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Govt inks 6-year pacts with city's 2 public bus operators

10 pct of buses must be pure e-vehicles from 2032

Tony Wong

The government has signed six-year service agreements with the city's two public bus operators – Transmac and TCM – which will start on January 1, 2027, and are scheduled to end on December 31, 2032, according to which at least 10 percent of their respective fleets must be pure e-buses from January 1, 2032.

The two companies' current six-year service agreements, which started on January 1, 2021, are scheduled to expire on December 31 this year.

The two new agreements were published in the Official Gazette (BO) yesterday.

Currently, most of the city's public buses are extended-range e-vehicles.

According to specialist websites, extended-range electric vehicles have a plug-in battery pack and an electric motor, as well as an internal combustion engine. The electric motor is used for driving the wheels, while the internal combustion engine is only used as a generator to recharge the battery when it is depleted.



A Transmac bus (right) and a TCM bus (left) stop at the traffic light-controlled crossing outside the Municipal Affairs Bureau (IAM) headquarters on Avenida de Almeida Ribeiro, the city's main thoroughfare, yesterday. – Photo: Tony Wong

While pure e-vehicles are exclusively powered by an on-board battery pack, thereby generating zero emissions, extended-range e-vehicles still generate minimal emissions as they are equipped with a small internal combustion engine used as a generator to recharge the battery.

According to the latest available data on the website of the Transport Bureau (DSAT), at the end of the second quarter of this year, the two public bus operators had 964 vehicles in service, comprising 24 diesel buses, 25 natural gas buses, 911 extended-range e-buses, and four pure e-buses.

Natural gas buses, extended-range e-buses, and pure e-buses are all officially classified as new energy vehicles (NEVs); 97.5 percent of the city's public buses were NEVs at the end of the second quarter.

According to the two agreements gazetted yesterday, the two public bus operators must ensure that at least five percent of their respective buses will be pure e-vehicles from January 1, 2030, and at least 10 percent of their respective buses will be pure e-vehicles from January 1, 2032.

Interchange discounts with LRT

Moreover, the new agreements require the two public bus companies to establish a fare system connected to the Light Rapid Transit (LRT), enabling passengers to enjoy interchange fare discounts between public bus and LRT rides.

The modus operandi of the interchange fare discounts will be drawn up by the government.

Community representatives have been calling for the implementation of fare discounts for rides between the two means of public transport with the aim of encouraging more residents to choose to use the LRT when out and about.

In 2025, according to official statistics, TCM and Transmac carried a record total of 231 million passengers – a daily average of 636,000 passengers, an increase of 1.81 percent from 2024.

The daily average number of public bus passengers during the first six months of this year stood at 665,100, a year-on-year increase of 6.12 percent. ■



A staff member takes a selfie with a photo-taking robot at the media center of the 9th China International Import Expo (CIIE) in Shanghai yesterday. The expo will be held from today to next Wednesday. (More on p.7) – Xinhua

Voters in US capital say 'oui' to foie gras ban

WASHINGTON, DC – The production and sale of foie gras is set to become illegal in Washington after voters in the US capital overwhelmingly backed a measure banning the controversial gourmet food item.

The ban however could face possible delays or be overturned, with media reports saying foie gras producers and restaurants are likely to challenge it in court.

Initiative 86, as the referendum is known, won 73 percent of the vote on Tuesday, according to provisional results. It bars the force-feeding of birds to enlarge their livers as well as the sale of any product resulting from the practice.

Activists say that the production of foie gras is torturous to ducks and geese.

Washington currently has no farms or facilities producing the classic French delicacy, but restaurants that serve it could face fines of US$1,000 to US$5,000 as well as a suspension of their operating licence.

Celebrity chef José Andrés, who owns several restaurants in the capital, was among several high-profile critics of the effort.

"So we are banning all meats?" Andrés said in October. "Let's concentrate on things that matter... cars with children are being shot by ICE, immigrants working in farms and restaurants being deported many with green cards and even citizens... so many other issues!"

Distribution of foie gras has already been banned statewide in California and in the US cities of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, and Portland, Oregon.

A 2019 attempt by New York City to ban foie gras has yet to take effect because of protracted legal battles.

New York state is home to the two main foie gras producers in the United States.

"Should governments have the power to say what we're allowed to eat? That's really the question here," Jordan Grinor, director of Hudson Valley Farms, told AFP in September.

– AFP

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Wang Yi calls for new 'golden decade' of Lancang-Mekong cooperation

Foreign Minister Wang Yi yesterday called on the six Lancang-Mekong countries to build on their fruitful cooperation in the past 10 years and jointly usher in a new "golden decade." *– Story on p. 6*

US voters deliver harsh verdict on Trump in midterms

Donald Trump faced a radically transformed and hostile political landscape yesterday after US voters handed control of Congress to the Democrats in a stunning rebuke to his presidency. *– Story on p. 7*

Pope Leo's Argentina visit: consolation for Francis no-show

Pope Leo XIV's upcoming trip to Argentina, the first papal visit in 39 years, is a sort of consolation prize for the homeland of predecessor Francis, who disappointed his compatriots by never returning as pontiff. *– Story on p. 12*

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Elderly man loses 2 million patacas in investment scam: police

Sherwin Hng

An elderly local man has reportedly lost approximately 2.029 million patacas in an online stock investment scam after making multiple bank transfers and handing over cash in person, Judiciary Police (PJ) spokeswoman Leong Sok Man said during a regular press conference yesterday.

According to Leong, the victim befriended a woman on a social media platform on September 7. She subsequently persuaded him to invest in online stocks, promising lucrative returns, and sent him a QR code to download an investment application and open an account.



Judiciary Police (PJ) spokeswoman Leong Sok Man looks on during yesterday's regular press conference. – Photo: Armindo Neves

Between September 12 and October 28, the victim made several transfers totalling 575,000 yuan from his mainland Chinese online banking account to a mainland bank account provided by the woman, purportedly for investment purposes, Leong added.

The woman later instructed him to make cash payments instead. Between October 28 and 30, the victim handed over a total of HK$1.3 million to an unidentified Southeast Asian-looking man on a daily basis near his residence in the northern district.

The victim only became suspicious after discussing the investment with his family. He subsequently reported the case to the police, claiming total losses equivalent to about 2.029 million patacas, Leong said.

The case has been transferred to the PJ's Investigation Department for follow-up. ■

Woman in wheelchair in ICU after hit by bus: police

Armindo Neves

A Public Security Police Force (PSP) spokesman confirmed to the *Post* last night that a woman in a wheelchair was admitted to the public hospital's emergency ward after being hit by a bus yesterday morning.

According to the spokesman, the Public Security Police Force received a report of a traffic accident on Rua do Visconde Paço de Arcos (巴素打爾古街) at 10:53 a.m. yesterday. Upon arrival, officers found that a local woman in her nineties, who was in a wheelchair, had been hit by a Transmac bus at a pedestrian crossing with traffic lights, the spokesman said, adding that the woman was trapped under the bus and injured.

She was rescued by firefighters and immediately rushed to the public Conde de São Januário Hospital Centre (CHSCJ).

A Fire Services Bureau (CB) spokesman also confirmed to the *Post* last night that the woman, aged 97, suffered contusions to her neck, back, and waist, a laceration to the back of her left hand, abrasions to her right calf, and a suspected fracture.



This photo downloaded from social media platform Facebook yesterday shows a female victim lying under the bus and her wheelchair lying in front of it after yesterday morning's crash near Hotel Ponte 16. The Post *cannot vouch for its authenticity.*

The PSP spokesman said the bus driver, a local man in his thirties, passed a breathalyser test, adding that the exact cause of the accident was still under investigation.

The spokesman also said that as of around 5:00 p.m. yesterday, the victim was found to have sustained multiple fractures and needed to be hospitalised for surgery.

A Transmac spokeswoman said that the bus was travelling along Rua do Visconde Paço de Arcos (towards Patane district) when, near the Ponte 16 bus stop, a review of video footage showed that after the pedestrian traffic light turned red, the nonagenarian moved from the left front blind spot of the bus into the road. The bus driver, moving off slowly, failed to notice her in time, resulting in the front of the bus colliding with the wheelchair user, the spokesperson said, adding that no passengers were injured in the incident. ■

7 residents lose 2.4 million patacas to fake 'Douyin customer service' scams in 4 days: police

Sherwin Hng

The Judiciary Police (PJ) have received seven separate reports of scams involving fraudsters impersonating Douyin customer service representatives, with the seven local victims losing a combined 2.436 million patacas, Judiciary Police (PJ) spokeswoman Leong Sok Man said during a regular press conference yesterday.

According to Leong, the victims, comprising four men and three women aged between their 20s and middle age, reported the cases between October 30 and November 2. Individual losses ranged from 2,249 patacas to 2.1 million patacas.

Leong noted that the scammers followed a similar modus operandi, calling victims while posing as "official" Douyin customer service representatives. They falsely claimed that the victims' free livestreaming accounts were about to expire and that a monthly service fee of 800 yuan would automatically be deducted from their bank accounts.

