also won gold at the Pan American Games in Santiago, Chile in 2023 after taking silver at the Lima games four years earlier.

Cuban sports stars often use international competitions as an opportunity to seek refugee status in another country.

As the communist-ruled island suffers through its worst economic crisis in decades, exacerbated by a nine-month-old US fuel blockade, the trend has continued.

In July, nine members of a 12-strong canoeing delegation defected during a visit to Canada.

Between 2021 and 2023, at the peak of a migrant exodus, half of the country's under-23 baseball team defected during a visit to Mexico. *– AFP*

Activists file Vatican complaint against pro-bullfighting priests

VATICAN CITY – Animal activists filed a formal complaint at the Vatican yesterday asking the Catholic Church to denounce five Spanish priests whom they accuse of glorifying animal cruelty in defending bullfighting.

Anti-bullfighting protesters have called for years for the pope to oppose bullfighting, which they call a barbaric and archaic practice that contrasts sharply with Catholic teaching.

Spain holds about 1,500 bullfights each year in which the animals are taunted and stabbed before being killed, with defenders calling the controversial practice a venerated cultural tradition.

An Italian lawyer for People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA), Laura Sgro, filed the complaint at the Dicastery for the Clergy that seeks to compel the Holy See to investigate the priests over their "public promotion of bullfighting."

Under canon law, a so-called "denuntiatio" formally alerts a dicastery to alleged wrongdoing.

Sgro said that in theory, the Vatican must respond, "even if only to reject it".

"It's an issue on which the Church, especially the Spanish Church, has never taken a stand," Sgro told AFP, adding that when Catalonia banned bullfighting in 2012, the Spanish Bishops' Conference "more or less buried" the issue.

"I believe this initiative is important, beyond these five priests who have spoken in favour, so that we can actually start thinking in terms of genuine reflection on the issue," she said.

In Spain, bullfights are often held in honour of Catholic saints, including the Virgin Mary, with priests performing religious rites during bullfights.

PETA alleges that the five Spanish priests have glorified bullfighting "including describing the bloodsport as a 'symbol of Christianity' and blasphemously comparing the killing of the bull to the sacrifice of Christ".

"Priests who preach compassion while celebrating the torment and killing of animals for amusement are contradicting the values they are ordained to represent," said PETA Senior Vice President Mimi Bekhecki in a statement.

In 2015, Pope Francis wrote in his encyclical 2015 "Laudato Si" about the environment that the ill treatment of animals was "contrary to human dignity".

In 1567, Pope Pius V issued a papal bull, or decree, largely ignored in ensuing centuries, banning bullfighting under penalty of excommunication, denouncing such events as "cruel and base spectacles of the devil and not of man".

While many countries have outlawed bullfighting, it remains legal, with some regional bans, in Ecuador, France, Mexico, Peru, Portugal, Spain, and Venezuela. *– AFP*

Mexican investigators raid storage unit rented by Thomas Markle

TIJUANA – Mexican authorities raided a storage unit rented by Meghan Markle's estranged father as part of an ongoing investigation into alleged child sex abuse material, the state prosecutor's office has told AFP.

Last week, Philippine police said they were investigating a laptop found alongside images of child abuse at a former home of Thomas Markle, whose daughter is married to Britain's Prince Harry.

The 82-year-old, who has denied all claims against him, had lived in Mexico before moving to the Philippines in 2025 and later returning to the United States.

The prosecutor's office of Mexico's Baja California state said Monday it had received an anonymous tip about the existence of child sex abuse material in a storage unit rented by Thomas Markle.

Investigators said the owner of the storage unit reported Markle had stopped paying rent for it in 2024 but his possessions remained secured inside.

Authorities reported finding "magazines from Asia" dating back 20 years, without giving further details, as well as computer equipment that has been taken in for further investigation.

British tabloid *The Sun* first reported last month that Markle's son, Thomas Markle Jr., had discovered the child abuse images while going through boxes found in his father's former home.

Meghan Markle said in a statement she was "deeply distressed" by accusations her father had possessed images of child abuse, adding she had blocked contact between him and her children over previous "troubling and disturbing" allegations.