The scammers then offered to help cancel the purported subscription and directed victims to access suspicious websites through their browsers.

When the victims failed to complete the procedures, the scammers instructed them to download unfamiliar third-party applications and enable screen-sharing functions on their mobile phones. This allowed the fraudsters to remotely access their devices and obtain banking details, verification codes, and transaction passwords before transferring all the money out of their accounts, Leong added.

Leong said the largest loss involved a middle-aged local woman who received a fraudulent call last Tuesday and was persuaded to follow the scammers' instructions. She only realised she had been defrauded on Saturday and subsequently reported the case to the police.

The cases have been referred to the PJ's Investigation Department for follow-up.

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

Oct temperatures hit record high as monsoon set to bring cooler weather this weekend: SMG

Khalel Vallo

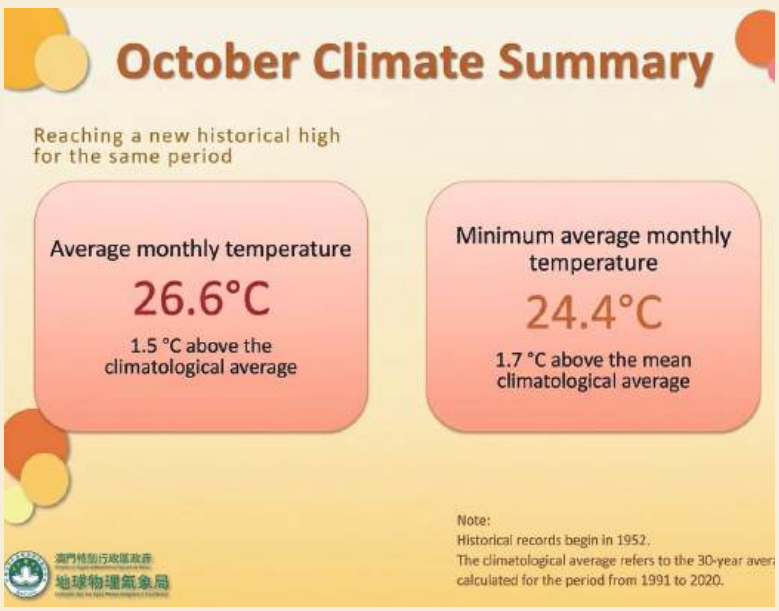
Macau recorded its warmest October since 1952, with both the monthly average temperature and average minimum temperature reaching new highs, while the Meteorological and Geophysical Bureau (SMG) yesterday forecast several days of cloudy skies and showers before a northeast monsoon brings cooler conditions over the weekend.

The local observatory said that October's average temperature was 26.6 degrees Celsius, 1.5 degrees above the climatological average, the statement said, adding that the monthly average minimum temperature reached 24.4 degrees, 1.7 degrees above the average.

The statement said that it was the highest temperatures recorded for October since records began in 1952, against a backdrop of global warming and an exceptionally strong El Niño event*.

A very strong or "super" El Niño is underway, according to a statement by the World Meteorological Organisation (WMO) in June. It is projected to peak between late this year and early next year, with a high probability of ranking among the strongest weather events recorded since 1950.

The local observatory attributed the warmer conditions to a weaker-than-usual northeast monsoon affecting Macau last month, together with the influence of an upper-level anticyclone, the statement said.



This infographic provided by the local observatory yesterday shows its October climate summary. Translation from Portuguese was arranged by the Post.

For the next two to three days, an easterly airflow is expected to affect the coast of southern China, bringing mostly cloudy skies and a few showers to Macau, yesterday's statement said, adding that residents are advised to monitor weather updates and carry umbrellas when going out.

A northeast monsoon is forecast to reach the Guangdong coast over the weekend, bringing stronger winds and a drop in temperature, the statement noted, underlining that the daytime heat is expected to ease, while mornings and evenings will become cooler.

The observatory said that the minimum temperature next Tuesday could fall to around 19 degrees Celsius. Residents, particularly older people, young children and those in poor health, are advised to wear an extra light jacket when going out early or returning home late, the statement noted. ■

**El Niño is a natural climate pattern where trade winds in the tropical Pacific Ocean weaken or reverse, causing unusually warm water to build up in the central and eastern Pacific. The term El Niño comes from Spanish, translating literally to "the little boy" or "the newborn Christ Child". "La Niña" is the direct counterpart to El Niño. Translating to "the little girl," it represents the periodic cooling of ocean surface temperatures in the central and eastern equatorial Pacific. – Gemini*

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MacauPOST

Macau Weather

CLOUDY APART FROM SUNNY INTERVALS.
A FEW RAIN PATCHES AT FIRST.
FORCE 2 TO 4 EAST TO SOUTHEASTERLY WINDS.
RELATIVE HUMIDITY WILL RANGE BETWEEN 75% AND 95%.

25ºC~28ºC

Source: SMG

UTM awards AHLEI certificates to hospitality trainees





Macao Tourism University (UTM) Rector Fanny Vong Chuk Kwan (left) and Macao Government Tourism Office (MGTO) Deputy Director Cheng Wai Tong address the American Hotel & Lodging Educational Institute's (AHLEI) international certification awards ceremony on UTM's Mong-Ha campus yesterday. – Photos: Khalel Vallo

Khalel Vallo

The public Macao University of Tourism (UTM), the Labour Affairs Bureau (DSAL) and the Macao Government Tourism Office (MGTO) jointly held a certificate presentation ceremony yesterday for trainees who completed the American Hotel & Lodging Educational Institute's (AHLEI) international certification courses, for 175 training places across five course areas and two additional industry classes.

The ceremony took place on UTM's Mong-Ha campus, recognising participants who completed the courses and passed the assessments. Graduates received certificates jointly signed by the three organisers, as well as internationally recognised qualifications issued by AHLEI.

According to a statement by the public university yesterday, the five course areas covered housekeeping operations management, managing front office operations, supervision and management in the hospitality industry, marketing for the hospitality industry, and food and beverage management. Two additional classes in housekeeping operations management and hospitality supervision and management were introduced in response to demand from industry practitioners, the statement noted.

Addressing the ceremony, UTM Rector Fanny Vong Chuk Kwan said in a speech that the programme marked further alignment between Macau's tourism talent development and international professional standards. She said that the university would continue integrating tourism education, professional training and international certification, while combining teaching and research resources to provide a high-level training and assessment platform.

Vong noted that UTM organised more than 60 international certification courses and assessments during the 2025/26 academic year, with over 1,000 participations, adding that international qualifications could help trainees strengthen their professional skills and broaden their career prospects, while improving the competitiveness of Macau's tourism and hospitality workforce.

DSAL Director Chan Un Tong said in a speech that his bureau would continue to work with higher education institutions and enterprises to provide more high-quality, internationally recognised training and certification programmes in line with the government's "1+4" diversified economic development strategy.

Meanwhile, MGTO Deputy Director Cheng Wai Tong said in a speech that the courses aimed to strengthen practitioners' professional knowledge, improve service standards and align local practices with international standards, supporting the development of new "Tourism+" offerings.

The statement said that it would continue collaborating with the two government entities to develop more diverse and high-quality international certification courses, supporting the development of Macau as a World Centre of Tourism and Leisure and the advancement of local industry talent. ■

Over 30 firms offer 230 opportunities at UM's Hengqin autumn career and internship fair

Rui Pastorin

The University of Macau (UM) recently held its 2026/2027 Autumn Career and Internship Fair for Technology and Engineering at the first phase of the Macao-Hengqin International Education (University) Town, bringing together 30 companies that provided close to 230 internship and employment opportunities across related fields, according to a statement by the university yesterday.

The statement did not reveal the exact date of the fair.

The event, jointly organised by the university's Faculty of Information Science and Computing and the Faculty of Engineering, was focused on technological R&D and engineering applications, with AI, integrated circuits, software development, and network engineering among the variety of areas available to applicants, the statement pointed out.

The statement added that applicants got to explore opportunities in the job-matching area, while services including how to enhance one's résumé, among others, were provided with the aim of increasing students' job market competitiveness.

The statement pointed out that both of UM's faculties that organised the event will "continue to collaborate with leading enterprises in the GBA, providing students with expanded career development opportunities, promoting talent mobility between Macau and Hengqin, and facilitating collaborative innovation of technology and engineering industries in the region, thereby injecting new momentum into the country's high-quality development". ■



This photo provided by the University of Macau (UM) yesterday shows various attendees exploring the opportunities on offer at the recently held 2026/2027 Autumn Career and Internship Fair for Technology and Engineering in Hengqin.



Photo taken by Armindo Neves on Saturday at the Centre of Educational Resources of the Education and Youth Development Bureau (DSEDJ) opposite S. Francisco Garden.



Exhibition highlights distinction between algorithms and souls

Armindo Neves

The Art Teacher Communication Association of Macau (ATCA) is holding a month-long exhibition at the Centre of Educational Resources' Exhibition Gallery of the Education and Youth Development Bureau (DSEDJ) near S. Francisco Garden, which runs until November 21.

According to a press statement released to the *Post* recently, in an era of rapid technological iteration where artificial intelligence (AI) frequently defines modern life, the exhibition takes "ÀI" as its theme. This draws attention back to the most primal and profound of meanings - "love" (ài in Pinyin) - while also standing for "Art & Intuition".

The statement noted that the exhibition aims to emphasise that creation is not a cold, impersonal algorithm, but rather perception and intuition drawn from the depths of the soul. It added that when artistic creation settles once more and returns to the inner self, every flowing line and every sweep of colour becomes a sincere emotion distilled by teachers through their life experience.

In an interview last week, exhibition curator and ATCA President Kuong Ka Kin told the *Post* that the exhibition takes "ÀI" as its theme in the hope of offering the public a calm point of reflection amid the overwhelming AI hype.

"This wordplay conveys the association's artistic stance: art is inseparable from intuition, and the foundation of art has always been 'love'," Kuong said.

He added that while AI can rapidly generate perfect images through big data, it has no breath, no sense of pain, no feeling, and no thrill in the face of life's impermanence.

"Intuition and emotion are precisely the last line of defence of the human soul in the AI era," Kuong said, noting that every hesitant brushstroke and every breath-like flow of colour represent a creator's unique life experience. "Technology will always be a tool, while the soul of art will always lie in human warmth."

Kuong noted that all the exhibitors are teachers. He explained that by day, teachers convey aesthetics from the podium and guide children to see the world; late at night, when all is quiet, the association's members transform into creators. He added that this duality is not a conflict, but rather a source of mutual nourishment.

In the works on display, the teachers have poured their recent reflections on life and their understanding of the world unreservedly into their pieces. Teaching keeps members sensitive to the world, and this experience of passing on knowledge has, in turn, given the teachers' artistic creation greater depth and humanistic concern. Kuong said this shift in identity has inspired members with a realisation: only teachers who continue to create can truly deliver an aesthetic education that possesses soul and depth.

The association was established 18 years ago and has held more than 18 exhibitions at the gallery. Kuong described the venue as being like an old friend with whom there is a deep rapport - even like "home".

Supported by the Cultural Development Fund (FDC) and the Education and Youth Development Bureau (DSEDJ), the exhibition aims to bring new thinking to visual arts education, cultivating students' aesthetic judgement, critical thinking, and emotional expression so that aesthetic education can return to its humanistic foundations and ignite true creativity within every child.







Sands China donates 1 million patacas to UTMDF

Rui Pastorin

Integrated resort operator Sands China has donated 1.0 million patacas to the Macao University of Tourism Development Foundation (UTMDF) during a signing ceremony held on Tuesday on the public university's Taipa campus on Avenida Padre Tomás Pereira (徐日昇寅公馬路).

The event was the fourth in a series of donation ceremonies with integrated tourism and leisure enterprises, with the prior three being MGM, Melco Resorts & Entertainment, and Galaxy Entertainment Group (GEG).

According to a statement on Tuesday, the donation agreement was signed by UTMDF Executive Committee Chair Cheung Kin Chung and Sands China Executive Vice Chairman Wilfred Wong Ying-wai, adding that the donation will support the university's academic development and institutional advancement such as "optimising the learning environment, enhancing teaching and research quality, and expanding international cooperation".

During his speech on Tuesday, Cheung, as summarised by the statement, highlighted Sands China as having "consistently placed the nurturing of local talent at the core of its corporate social responsibility, and has long supported youth development and higher education in Macau".

He added that the donation will "further deepen industry education integration, foster closer alignment between academic learning and industry needs, cultivate a steady stream of cultural and tourism talent for Macau, and build a robust high quality talent pipeline".

Moreover, Wong noted in his speech, which was also summarised by the statement, that "as the largest integrated resort operator in Macau, Sands China firmly believes that talent is the cornerstone of industry advancement and urban development".

The statement also quoted Wong as pointing that the company's support for the Macao University of Tourism not only reflects its commitment to advancing education in Macau, but also underscores its dedication to talent development as a strategic priority. ■



This handout photo taken on Tuesday and provided by the Macao University of Tourism (UTM) yesterday shows Sands China Executive Vice Chairman Wilfred Wong Ying Wai (left) and Macao University of Tourism Development Foundation (UTMDF) Executive Committee Chair Cheung Kin Chung posing with the donation agreement signed during the ceremony held at the Forward Building of the public university's Taipa campus.

Govt targets removal of over 100 of 40,000 road manhole covers



Central District Community Service Consultative Council Deputy Convenor Pui Seng In (left) and Councillor Leong Chon Kit pose during yesterday's press briefing after the government-appointed council's closed-door meeting at the Patane Municipal Market Complex (沙梨頭街市市政綜合大樓). *– Photos: Ida Cheong*



This photo taken in June shows several drainage manhole covers along Travessa da Ribeira.

Ida Cheong

Public Works Bureau (DSOP), Transport Bureau (DSAT), Environmental Protection Bureau (DSPA), and Macao Post and Telecommunications Bureau (CTT) officials revealed yesterday that Macau has nearly 40,000 manhole covers on drivable road surfaces, alongside roughly 48,000 drainage manhole covers. Aiming to improve driving comfort and enhance street aesthetics, the government's road work coordination group projects a total reduction of over 100 manhole covers across completed, ongoing, and planned road projects.

The officials confirmed the figure during a meeting with members of the government-appointed Central District Community Service Consultative Council at the Patane Municipal Market Complex (沙梨頭街市市政綜合大樓).

Briefing reporters after yesterday's closed-door meeting, Pui Seng In, a deputy convenor of the government-appointed council, noted that roadway manhole covers serve six major utility networks, including electricity, gas, and telecommunications, while drainage manhole covers target stormwater, sewage, and recycled water.

According to the coordination group, eight designated engineering projects are expected to eliminate more than 100 manhole covers in total. Manhole reduction initiatives carried out alongside pipe-laying projects on Avenida Wai Long (偉龍馬路), Governador Nobre de Carvalho Bridge (known as the "Old Bridge"), and Rua da Palmeira (麻子街) have already successfully removed over 10 manhole covers, fellow council member Leong Chon Kit noted.

Leong did not say when the removel of the over 100 manhole covers is slated to be completed.

Furthermore, Leong pointed out that the Northeast Avenida Leste do Hipódromo Elevated Walkway project is projected to remove 94 roadway manhole covers.

Meanwhile, utility conduits in Zone A of the New Urban Area have already been pre-reserved, which will significantly reduce the need for future road excavations in subsequent construction projects, Leong added.

All new road construction projects continue to optimise early-stage planning and coordination with utility operators. Optimisation measures—such as combining, relocating, concealing, and removing obsolete manhole covers—will be integrated directly into project designs, ensuring a steady, long-term reduction of roadway manhole covers across the territory, Leong said.

In Macau's old quarters, high building density and limited street frontage combined with early infrastructure limitations have created a highly complex network of subterranean utilities, Pui said, adding that the continuous addition of utility connections for new developments has further driven up the number of manhole covers over time. ■

QS ranks UM among top 100 universities in Asia

Ida Cheong

The University of Macau (UM) has climbed six spots to 96th in the 2027 QS Asia University Rankings, breaking into the top 100 in Asia, according to a statement from the Education and Youth Development Bureau (DSEDJ). The annual rankings are published by the global higher education research institution Quacquarelli Symonds (QS)*.

The Macau University of Science and Technology (MUST) advanced 21 spots, moving up from 211th to 190th, the statement said, adding that the Macao Polytechnic University (MPU) made a major leap from 402nd to 306th and the City University of Macau (CityU) recorded significant gains, rising from 433rd to 370th.

The statement underscored that the QS ranking covered over 1,700 higher education institutions across the region. Four higher education institutions in Macau saw improvements in their rankings, highlighting the steady increase in local higher education competitiveness, regional influence, and overall educational quality.

Efforts are underway to push forward the development of the Macao-Hengqin International Education (University) Town, the statement said, adding that the government remains committed to supporting local universities in optimising academic disciplines, refining research resource allocation, and deepening international and regional collaboration. ■

** Founded in 1990 by Nunzio Quacquarelli, the EU-based QS World University Rankings portfolio specialises in the analysis of international higher education institutions. It is best known globally for publishing the QS World University Rankings, alongside regional and subject-specific university rankings. - Gemini*

Sam to attend opening of 9th CIIE in Shanghai

Tony Wong

Chief Executive Sam Hou Fai travelled to Shanghai yesterday afternoon, where he will attend the opening ceremony of the 9th China International Import Expo (CIIE) this morning as well as other relevant events, according to a statement by the Macao Government Information Bureau (GCS) yesterday.

Since its inception in 2018, the expo has been held every year between November 5 and 10 at the National Exhibition and Convention Center (NECC) in Shanghai.

Vice Premier Ding Xuexiang, also a member of the Standing Committee of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Committee, will deliver a keynote speech during this morning's opening ceremony of the six-day expo.