After the reports, Meghan said that in 2018 she had seen a letter sent to London's Metropolitan Police and Royalty and Specialist Protection making similar accusations.

"It made troubling and disturbing allegations against my father, and I was given assurances that these were being investigated," she said in a statement.

Meghan Markle and Prince Harry left Britain and quit royal duties in 2020 amid a bitter royal family feud.

They made an unexpected return with their children to live in the United Kingdom in August. *– AFP*

Football cost them their life: 5 tragic cases

Football

PARIS – Tenerife striker Jesus de Miguel died yesterday as a result of injuries he suffered in a sickening collision with FC Andorra's goalkeeper in a Spanish second division match.

The 30-year-old is sadly not a unique case of a player dying either on the pitch or because of an injury sustained during the match.

AFP Sport highlights five such fatalities:

Marc-Vivien Foe, June 2003

Cameroon midfielder Foe collapsed after a heart attack during a Confederations Cup semi-final against Colombia in Lyon, France.

The former Manchester City, West Ham and Lyon player was carried from the pitch as medical staff tried to revive him with mouth-to-mouth resuscitation and oxygen.

After trying to restart his heart for 45 minutes without success he was declared dead, aged just 28.

His death prompted improvements in both the testing of footballers for heart problems and the treatment they can receive during matches, including training club medical teams in CPR and using defibrillators.

Antonio Puerta, August 2007

Spain international Puerta, 22, collapsed while playing for Sevilla in a La Liga match against Getafe and died three days later from multiple organ failure stemming from prolonged cardiac arrest.

It was three months after he had helped Sevilla to win the UEFA Cup.

Spanish legend Sergio Ramos has a tattoo tribute to Puerta and wore a T-shirt dedicated to him as Spain won the 2010 World Cup.

"Antonio has always been with me. The next game, I went out on the field with his shirt and for a long time after that, I wore one that was dedicated to him," said Ramos.

Phil O'Donnell, December 2007

The Motherwell captain died of heart failure towards the end of his side's 5-3 Scottish Premier League win over Dundee United in December 2007.

The 35-year-old midfielder collapsed just as he was about to be substituted and was treated for around five minutes on the field before being taken to a waiting ambulance.

O'Donnell played for Scotland, Celtic and Sheffield Wednesday during his career and his death caused widespread grief in Scottish football, causing a number of fixtures to be postponed.

"He was a man among boys in every sense, in his attitude, his professionalism and integrity and sincerity," his manager Mark McGhee said.

Cristiano Junior, August 2009

The 25-year-old Brazilian, who was then the highest paid footballer in India, collided with the opposing goalkeeper when he scored a goal for his club Dempo 12 minutes from time in the 2004 Federation Cup final in Bangalore.

Junior, who had moved to India to earn enough money to build a house for his mother back home, collapsed and was immediately attended to by his Nigerian strike partner Santi Martins.

Martins stayed with him until an ambulance whisked him off to hospital but he was pronounced dead on arrival having suffered cardiac arrest.

"The match continued. We played the remaining 12 minutes, received the trophy and were told of Cristiano's death only when we reached the hospital. We broke down, unable to control ourselves," his teammate and club captain Stanley Colaco told the *Times of India* in 2021.

Juan Izquierdo, August 2024

The 27-year-old Uruguayan central defender suffered cardiac arrhythmia during his club Nacional's Copa Libertadores last 16 match with Brazilian outfit Sao Paulo FC.

Taken to hospital, he died five days later of "cardio respiratory arrest associated with his cardiac arrhythmia".

His second child had only been born 10 days prior to his death. His club described his death as an "irreplaceable loss".

– AFP

Demichelis brings 'competitive aura' to Leipzig before City reunion

Daniel Wighton

BERLIN – Coach Martin Demichelis will be looking to strike a blow against his former employers when his RB Leipzig side host Manchester City in the Champions League today.

Former Argentina centre-back Demichelis spent three seasons at Manchester City, winning the 2013-14 Premier League title and two League Cups.

Demichelis, who also won four league titles as a player at Bayern Munich, is now hoping to bring success to Saxony in a budding coaching career.

Leipzig have beaten City just once in six attempts, but may feel Enzo Maresca's men are vulnerable.

In their past three games, City have lost twice and won the other match on penalties, as the spectre of sanctions for breaching financial rules looms.

Demichelis, 45, was controversially handpicked by then-Red Bull boss Jurgen Klopp to take over in the summer.

To bring in Demichelis, Leipzig sacked popular coach Ole Werner, who had taken a young team back into the Champions League, while overseeing the development of Yan Diomande.

Real Madrid paid a reported 125 million euros (US$140 million) for Diomande, just a year after Leipzig signed him for 20 million euros.

Demichelis was relegated from La Liga during a short stint with Mallorca last season but Klopp and Leipzig had seen enough to convince them of his ability, after he oversaw a significant upturn in the club's form.

After a rocky start with Leipzig including a 4-1 loss at Como in the Champions League and a 6-1 thrashing by Bayern Munich, Leipzig have won three games in a row.

The Red Bulls sit just three points off top spot in the Bundesliga, but are in desperate need of points in Europe.

The 2020 semi-finalists are 29th in the 36-team table after winning just one of three Champions League games this campaign.



Argentinian coach Martin Demichelis (left) and Leipzig's Austrian midfielder Christoph Baumgartner address a press conference at the training grounds of German first division Bundesliga football club RB Leipzig on the eve of the UEFA Champions League match against Manchester City in Leipzig, eastern Germany yesterday. – AFP

'Competitive aura'

Demichelis benefited from the tutelage of several big-name coaches, including Louis van Gaal, Manuel Pellegrini, Diego Simeone and his idol Diego Maradona.

Leipzig centre-back Maxime Esteve said Demichelis has brought a "competitive aura" to the club.

"Even in small games in training, you can see that the coach does not want to lose," Esteve told AFP and other media on Monday.

"When he misses something, you can see he's a little bit angry. You can see he stopped playing football not that long ago.

"You can see the aura of his competitiveness."

Esteve played under another former City player, Vincent Kompany, during his time at Burnley and said Demichelis reminds him of the Belgian, who is now coach of Bayern.

"It's funny because they both spend a lot of time in the gym. They want to stay fit, because they have a big history in football.

"They play in games in training and you can see they are quite competitive. They don't want to lose.

"They are really energetic and spend a lot of time at the training ground.

"They are perfectionists and want to sort out the small details as soon as they can."

Esteve also has experience defending against Manchester City talisman Erling Haaland in the Premier League.

The Frenchman acknowledged his side had played against freshly minted Ballon d'Or winner Harry Kane only two weeks ago, but called the big Norwegian "the best striker in the world".

"He's so powerful, so good with his head, so quick. He has all of the qualities to be a beast.

"So it will be a difficult game but when you want to progress in football, you have to play against the best opponents. And you want to perform in this type of game."

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

– AFP/MPD

FIFA to share documents related to World Cup private investment plan

PARIS – FIFA will allow members of its ruling Council to view "key documents" related to the aborted project to sell stakes in the World Cup to private investors, a source close to world football's governing body told AFP yesterday.

"FIFA has informed the members of its Council, including all the vice-presidents, that they will have access to key documents in relation to FIFA Forward Enterprise," the source told AFP, referring to FIFA president Gianni Infantino's FFE proposal.

Members of the Council - a total of 37 people including Infantino and eight FIFA vice-presidents - were informed on Monday in a letter sent by FIFA Secretary General Mattias Grafstrom that they must come forward "in the next two weeks" if they want to see the documents "in person and in specific conditions".

The documents can be consulted at the headquarters of world football's governing body in Zurich, Switzerland, the source added.

The move came as a November 2 deadline set by European governing body UEFA to answer a series of questions related to the FFE proposal passed on Monday.

UEFA has led the opposition to the project, which was revealed in late July and would have seen FIFA open up its premium competitions such as the World Cup to private investors.

Infantino quickly abandoned the proposal in the face of an uproar, but UEFA has gone to a court in Florida in an attempt to gather evidence for a potential complaint of "criminal mismanagement" against the FIFA president in Switzerland.