According to yesterday's GCS statement, Sam is accompanied on his visit to Shanghai by Secretary for Economy and Finance Dora Ng Wai Han. They are scheduled to return to Macau this afternoon.

During Sam's absence from Macau, Secretary for Administration and Justice Wong Sio Chak is assuming the duties of acting chief executive.

The GCS statement also noted that 162 countries, regions, and international organisations are participating in this year's CIIE.

The statement noted that Macau entrepreneurs will take part in the "Pavilion of Food and Beverage from Macao and Portuguese-speaking Countries" and the "Macao and Portuguese-speaking Countries' Professional Service Pavilion," showcasing "Made in Macao" items, Macau-branded products, and food and beverage products from Portuguese-speaking countries (PSCs), as well as various professional services. ■



This photo taken last week shows part of the National Exhibition and Convention Center (NECC) in Shanghai, where the six-day 9th China International Import Expo (CIIE) will be held from today. *– Photo: Xinhua*

Wang Yi calls for new 'golden decade' of Lancang-Mekong cooperation

BEIJING – Foreign Minister Wang Yi yesterday called on the six Lancang-Mekong countries to build on their fruitful cooperation in the past 10 years and jointly usher in a new "golden decade."

Wang, also a member of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Committee, made the remarks when co-chairing with Thai Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sihasak Phuangketkeow the 11th Lancang-Mekong Cooperation (LMC) Foreign Ministers' Meeting in Beijing.

The LMC mechanism was launched by the six countries in 2016. Its name derives from a river known as the Lancang in China and the Mekong after it flows out of the country and through Myanmar, Laos, Thailand, Cambodia and Vietnam.

China stands ready to work with Mekong countries in the direction set by the leaders, take stronger measures and more coordinated steps, to continuously substantiate the Lancang-Mekong community with a shared future, Wang said.

Wang called for efforts to keep Lancang-Mekong Cooperation at the forefront of regional cooperation, make it a benchmark for Global South solidarity, and contribute to building a community with a shared future for humanity.

Lancang-Mekong countries should strengthen top-level design on core issues such as regional development and security, enhance the alignment of development strategies, promote trade and investment liberalization and facilitation, and deliver more "small and beautiful" livelihood demonstration projects to give people a greater sense of gain, he said.

It is important to expand cooperation in emerging fields such as the digital economy, artificial intelligence, smart manufacturing and smart agriculture, he said, welcoming more Mekong countries to join the World Artificial Intelligence Cooperation Organization (WAICO).



Foreign Minister Wang Yi (center), also a member of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of China Central Committee, co-chairs the 11th Lancang-Mekong Cooperation (LMC) Foreign Ministers' Meeting with Thai Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sihasak Phuangketkeow in Beijing yesterday. – Xinhua

He urged Lancang-Mekong countries to oppose external interference and incitement of bloc confrontation, reject the creation of exclusive "small circles," and never allow the resurgence of militarism, adding that the countries should step up joint efforts to combat cross-border crimes.

Wang suggested the countries promote the establishment of a Lancang-Mekong cross-border disaster early-warning cooperation mechanism and jointly enhance disaster prevention, mitigation and relief capabilities.

Cambodian Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Prak Sokhonn, Lao Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Thongsavanh Phomvihane, Vietnamese Foreign Minister Le Hoai Trung and Myanmar's Minister for the Ministry of National Planning, Investment and Foreign Economic Relations, Aung Kyaw Hoe, attended the meeting.

All parties at the meeting spoke highly of the positive progress of the LMC over the past decade and appreciated China's important leading role in advancing their cooperation.

Those present reaffirmed their commitment to good-neighborliness and friendship, mutual respect and mutual trust, deeper cooperation and win-win outcomes, and to jointly promoting sustainable development and prosperity in the region.

They agreed to deepen cooperation in priority areas such as connectivity, water resources and environment, expand digital transformation, green innovation, and promote people-to-people and cultural exchanges.

They also agreed to strengthen disaster governance, tighten security coordination, combat cross-border crimes and safeguard regional tranquility.

All parties agreed to maintain close communication to ensure that the fifth LMC Leaders' Meeting is a complete success and delivers positive outcomes. *– Xinhua*

Report shows China-Africa renewable energy cooperation projects top 17 GW in 2023-2026

CHANGSHA – China-Africa renewable energy cooperation projects have reached a combined installed capacity of over 17 gigawatts (GW) between 2023 and 2026, strengthening Africa's energy supply foundation and improving the security of local power systems, according to a report released yesterday.

The China-Africa Renewable Energy Cooperation Report 2026 was unveiled at the third China-Africa Energy Cooperation Project Promotion Conference in central China's Hunan Province, which hosts the permanent venue of the China-Africa Economic and Trade Expo.

In recent years, under frameworks including the Belt and Road Initiative and the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation, the two sides have deepened cooperation in key areas such as green energy and energy infrastructure connectivity, the report noted.

Major hydropower, wind and photovoltaic projects have been launched under China-Africa cooperation, while numerous livelihood projects have taken root in rural areas, bridging the last-mile gap in rural electricity access, said Yi Yuechun, president of the China Renewable Energy Engineering Institute.

Innovative projects, including energy storage systems, have also been implemented, providing practical support for the development of technology roadmaps tailored to African countries and for replicable models of cooperation, Yi added.

Jiang Hao, director of international business department of the institute, said this year's conference focused more on providing integrated solutions to Africa, developing localized development plans with African partners, and building a regular platform for hands-on training to cultivate Africa's capacity for independent clean energy development.

The Aysha Wind Farm in Ethiopia offers a concrete example of this approach. During construction and commissioning, many local technicians received practical training from Chinese technicians and gradually mastered core skills, including turbine installation and operation and maintenance.

China's experience in equipment manufacturing and energy infrastructure development has created valuable opportunities for cooperation, said Nardos Bekele-Thomas, chief executive officer of the African Union Development Agency.

She expressed hope that more entities support African companies in integrating into the green energy industrial chain, developing products tailored to the African market and upgrading cooperation models to better meet Africa's actual needs for sustainable development. *– Xinhua*

Chinese medical team explores AI solutions for radiology in Zanzibar

DAR ES SALAAM – When Chinese radiologist Ji Yugang began examining chest CT scans at Mnazi Mmoja Hospital in Tanzania's Zanzibar, he noticed a significant difference in working conditions compared with his hospital in China, where AI-assisted imaging tools had helped improve diagnostic efficiency.

In China, AI-assisted imaging software helped him identify suspicious pulmonary nodules before he reviewed the results and made his final assessment. In Zanzibar, however, no such tools were available, so he manually examined hundreds of images from each patient.

"During my first two days here, I found it quite difficult to adapt," Ji recalled. "Back in China, AI software helps us with the initial screening. Here, each CT scan contains about 300 images, and we have to go through them one by one."

Unlike conventional X-rays, which typically produce only a few images of the examined area, CT scans can generate hundreds of detailed cross-sectional images, making the reading process considerably more demanding.

Ji, a member of the 36th Chinese medical team in Zanzibar, said his hospital in China introduced AI-assisted medical imaging about eight to 10 years ago. The technology has since helped radiologists work more efficiently and spot abnormalities they might otherwise overlook.

He said AI-assisted screening for pulmonary nodules was among the earliest and most established applications, while similar technologies are now also used to analyze blood vessels in coronary and head-and-neck CT examinations.

Recognizing the potential benefits for Zanzibar, Ji began sharing China's experience with local radiologists, starting with pulmonary nodule detection, an area where he said the technology is relatively mature and local demand is particularly strong.

The Chinese team has provided systematic training on the principles of AI-assisted imaging, its practical applications, interpreting AI-generated findings, and the importance of professional verification.

"AI helps us with the initial screening and reduces the risk of missing suspicious lesions, but doctors still need to review the results and make the final diagnosis," Ji explained.

Saria Awesu Omar, a local radiologist with three years of experience, welcomed the training, saying AI-assisted imaging could help address the heavy workload faced by medical professionals.

"Surely, it is very, very important because it will reduce the time," Omar said, adding that the technology could help doctors examine more images daily and identify tiny lesions in the chest and abdomen.

She said the cooperation would create more opportunities for local doctors to gain new skills and improve patient care.

The 36th Chinese medical team arrived in Zanzibar on Sept. 16 with 24 members, including 15 stationed on Unguja Island and nine on Pemba Island. Its specialists work across multiple medical fields, providing clinical services, technical support, and professional training.

Team leader Wang Wei said that beyond daily hospital work, Chinese doctors also conduct free medical consultations in rural communities and participate in mobile medical outreach programs.

For complicated cases, the team can seek additional advice from specialists in Chinese hospitals through real-time remote consultations, allowing doctors in Zanzibar to benefit from expertise beyond the island.

The team is also exploring whether anonymized medical imaging data from Zanzibar could be securely transmitted to China for AI-assisted analysis and multidisciplinary expert review, with the findings subsequently returned to local doctors.

Ji said the proposed approach could help compensate for the lack of AI imaging software in local hospitals, although several challenges remain before it can be implemented on a larger scale.

"Network connectivity and patient data anonymization are among the difficulties we need to address," he said.

Wang emphasized that local medical professionals would remain responsible for final diagnostic and treatment decisions, with AI and remote consultations serving as additional sources of support.

For Omar, the cooperation represents not only an opportunity to learn new technologies but also a continuation of the friendship between the two countries.

"The Chinese people are our friends. They help us in different ways, different sectors, not only in health," she said.

For Ji, the experience has highlighted both the challenges Zanzibar's healthcare system faces and the potential for technology to help address them. While AI-assisted diagnosis is not yet routinely available at the hospital, training and exploring cross-border cooperation could offer a path to faster, more efficient medical imaging services.

– Xinhua

China's import expo draws more Fortune Global 500 companies, industry leaders

Analysis

SHANGHAI – The numbers of overseas companies and industry heavyweights attending the 9th China International Import Expo (CIIE) are both set to reach record highs, underscoring the enduring appeal of the world's largest import-themed trade fair.

The event is scheduled to open this morning in Shanghai, with more than 300 Fortune Global 500 companies and industry leaders expected to participate, marking a record high. Additionally, more than 2,000 companies will be exhibiting here for the first time, according to organizers.

This year's expo is expected to attract a record 4,142 overseas exhibitors from 148 countries and regions. In total, 162 countries, regions and international organizations will participate, according to the Ministry of Commerce.

Since its launch in 2018, the trade fair has maintained strong appeal for international companies of all sizes, which have used the platform as a launchpad for new products in China and a fast track to enter the world's second-largest consumer market.



Fairgoers visit the booth of Qualcomm at the technical equipment exhibition area of the 9th China International Import Expo (CIIE) in Shanghai yesterday. The six-day expo will officially open this morning, bringing together exhibitors from around the world. – Xinhua

Danish pharmaceutical giant Novo Nordisk, which has participated in all the previous eight editions of the expo, will showcase new medicines during this year's event, including Kyinsu, a once-weekly injection for type 2 diabetes.

"The CIIE has become an important part of our work in China," said Mike Doustdar, president and CEO of Novo Nordisk. "This is our ninth consecutive year taking part, and many medicines we first presented at the expo have since launched here."

This year, over 480 exhibits are set to make their global, Asian or China debuts – another record for the event.

Canada-headquartered athletic apparel brand lululemon will participate in the trade fair for the third consecutive year, with China now serving as its second-largest market globally.

"The CIIE is far more than a platform to showcase products," said San Yan Ng, regional president of lululemon China and APAC. "It also gives us the opportunity to engage in deeper dialogue and build stronger connections with Chinese guests, partners, government stakeholders and friends from all sectors."

The CIIE is a prominent example of China's efforts to open its market wider and facilitate entry of quality products from around the world. China expects the expanded imports will boost domestic demands and support its industrial upgrading.

The nation's imports reached 16.7 trillion yuan in the first nine months of this year, up 22.3 percent, the fastest growth since 2021.

– Xinhua

CIIE key platform for advanced technologies, innovation: Samsung executive

Interview by Xinhua writer Huang Xinxin

SEOUL – The China International Import Expo (CIIE) serves as an important platform for multinational companies to launch new products, showcase new technologies and expand their presence in the Chinese market, Zhang Daijun, senior vice president of Samsung China, said in a recent interview with Xinhua.

This year marks Samsung's ninth consecutive appearance at the CIIE. Alongside its continued participation in the expo, the South Korean conglomerate has continued to increase investment, expand research and development capabilities and localize production of high-end products in China.

In recent years, almost all of Samsung's investment in China has gone into high-end industries such as semiconductors and new energy vehicle batteries, with the company further directing production capacity and R&D resources toward emerging fields with higher added value, Zhang said.

Samsung currently operates 15 manufacturing enterprises in China, with cumulative investment of about US$59 billion. Investment in advanced industries accounts for nearly 90 percent, according to the company.

Zhang said Samsung has continued to deepen industrial development and innovation cooperation in China. Its R&D centers in the country have developed end-to-end innovation capabilities in fields including artificial intelligence (AI), mobile communications and semiconductors, under the approach of "developing in China and innovating for the world."

This year, Samsung established its first overseas R&D center for biopharmaceuticals in Beijing and its first overseas advanced manufacturing technology research institute in Suzhou city in east China, he said.

At the ninth CIIE, Samsung will showcase a range of cutting-edge technologies in semiconductors and AI, covering areas such as smart devices and future mobility. The exhibition will present the company's innovation achievements across the entire industrial chain, Zhang said.

A high-end ultrasound diagnostic system manufactured at Samsung's Suzhou facility will also make its debut at the expo, he added.

According to Zhang, the CIIE is not only an important platform for multinational companies to expand in the Chinese market, but also a vivid reflection of China's commitment to opening up.

"China's firm commitment to expanding high-standard opening up has created more opportunities for international enterprises, and provided a stable and predictable environment for their development, injecting greater certainty into global trade cooperation," he added. *– Xinhua*

CIIE injects impetus for Africa's shift to value-added exports, says Ethiopian scholar

Interview

ADDIS ABABA – The China International Import Expo (CIIE) serves as a pivotal opportunity for African economies and enterprises to leverage expanding Chinese market access and preferential tariffs to drive long-term structural transformation, an Ethiopian scholar has said.

In a recent interview with Xinhua, Alemayehu Geda, professor of macro and international economics at Addis Ababa University in Ethiopia, highlighted that China places strong emphasis on the annual import expo, adding that the initiative demonstrates China's steadfast support for global trade and trade liberalization, reflecting Beijing's commitment and readiness to embrace healthy global market competition.

"China attaches a lot of emphasis to the CIIE because it wants to show the world that it is in favor of global trade and trade liberalization," Geda said, adding that the platform helps deepen trade ties, enhance export competitiveness, and facilitate broader market access.

Highlighting China's growing commitment to open trade, he stressed that as a powerhouse in international trade, "China is not afraid of any competition from any part of the world. Therefore, it is encouraging international trade."

Unlike conventional trade platforms that traditionally focus on promoting exports, the scholar noted that the CIIE is uniquely positioned to actively encourage foreign goods to enter China's domestic market.

"What is special about this expo is that China is not only encouraging exporters as was traditionally the case, but also importers into China," said Geda, adding that China's preferential tariff treatment provides a major opportunity for Africa to move beyond exporting primary commodities.

The ninth CIIE is scheduled to take place in Shanghai from today to next Tuesday. A total of 162 countries, regions, and international organizations will participate, alongside 4,142 overseas exhibiting companies. The overall exhibition area will exceed 440,000 square meters for the first time, according to the organizers.

Launched in 2018 as the world's first national-level expo dedicated to imports, the CIIE aims to expand China's opening-up and turn its vast market into a shared opportunity for the world.

Emphasizing the vital imperative for African economies and enterprises to fully harness China's expanding import market and zero-tariff treatment, Geda argued that the CIIE offers a "big opportunity" for African countries and businesses to capitalize on these favorable market conditions.

China's zero-tariff policy for 53 African countries with which it has diplomatic relations took effect on May 1.

"China's zero-tariff measure is very important for African countries," Geda said. "The challenge for African countries is not tariffs anymore. The tariff on processed goods, for instance, South African wine, which was previously up to 30 percent, becomes almost zero with this policy. African countries can participate in and benefit from this opportunity."

To effectively leverage these preferential advantages, Geda argued that African nations must urgently enhance their domestic capacity to manufacture finished goods, an essential prerequisite for achieving structural economic transformation. He called on the continent's businesses to pay special attention to export quality by actively bolstering capabilities to meet phytosanitary and rules-of-origin requirements.

The scholar stated that the CIIE serves as a crucial platform for African countries and enterprises to foster joint production and capacity-building partnerships in order to capitalize on the advantages presented through China's zero-tariff policy.

Noting that Africa's exports have historically relied heavily on primary commodities – with raw materials accounting for roughly three-quarters of the continent's total exports – he said China's preferential tariffs could help spur Africa's industrial growth.

"China's market access for African countries is not limited to primary commodities, but extends to processed goods," he said. "African producers and exporters have this huge market opportunity, provided they are capable of supplying value-added, processed goods." *– Xinhua*

Indonesian govt says ex-police chief may have committed 'treason' by wiretapping president

Marchio Gorbiano

JAKARTA – Indonesia's former police chief may have committed "treason" through his alleged involvement in wiretapping President Prabowo Subianto's telephone, the government said yesterday.

Listyo Sigit Prabowo was fired from his latest post as presidential chief of staff, and arrested on Tuesday with two other senior police officials for allegedly spying on his boss and other high-profile individuals.

"What was done may have fallen into the category of being considered as leading to treason," presidential spokesman Prasetyo Hadi told reporters in Jakarta yesterday.

"This also constitutes actions that endanger the security of the interests of the state, including jeopardising the safety of the country's leader," he said.