Following a FIFA Council meeting on October 15, UEFA general secretary Theodore Theodoridis sent a letter to Grafstrom with a list of over 40 questions and requests for information related to FFE.

It also raised other issues such as the decision to award a FIFA Peace Prize to Trump and the decision to suspend a red card shown to United States player Folarin Balogun at the World Cup following an intervention by the US President.

FIFA did not respond to UEFA before the deadline, arguing that this was "impractical".

Infantino is standing for re-election as FIFA president next March.

The deadline for rival candidates to declare themselves is November 18, but UEFA has so far not been able to find a credible challenger to put forward.

Infantino was handed a major boost when the Asian Football Confederation announced on October 23 that it was backing him for re-election.

CONCACAF chief Victor Montagliani was mooted as a candidate, but the Canadian has announced his desire to stand for a new term as the head of the North American confederation, meaning he is unlikely to challenge Infantino.

Ramon Vega, the former Tottenham Hotspur, Celtic and Switzerland defender, has stated a willingness to stand but it remains to be seen if he will get the necessary support. *– AFP*

Eala defies last-minute switch to launch HK title bid

Tennis

Alex Eala threw off the shock of a last-minute change of opponent to launch her Hong Kong Open title bid with a straight-sets win yesterday.

The Philippines trailblazer, now at a career-high of 17 in the world, beat Australia's Emerson Jones 6-4, 6-3.

Eala faces Tereza Valentova of the Czech Republic in the last 16.

The 21-year-old Eala, who this year became the first Filipina to win a WTA Tour title, was scheduled to play Alycia Parks in her opening match.

But the American pulled out at the 11th hour with injury, giving the 18-year-old lucky loser Jones the opportunity of an upset.

Eala took the late switch in her stride, and with backing from a large number of her compatriots in the crowd, got the job done in 83 minutes.

"I'm definitely not used to my opponent changing that late," said Eala, the second seed.

"It was just a new experience. I guess that's the tour, you kind of have to be ready for anything."

Eala said that Hong Kong feels like a home tournament.

"I've been competing here ever since I was very young. I've been here many, many times," she said.

"There's a huge Filipino community, and the Hong Kong community has been very hospitable towards me, my family, my team, and all of the players.

"Besides it being geographically very close to home, it feels very familiar."

Also into the last 16 was top seed Sorana Cirstea of Romania, who needed three tough sets to battle past Maria Timofeeva 7-6 (8/6), 1-6, 7-5.

– AFP



Alexandra Eala of the Philippines hits a return during the women's singles round of 32 match against Emerson Jones of Australia at Hong Kong Tennis Open in Hong Kong, yesterday. – Xinhua

Giro d'Italia to tackle 3 motor-racing circuits in 2027

Cycling

ROME – Giro d'Italia organisers RCS revealed yesterday a "particularly tough" route for the race's 110th edition in 2017, taking in three motor racing circuits.

The quest to succeed Giro champion Jonas Vingegaard begins in Trieste on May 8 and will end in Rome on May 30 following more than 3,400 kilometres and over 50,000 metres of elevation gain.

It will have passages around the Mugello and Monza motor racing circuits, as well as the Misano Adriatico, where the fourth stage on May 11 will end.

There will be two individual time-trials, like the 2027 Tour de France, and a penultimate stage taking in the mighty Monte Zoncolan.

It will be a mountainous conclusion to the race, with the highest point, the 2,618m Passo di Gavia, crested on the 16th stage and a brutal 18th stage with the Madonna di Campiglio coming after two trips up the Passo Durone.

After two successive starts abroad – in Albania and Bulgaria – next year's race begins in Italy but the second stage will be ridden entirely in neighbouring Slovenia – home to the 2024 champion and five-time Tour de France winner Tadej Pogacar.

He is unlikely to be on the start line as he targets a record-breaking sixth Tour success, but French starlet Paul Seixas said recently he had not decided which of the main two Grand Tours to ride next year.

The first six stages lend to breakaways and sprint finishes but the seventh stage will see the overall contenders battle it out in a mountainous 19.6km time-trial, ending with a 12.5km-long climb.