Under Indonesia's criminal code, the maximum penalty for treason against the president is death by firing squad, though the country has not executed anyone in 10 years.

Government officials and politicians, journalists, NGO representatives and businesspeople were also targeted in the alleged wiretap.

The national police's top detective, Asep Safrudin, said Tuesday the surveillance operation had been conducted "without any legal basis or without any investigative or inquiry process in accordance with applicable laws".

Listyo has not commented publicly on the allegations.

Prasetyo said yesterday the motive was not yet known.

"When we talk about the head of state... there is a great deal of information there that is naturally very sensitive, which could endanger... the interests and the strength of the nation and the state," he said.

Prasetyo added that President Prabowo had expressed his "profound concern" about the revelations.

Pressure on president

Prabowo, a former general who took office in 2024, has come under increasing pressure over his government's handling of the economy and response to destructive wildfires.

Students and others have mounted large protests against him in recent weeks, also denouncing what they perceive as growing authoritarianism and rampant corruption.

The president's approval ratings have fallen to a record low, and he reshuffled his cabinet for a seventh time last month, appointing Listyo, 57, as his chief of staff.



Indonesian Police Chief General Listyo Sigit Prabowo is seen at an air force base in Jakarta on November 4, 2023. – AFP

The men are not related.

Listyo had until then served as national police chief during the period of the alleged wiretapping that investigators say started in 2025.

Social media users in Indonesia have speculated on the seeming volatility at the top echelons of government.

Indonesia's military chief this week ordered the deployment of thousands of troops to the capital Jakarta – a move that has added to the disquiet.

Indonesia National Armed Forces (TNI) spokesman Muhammad Nas told AFP "The deployment of troops is a routine measure carried out to ensure the operational readiness of the TNI."

Analyst Khairul Fahmi of Indonesia's Institute for Security and Strategic Studies (ISESS) told AFP that "greater transparency about the deployment would certainly help prevent unnecessary speculation".

But for the moment, he said, "I see no sufficient evidence to conclude that the deployment signals an imminent military intervention or confrontation between state institutions".

The wiretapping scandal has come with pressure also growing on Vice President Gibran Rakabuming Raka, the son of Prabowo's predecessor and political rival Joko Widodo.

Widodo's party is a member of the ruling coalition, and his popularity is widely seen to have helped Prabowo to the top job, with Gibran by his side.

There have been renewed calls to unseat Gibran after Indonesia's Supreme Court ruled last month to annul his high school certificate – which opponents say disqualifies him from the vice presidency. *– AFP*

Singapore toughens haze law with arrest powers, bigger fines

Martin Abbugao and Taryn Ng

SINGAPORE – Singapore's parliament toughened yesterday its anti-haze law with arrest powers, bigger fines and potential restrictions on companies linked to transboundary air pollution from wildfires.

The changes, which passed without dissent, come after weeks of air pollution from fires in neighbouring Indonesia angered Singaporeans and sparked calls for action.

"We need better ways to obtain and verify information, trace complex corporate relationships, and impose meaningful consequences on errant entities," Minister for Sustainability and the Environment Grace Fu said.

"We also need to be able to intervene earlier before haze pollution reaches Singapore. We therefore have to strengthen our laws, and we must act quickly."

Singapore enacted a Transboundary Haze Pollution Act in 2014, but enforcement has been stymied by jurisdictional barriers and challenges obtaining evidence from overseas.

Of six cases filed in 2015 under that law, two were closed in 2017 after the companies provided information in response to the legal notices, while investigations into the other four remain open.

The changes make offences under the law arrestable, and allow courts to try defendants in their absence if they are overseas or unreachable.

Fines increased tenfold to nearly US$800,000 a day for companies deemed non-compliant, with the ceiling on fines rising to over US$15.6 million.

The government now also has powers to force companies to appoint independent assessors at their expense to investigate fires, business operations and corporate relationships.

Assessors, approved by the government, will submit findings to officials for potential further action. Appointing an assessor would not imply wrongdoing, but would be a way to determine possible links to fires.

'No magic bullet'

The changes also allow authorities to impose restrictions on designated companies, including limiting services provided by Singapore's outsized financial industry.

Companies blaming third parties for fires affecting their land would also have to demonstrate they took reasonable steps to prevent and fight the blazes.

The changes were certified as urgent, allowing them to be debated and voted on quickly. They were passed after a lengthy debate in the legislature dominated by the ruling People's Action Party.

Simon Tay, chairman of the Singapore Institute of International Affairs, a think-tank, told AFP the law would strengthen Singapore's hand but limitations would remain.

Restricting commercial activities and financing of a firm involved in the fires will make that company "a corporate pariah", he said.

The law "is loaded and now has more bullets. But there is no magic bullet solution", Tay said.

"This alone does not guarantee that the haze will never recur. Cooperation within the ASEAN framework and with Indonesia and neighbouring countries will also be essential," he added, referring to the Association of Southeast Asian Nations.

Greenpeace Malaysia interim country representative Heng Kiah Chun said other Southeast Asian countries could learn from Singapore.

But he said that "stronger national laws must be supported by greater ASEAN cooperation, especially in sharing evidence, improving corporate transparency and preventing peatland fires at their source".

'Paper tiger?'

Gerald Giam of the opposition Workers' Party supported the bill, but said he remained "sceptical about the real-world effectiveness" of the heavier criminal penalties.

"Would it simply be a paper tiger?" he asked.

Singapore last month issued warnings to 10 foreign-based companies telling them to deploy firefighters, stop burning and submit action plans.

Ten other Singapore-registered firms were also directed to appoint assessors designated by the government to examine their operations.

Fires in Indonesia burned through over 1.9 million hectares between January and the end of September, most of it in recent months, according to the Nusantara Atlas monitor.

The fires, which sparked a diplomatic spat between the neighbours, have been driven in part by drought linked to a strong El Niño phenomenon, but are also caused by longstanding deforestation and drying of peatland, experts say.

Fu, the sustainability and environment minister, said Singapore welcomed steps taken by Indonesia.

"But we must also do what we can within our own jurisdiction, to protect our people from the harmful effects of haze," she said. *– AFP*

Philippine police find child abuse imagery on devices tied to Thomas Markle

MANILA – Philippine police told AFP yesterday that three memory cards and a cell phone turned over by the son of Meghan Markle's estranged father contained child sexual abuse material.

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

Philippine interior minister Jonvic Remulla told AFP at the time the country planned to take "appropriate legal actions" if sufficient evidence was found. Markle has denied all claims against him.

Yesterday, the country's national police said child abuse materials had been discovered among the cache turned over by Markle's son amid an "intensifying" investigation.

"It is not enough to simply come across some materials and immediately draw conclusions," Philippine national police chief Jose Melencio Nartatez Jr said, in a statement provided in response to questions about the investigation.

"We have to establish where these came from, who may be responsible, and whether Philippine laws were violated," he said.

The revelation came a day after Mexican authorities raided a storage unit rented by Thomas Markle as part of the ongoing investigation.

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.

Markle had been living in Cebu in the Philippines until reportedly returning to the United States earlier this year.

Meghan Markle has previously said she was "deeply distressed" by accusations that her father had possessed images of child abuse, adding she had blocked contact between him and her children over previous "troubling and disturbing" allegations. *– AFP*



A staff member from the Philippines' Bureau of Fire Protection is seen after a residential fire at a slum area in Quezon City, the Philippines, on Tuesday. – Xinhua

N Korea fires several missiles into Sea of Japan

SEOUL – North Korea fired several missiles off its east coast yesterday, Seoul's military said, extending a burst of weapons testing as Pyongyang hardens its stance toward South Korea and the United States.

The nuclear-equipped North has carried out a flurry of weapons tests in recent days, which come during heightened tensions between Pyongyang and Seoul over a landmine explosion along their heavily fortified border.

South Korea's Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) said its military "detected several missiles launched from the Sondok area of North Korea towards the East Sea on the morning of November 4", referring to the body of water also known as the Sea of Japan.

"South Korea and the United States are conducting a detailed analysis of the exact specifications of the detected North Korean missiles," it said.

The allies "closely monitored the missile launches from the preparation stage and detected and tracked the missiles immediately after launch".

Yesterday's launch also comes a day after North Korea said it test-fired strategic cruise missiles, following a separate test of cluster bomb warheads over the weekend.

The North recently trialled other weapons including attack drones, a new precision-guided torpedo system and an intermediate-range hypersonic missile.

A joint Seoul-UN investigation concluded that the North had planted the mines more than a year earlier, which wounded three South Korean soldiers.

The North has denied responsibility and vowed to further fortify its border areas and resume its loudspeaker campaign.

Separately yesterday, North Korean leader Kim Jong Un's powerful sister warned that Pyongyang would mount a stronger response to Washington's "invariable hostile policy".

Kim Yo Jong also signalled little appetite for renewed dialogue with Washington.

"In the present reality when new records are being set in the implementation of the US hostile policy towards the DPRK, it is natural that new records should be created in our reflective counteraction," Kim Yo Jong was quoted as saying by state-run Korean Central News Agency (KCNA), using the acronym for North Korea's official name.

US president Donald Trump has touted that relationship is "very good" with North Korean leader Kim Jong Un and said recently that he "may" meet with Kim during his Asian tour this month and that it "would be exciting". – *AFP*



News coverage showing file footage of Kim Yo Jong, sister of North Korea's leader Kim Jong Un, is seen on a screen at Seoul Station in Seoul yesterday. – AFP

Cambodia cracks down on 1,906 natural resource, wildlife crimes in first 10 months of 2026

PHNOM PENH – Cambodia cracked down on 1,906 natural resource crimes in the first 10 months of 2026, down 1.5 percent from 1,935 cases during the same period last year, a Ministry of Environment spokesperson said yesterday.

Khvay Atitya, who is also an undersecretary of state for the Ministry of Environment, said park rangers conducted routine patrols across all protected areas from January to October this year.

As a result, they cracked down on 1,906 natural resource crimes, including illegal forestry, wildlife poaching and snaring, land encroachment, fishing, and mining, he said in a news release.

Atitya noted that 118 case files and 79 suspects had been sent to court for prosecution under the legal procedures of the Environment and Natural Resources Code.

The spokesperson attributed the drop in environmental crimes to strong cooperation between the ministry, local authorities, armed forces, residents, NGOs, and the Anti-Corruption Unit.

According to the Ministry of Environment, the Southeast Asian nation has 73 protected areas covering more than 41 percent of the country's land area. – *Xinhua*

Sri Lanka's opposition rallies against tougher terror laws

COLOMBO – Hundreds of opposition activists demonstrated in Sri Lanka's capital yesterday, demanding a rollback of proposed anti-terror legislation denounced by international rights groups as draconian.

The government of President Anura Kumara Dissanayake is planning to replace the Prevention of Terrorism Act of 1979, but campaigners say the new legislation would hand sweeping powers to authorities and threaten civil liberties.

The government is also proposing tougher laws to deal with organised crime, particularly drug-related offences, which the country's main opposition argues could be used against it to settle scores.

Yesterday, activists from the leftist Frontline Socialist Party and their allies rallied against the Protection of the State from Terrorism Bill and the Prevention of Organised Crimes Bill, marching up to the national parliament.

Among the provisions criticised are the possibility of up to 72 hours' detention without being produced before a magistrate, detention in police custody for up to a year under an executive order, and expanded surveillance powers.

"An employee who strikes is a terrorist!" read one of the posters raised by protesters. "72 hours in a police cell," read another.

The crowd shouted slogans denouncing the two bills, before dispersing peacefully while police stood guard at the entrances to the parliament building, which sits in the middle of a man-made lake.



Activists and supporters of Frontline Socialist Party and Jana Aragala Movement (People's Struggle) protest against the proposed Protection of the State from Terrorism Act (PSTA), near the Parliament building in Colombo, Sri Lanka yesterday. – AFP

The UN human rights office has said the bills use vague definitions of terrorism and related offences that could undermine civic and media freedoms, as well as the right to dissent peacefully.

The independent Centre for Policy Alternatives (CPA) think tank has called for both bills to be withdrawn, arguing that they retain key features of the oppressive laws already in place.

While acknowledging the need to address genuine security threats and organised crime, the think tank argued that the bills would grant extensive powers to the executive and risk undermining constitutional protections.

The CPA is also challenging the two bills in the Supreme Court before they move for debate and a vote in parliament, where President Dissanayake's party has an overwhelming two-thirds majority.

The CPA has criticised the lack of public consultation on the bills and warned that the broad provisions could be used against protesters, marginalised communities and dissenting voices. – *AFP*

Bangladesh to increase garment sector pay after protests

Sheikh Sabiha Alam

DHAKA – Bangladesh's garment wage board agreed yesterday to raise minimum pay in the key export sector, but details remained scarce and it was unclear whether the deal would end five days of protests and clashes.

Tens of thousands of workers marched through industrial areas yesterday morning demanding higher wages, with some throwing bricks, torching police vehicles and erecting barricades, as police fired tear gas to disperse crowds.

Protests eased in the afternoon after an agreement was announced, but there was no immediate indication that workers would return to factories and restart production.

Many workers were still unsure what the announcement meant, union leader Kamrul Hasan of the Ekota Garments Sramik Federation said, adding that most "did not know" how the wage board worked and were asking on social media whether their pay had increased.

Mahmudul Hasan, Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA) president, said workers should go back to work.

"The unrest should subside, as progress is evident now," Hasan told AFP. "We do not want our factories to remain closed, but we had no choice because of the unrest."

The South Asian nation of 170 million people is the world's second-biggest garment exporter behind China, making clothes for some of the world's best-known brands.

The dispute reflects longstanding tensions in an industry that employs more than four million people but has been dogged by complaints over pay, working conditions and labour rights.

The board, comprising representatives of employers and workers, was set up by the government on Sunday to negotiate a pay rise. It did not specify the size of the increase.

'Working together'

"The workers have been demanding a wage increase by December so that they can receive their revised salaries in January," said Babul Akter, the workers' representative on the board.

"The representative of the factory owners on the wage board agreed, too. We agreed on this point... We are working together."

The announcement came after unrest in major industrial centres including Gazipur, Mirpur, Narayanganj and Savar.

In Savar, angry workers torched police vehicles and injured a police officer before the deal was announced, Dhaka's police superintendent Shamima Parvin said.

"Around 30,000 to 40,000 workers came from both sides and attacked the police, and the police, in response, tried to resist the attack," Parvin said.

"The protesters torched a police vehicle, and the officer-in-charge of Savar police station was seriously injured."

Workers say the rising cost of food, housing, transport and healthcare has eroded their purchasing power in a country with eight percent inflation.

They are demanding a minimum monthly wage of 30,000 taka (US$240), a 140 percent increase on the current 12,500 taka.

"We will complete our work by December so that workers can receive their increased salaries by January," said ABM Shamsuddin, the BGMEA representative on the wage board.

Bangladesh's garment industry generates around four-fifths of the country's export earnings, worth up to US$38 billion.

The United States is its biggest individual market, while the European Union is its largest trading bloc.

Workers make clothes for companies that range from Fruit of the Loom to Levi Strauss and VF Corp, whose brands include Vans, Timberland and The North Face.

Syed Sultan Uddin Ahmed, executive director of the Bangladesh Institute of Labour Studies, said the government should take immediate steps to inform workers about the developments.

"The government can form a tripartite arrangement involving representatives of the government, factory owners and workers to explain how the wage board will work. That is how the unrest could be managed, not through coercion," he said. – *AFP*

US voters deliver harsh verdict on Trump in midterms

Analysis

WASHINGTON, DC – Donald Trump faced a radically transformed and hostile political landscape yesterday after US voters handed control of Congress to the Democrats in a stunning rebuke to his presidency.

The result was a personal humiliation for the 80-year-old Trump as a Democratic wave swept into his Republican heartland, boosted by anger at soaring energy costs and his costly, dragging war with Iran.

The Democratic capture of both the Senate and the House of Representatives signals an end to Trump's stranglehold on US politics and gives Democrats the power to block legislation, launch investigations into Trump's administration and thwart his appointments.

The results reflected deep frustration over the cost of living, tariffs and Trump's war with Iran, which has sent fuel prices soaring and compounded dissatisfaction with an already deeply unpopular president.

"This is so incredibly exciting. We can get our country back," Kathy Jackoway said in Texas, celebrating a win by Democratic Senate candidate James Talarico.

Trump struck a conciliatory tone despite his history of rejecting election defeats, telling *The New York Times* he was "absolutely willing" to accept the results.

"I think the Democrats did a good job," the 80-year-old told Fox News, in rare praise for his political opponents. "They fought hard."

But he sought to distance himself from his party's poor showing, adding: "I don't view it as a hit on me."

He acknowledged that the Iran conflict had contributed to the result but defended the military campaign, and he suggested the rival parties could find common ground on immigration.



Democratic US Senate candidate Abdul El-Sayed (right), accompanied by his wife, Sarah Jukaku, declares victory during a midterm election night party at The Department at Hudson's in Detroit, Michigan, yesterday. El-Sayed is the first Muslim elected to the upper chamber of Congress. "Michigan, we did it!" El-Sayed said in a speech at his election headquarters in Detroit. *– AFP*

Republican heartland

Democrats flipped seats that had long been held by Republicans, scoring breakthroughs in South Carolina, North Carolina, Iowa, Kansas, Ohio, Texas, and Maine.

In Maine, former logger Troy Jackson defeated longtime Republican Senator Susan Collins.

In Kansas, Methodist minister Adam Hamilton became the first Democrat elected to the Senate from the reliably conservative state since 1932.

Iowa had not elected a Democratic senator since 2008.

In Texas, Democrats won not only a Senate seat but also the governor's race, ending decades of Republican rule.

Democrats protected key Senate seats of their own, including Jon Ossoff in Georgia and an open seat in New Hampshire.