The Giro d'Italia Women will begin in Viareggio, Tuscany on May 29, ending in a mountainous ninth stage in Val d'Aoste on June 6.

It will cover 1,132km with 17,450m of elevation gain, significantly more than the 12,500m of the 2026 edition.

The successor to Demi Vollering will no doubt be decided during the final two mountainous stages, an 11km individual time-trial followed by the Val d'Aoste finale.

– AFP

China's Liu Lili wins 2nd gold at Youth Olympics

DAKAR - China's Liu Lili claimed her second gold medal at the 2026 Youth Olympic Games, winning the women's solo coastal beach sprint at Saly Beach West yesterday.

Liu, who had partnered with Su Juntao to win the mixed double sculls on Monday for China's first gold of the Games, led throughout to win in 2:39.65.

Germany's Carolina Guerra Gonzalez finished 14.23 seconds adrift of Liu in second place, while Spain's Blanca Lopez Varela claimed the bronze medal. *– Xinhua*

China's Lin claims 1st ever wushu gold at Youth Olympics

DAKAR – Chinese athlete Lin Yilei claimed the gold medal in men's changquan combined at the Dakar Youth Olympic Games yesterday, securing the first-ever wushu gold medal in YOG history. *– Xinhua*

Medal Tally

Rank	National				
1	CHN	3	2		5
2	RUS	2	1		3
3	JPN	2			2
4	RSA	1	2	1	4
5	CRO	1	1		2
5	GER	1	1		2
5	NZL	1	1		2
8	ARG	1		2	3
9	EGY	1		1	2
9	FRA	1		1	2
11	AZE	1			1
11	ECU	1			1
11	KAZ	1			1
11	KSA	1			1
11	SLO	1			1
11	TUR	1			1
11	UKR	1			1
18	IRI		2	1	3
19	ESP		1	1	2
19	GRE		1	1	2
19	INA		1	1	2
19	IND		1	1	2
31	TPE			1	1

Russell says 'tough to deal with' after failed F1 title bid

F1

LONDON – George Russell has "spoken from the heart" to admit it was "tough to deal" with seeing his Formula One title bid disintegrate.

The Briton's Mercedes team-mate Kimi Antonelli became the sport's youngest world champion and Italy's first since 1953 on Sunday in Mexico City.

Mercedes were fined for allowing Russell, the clear pre-season favourite, to skip his post-race media duties having left the track early.

Russell's disappointing campaign was in stark contrast to the 20-year-old Antonelli's historic year.

"Now feels like a pretty suitable moment to speak from the heart," Russell wrote on Instagram late Monday.

"This season started off exactly how I had hoped but it very quickly unravelled with tough luck and poor performances.

"It's been the first proper season of my career where I've had more bad days than good.

"Has it been tough to deal with? Yes, very.

"Has it been tough to pick myself up week in, week out? Yes, very.

"Confusion at times? Often.

"All I know is that I've given it my all and 2026 was not meant to be my year."

In a campaign that was supposed to be all about Russell, the 28-year-old was upstaged by Antonelli and sits fourth in the championship.

Team boss Toto Wolff said Mercedes had let him down with an unresponsive car.

Russell was at pains to congratulate Antonelli for what he called "an absolutely incredible season".

"You truly deserve the championship," he added, and vowed to come back stronger in 2027.

"I will be giving my absolute all to rediscover the performance I have been capable of producing for the majority of my career and fingers crossed a little bit of luck returns," he said. *– AFP*

Tehran residents seek refuge from gloom at cafés

Sebastien Ricci and Ahmad Parhizi

TEHRAN – Iranians are flocking to stylish cafés in the capital, as they look for respite from soaring inflation and the spectre of renewed war with the United States.

"Cafés offer a chance to unwind, to escape the stress of exorbitant prices, war and anxiety-inducing news," said Mitra Alipour, celebrating her birthday at a coffee shop in Tehran.

Since the start of the Middle East conflict, triggered in late February by US-Israeli airstrikes, "everything has become more expensive", the 28-year-old told AFP.

She regrets that she can no longer travel or afford a new phone, but she can at least get a coffee.

"How do I know if I'll still be able to afford it next year? So I tell myself I'll make the most of it and treat myself, while I still can," she added.

In downtown Tehran, cafés are constantly packed – a striking sight for a country grappling with Western sanctions and an economic slump exacerbated by the war.

Washington has imposed sanctions on Tehran since the 1979 Islamic Revolution toppled the US-backed shah, and more recently has applied further economic pressure.

Yet upscale cafés near shopping malls stocked with Western products remain a common sight along Fereshteh Street, in the city's north.

As night falls, groups of young people and couples head to cafés to unwind and socialise, just metres from Valiasr Avenue, known as the Champs-Élysées of Tehran.

Headscarves are less conspicuous among women in these fashionable neighbourhoods, despite compulsory hijab rules introduced after the revolution established clerical rule.

'No other entertainment'

Cafés "have become a gathering spot", said Alireza Ashouri, a 22-year-old medical student in Tehran.

"There is no other entertainment," he added from an establishment that he visits "two or three times a week, often in the evening, and sometimes to study".

Fatemeh Hosseinzadeh, a 38-year-old English teacher still living with her parents, goes to cafés to escape.

"It's a safe place where no one bothers me. I settle in there for two hours and disconnect from work, from home and from all my worries," she said.

According to officials, the Iranian capital is home to some 3,000 cafés, a recent phenomenon that has become widespread over the last decade.

Amir-Hossein Manafi, 24, a student, said he visits cafés "three to four times a week, usually after class".

As he enjoyed his iced mocktail, thumping electronic music played while a group of women laughed at a nearby table at Lova café in affluent northern Tehran.

"Drinking coffee has now become an integral part of our culture," said Parsa Nobaghi, who opened Lova two years ago.

"Today, Tehran is teeming with cafés. You can find one or two on every street corner."

'Full every single day'

The economic crisis and soaring prices have not stopped new cafes from popping up in major cities.

Their decor ranges from refined to retro, while chains like Raees and Lamiz draw some inspiration from Western brands such as Starbucks.

"At a café, you talk about all sorts of things. You discuss changes in people's lives and lifestyles, as well as societal problems," Manafi told AFP.

The café craze remains strong, even as many Iranians fear that hostilities with the US and Israel could resume.

One waiter, who preferred to remain anonymous, was surprised to see the café "full every single day", even during the worst of the attacks on the capital.

Yet not everyone can afford a visit, as high inflation – 89 percent in September – and the depreciation of the rial have turned a cup of coffee into a luxury for many Iranians.

The average price of an espresso has more than tripled over the past two years, reaching around 2.5 million rials, around US$1 at the current exchange rate.

That is a considerable sum in a country where the minimum wage stands at around US$65. *– AFP*



British-American fashion editor and media executive Anna Wintour, 77, poses on the sidelines of the CFDA Fashion Awards at The Museum of Natural History in New York on Monday. – AFP

World Weather

CHINA	ASIA-PACIFIC	WORLD	LUSOPHONE
Beijing 4°C~15°C	Manila 22°C~33°C	New York 15°C~23°C	Lisbon 9°C~21°C
Shanghai 15°C~20°C	Bangkok 25°C~34°C	London 8°C~12°C	Rio de Janeiro 23°C~29°C
Hong Kong 23°C~28°C	Tokyo 12°C~17°C	Frankfurt 2°C~11°C	Luanda 24°C~28°C
Taipei 20°C~30°C	Singapore 25°C~33°C	Vancouver 9°C~13°C	Maputo 21°C~31°C
Guangzhou 21°C~29°C	Kuala Lumpur 23°C~33°C	Paris 1°C~10°C	Dili 22°C~34°C
Nanjing 13°C~19°C	Jakarta 24°C~35°C	Moscow 0°C~3°C	São Tomé 24°C~32°C
Guilin 17°C~27°C	Seoul 10°C~18°C	Las Vegas 9°C~21°C	Praia 23°C~30°C
Xi'an 6°C~18°C	Sydney 16°C~24°C	Monte Carlo 13°C~17°C	Bissau 24°C~34°C

Kennedy Center names Paul Anka, Andy Garcia among 2026 honorees

WASHINGTON, DC – The Kennedy Center, the famed Washington arts hub that President Donald Trump has sought to overhaul, on Monday named singer Paul Anka and actor Andy Garcia among five honorees recognised for lifetime artist contributions.

Composer and producer David Foster, playwright David Mamet and musician Barbara Mandrell were also listed as recipients of the Kennedy Center Honors, one of the United States' highest arts awards.

This year's ceremony will for the first time be hosted at Washington's Capital One Arena rather than the Kennedy Center, which has been shuttered since September amid a legal battle over renovations.

The Kennedy Center – inaugurated in 1971 following the assassination of US president John F. Kennedy – is also the target of Trump's contested effort to rename it the Trump-Kennedy Center.

Trump hosted last year's awards programme, which included "Rocky" actor Sylvester Stallone, country singer George Strait, disco legend Gloria Gaynor and rock band KISS.

The Kennedy Center had long enjoyed bipartisan support before Trump appointed himself board chairman in February 2025, pledging to end "woke political programming" at the site.

A host of artists cancelled concerts at the venue in response to Trump's takeover, while US media has reported that Kennedy Center ticket sales have plummeted. *– AFP*

Italy takes new look at five-decade-old murder of filmmaker Pasolini

ROME – Italian prosecutors have re-opened an investigation into the 1975 murder of writer and filmmaker Pier Paolo Pasolini, the lawyer who made the request has told AFP.

Stefano Maccioni, who had been asking for a fresh investigation for years, told AFP on Monday he hoped the new inquiry "would put an end to this story once and for all".

"I appeal to anyone who knows things about this case who has not had the courage to come forward to do so now," he said.

Pasolini, a leading left-wing intellectual, was found dead on a beach outside Rome on November 2, 1975.

A 17-year-old male prostitute, Giuseppe "Pino" Pelosi, was stopped while running away from the filmmaker's car and admitted killing him, saying Pasolini tried to rape him.

Pelosi was jailed for nearly 10 years, but in 2005 he recanted his confession, instead blaming three unnamed men with Sicilian accents.

Maccioni said DNA tests had shown there were other people at the crime scene and Pelosi himself may not have been present. The lawyer urged prosecutors to "put together the pieces of the puzzle".

In the years since Pasolini died, theories have swirled about why he was killed, ranging from blackmail to a hit by the far-right or mafia.

Pasolini lived his life unafraid of controversy as he took aim at bourgeois values, Catholic censorship and the threat of neo-fascism, while exposing the hardships of life through an often unbearably grim lens.

His last movie, "Salò or the 120 Days of Sodom", a critique of Fascist Italy which was released after his death, caused outrage because of its graphic depiction of violence and sexual abuse. *– 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 has announced.

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 on Sunday.

"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*



Sun Ruirui of China competes on Astral Z during the equestrian jumping individual qualifier round A at the Dakar 2026 Summer Youth Olympic Games in Diamniadio, Senegal, yesterday. - Xinhua



The gold medal of Mana Ishikawa of Japan, is photographed at the awarding ceremony of the women's 200m breaststroke final at the Dakar 2026 Youth Olympic Games in Dakar, Senegal, on Monday. - Xinhua



Sacha Leroy (right) of France vies with Jake Dave of South Africa during the rugby sevens men's gold medal match between France and South Africa at Dakar 2026 Summer Youth Olympic Games in Dakar, Senegal, on Monday. - Xinhua



Liu Lili (front) of China hugs Guilloton Elisa of France after the women's solo last 16 knockout 2 match of the rowing coastal beach sprints between Liu Lili of China and Guilloton Elisa of France at the Dakar 2026 Summer Youth Olympic Games in Saly, south of Dakar, Senegal, on Monday. - Xinhua



Players of Australia comfort players of China after the rugby sevens women's pool A match between China and Australia at Dakar 2026 Summer Youth Olympic Games in Dakar, Senegal, on Monday. - Xinhau



Albertus Nel of South Africa is stretchered off during the rugby sevens men's gold medal match against France at Dakar 2026 Summer Youth Olympic Games in Dakar, Senegal, on Monday. - Xinhua