In Michigan, Abdul El-Sayed defeated former Republican lawmaker Mike Rogers, making him the first Muslim elected to the upper chamber of Congress.

El-Sayed won despite a last-minute curveball when congresswoman Haley Stevens, who lost the Democratic primary to El-Sayed, came out in support of Rogers.

In the House, Democrats made gains in Pennsylvania, Kentucky, Arizona, North Carolina, Wisconsin and New Jersey, including districts Trump had carried comfortably in 2024.

Democrats also won Georgia's governorship, electing former Atlanta mayor Keisha Lance Bottoms as the first black woman governor in US history.

Republicans had some consolation in Florida, where Trump-backed Byron Donalds became the state's first black governor and Ashley Moody retained a Senate seat.

But the night was "a big wipeout and a strong repudiation of Donald Trump and his policies," George Washington University professor Todd Belt told AFP.

Trump on defensive

House Democratic leader Hakeem Jeffries declared Trump's MAGA movement "on the run."

Jeffries could become the first black speaker of the House when the new Congress convenes in January.

Trump insisted on social media that Republicans would have won "IN A LANDSLIDE" if he had been running, though he had repeatedly urged supporters throughout the campaign to "pretend I'm on the ballot."

He also repeated his threat to use the presidential veto on Democrat-passed bills, posting a picture on social media of a red baseball cap reading just: "VETO."

On the international front, Russia said it hoped Trump will continue his "peacemaking efforts" and China said it would "continue working" with the United States.

Iran's supreme leader Mojtaba Khamenei said he did not expect the election results to bring about a shift in US policy. *– AFP*

White House insists Trump is 'still your president'

WASHINGTON, DC – Donald Trump is "still your president," the White House said yesterday, a day after his Republican Party suffered sweeping losses in midterm elections seen as a referendum on his second term.

The White House delivered the message in a post on X featuring a picture of a glaring Trump looming over the Resolute Desk in the Oval Office.

"PSA: TRUMP IS STILL YOUR PRESIDENT," text superimposed on the image said, using the abbreviation for public service announcement.

"Thank you for your attention to this matter," the post added, using a phrase Trump frequently employs in his social media messages.

Opposition Democrats won control of both the House and the Senate on Tuesday, dealing a major blow to Trump and the Republican Party.

The results reflected deep frustration over the cost of living, tariffs and Trump's war with Iran, which has sent prices soaring and compounded dissatisfaction with an already deeply unpopular president.

But Trump has threatened to use his veto power, raising questions about how much Democrats can achieve even with control of both the House and Senate. *– AFP*

Republican US House speaker to step down after midterm rout

WASHINGTON, DC – US House Speaker Mike Johnson will step down as Republican leader following his party's crushing midterm election defeat, his spokesman told AFP yesterday.

Johnson, the highest-ranking Republican in the United States after President Donald Trump and Vice President JD Vance, is second in the line of presidential succession.

Asked whether reports that Johnson would step aside were correct, his spokesman responded in a one-word email: "Accurate."

The Louisiana Republican told staff of his decision yesterday morning, a day after Democrats seized control of both chambers of Congress in a sweeping rejection of Trump's party.

Johnson, 54, had led the House since October 2023, when he emerged as a compromise candidate after weeks of Republican infighting following the ouster of his predecessor, Kevin McCarthy.

He had campaigned extensively to preserve the Republicans' narrow House majority and previously suggested he might remain party leader even if Democrats won control.

His decision not to seek the minority leadership clears the way for a contest between current House Majority Leader Steve Scalise and Judiciary Committee chairman Jim Jordan.

Johnson won re-election to his Louisiana seat, and his decision does not mean he is immediately resigning as speaker or leaving Congress.

– AFP

Mississippi cliffhanger, Alaska count continues in US Senate races

WASHINGTON, DC – A cliffhanger in deeply conservative Mississippi and an Alaska race that had drawn accusations of cheating were two US Senate races yet to be called yesterday, a day after Democrats stormed to victory in polls across the country.

In the Deep South state, Democratic candidate Scott Colom was ahead by less than 50 votes over Republican incumbent Cindy Hyde-Smith, according to CNN and NBC, with 96 percent of ballots counted.

Colom would be the first Democrat elected to the US Senate from Mississippi since 1982.

In a state that President Donald Trump won by 24 points in 2024, a win by Colom would mark the eighth Senate seat flipped by Democrats in the midterm elections.

"Voters know what's at stake and we saw historic voter turnout in this election across Mississippi, including thousands voting for the first time," Colom said on his campaign Facebook page early yesterday.

Mississippi has long been overlooked by national Democrats but the Senate race attracted attention from party heavyweights late in the race, with Bill Clinton rallying voters in Tupelo and Barack Obama issuing an endorsement.

Colom would also be the first black Mississippian to serve in the chamber since Blanche Bruce, who had been born into slavery and was sent to Washington by the state legislature in 1875.

The result of the race was not expected for days, with local media reporting that there were thousands of uncounted ballots from people whose voter eligibility needed to be checked.

In Alaska, Democrat Mary Peltola was ahead of Republican Dan Sullivan 48.2 percent to 47.9 percent, with 74 percent of votes counted.

The race had attracted national attention following a *The New York Times* investigation revealing that aides to Peltola had recruited another man named Dan Sullivan to run for office with the goal of siphoning votes from the Republican incumbent.

"My opponent's campaign is literally focused on misleading Alaskans, lying, and cheating," Senator Sullivan told reporters in Anchorage on Election Day.

Peltola has denied any knowledge of the decoy candidate plot.

The result of the contest may not be declared for weeks, with Alaska employing a ranked-choice system and thousands of absentee and early votes still uncounted. *– AFP*

Danish students join European protests against education cuts

Camille Bas-Wohlert

COPENHAGEN – Thousands of young Danes took to the streets yesterday to protest over a government plan to cut student allowances, adding to a wave of European youth anger.

Under the banner "Enough is Enough", 11 high school and university student associations marched from Copenhagen's City Hall Square to parliament over the proposed cuts to free up funds for defence spending.

Student protests that started in France have spread in recent weeks to other European countries. Some 40,000 students were on strike at 57 schools across Denmark, including 12,00-13,000 at the protest in Copenhagen, according to organisers.

Copenhagen police were out in force during the demonstration which unfolded in a peaceful atmosphere under sunny autumn skies.

Thousands of young people chanted "Broken Promises" and carried signs reading "Save SU", the Danish acronym for the student allowance, "Less Support, Less Educated" and "Don't Cheat the Young".

"In Denmark, we get funding and economic support for getting an education, and we're very proud of this," said one protest organiser, Danish High School Students' Association president Oscar Tonsberg Hoffmann.

He told AFP that it would be wrong to dismantle "one of the world's strongest educational systems".

In a draft budget bill, Denmark's centre-left government plans to abolish the SU allowance for students who live with their parents and whose parents' total annual income exceeds 700,000 Danish kroner (US$104,440).



Students demonstrate in front of the Danish Parliament in Copenhagen, during a nationwide protest of high school students against the government's plan to cut state-paid student allowances to free up funds for defence spending. *– AFP*

The amount students receive would be progressive for all students whose parents earn between 419,589 kroner and 700,000 kroner a year.

The SU has until now been given to all students over the age of 18, which means high school and university students receive it.

Kieran Hindshaw, a 23-year-old agronomy student, said he felt betrayed by the government.

"I'm infuriated that we finally get a supposedly 'red' government in Denmark that includes the left parties, and anyway we get cuts to our welfare and to the economies of young people whilst they're funding corporate tax reductions and warfare," he told AFP.

"I hope they will look at this demonstration and change their mind."

According to the Higher Education Ministry, around 14,000 students are expected to lose their grant, and some 8,000 would see it reduced.

In force since 1970, SU is one of the cornerstones of Denmark's egalitarian university system, enabling all young people to get an education regardless of their parents' income.

The amount students currently receive is 1,154 kroner a month for those who live with their parents, and 7,426 kroner for those who live on their own.

'A helping hand'

The government has also proposed that unemployment benefits for recent university graduates be paid only to those who have worked during 18 of the last 24 months of their studies.

Dagmar Demuth, a high school student attending the protest, said the SU made it easier for students to make ends meet.

"It's important when you are in school and trying to educate yourself. It's hard to have to pay for yourself, so sometimes it's nice to have a little helping hand with the SU," she told AFP.

Tonsberg Hoffmann of the student association said high school organisations have tried to have a dialogue with the government, but without success.

Within the government, the Socialist People's Party and the Social Liberal Party had opposed education cuts but have nonetheless defended the proposal.

Interior and Economic Affairs Minister Pia Olsen Dyhr has in particular had to explain herself, as she had vowed that her Socialist People's Party would not touch the student grant system.

"It's no secret that this is not an initiative that comes from us. But we have made compromises in this government, and I fully stand by them," she said.

Industry Minister and Social Liberal Party leader Martin Lidegaard has meanwhile said that the cuts "are not pleasant decisions. This is economically responsible policy." *– AFP*

UK man tells rape trial he thought snoring woman was 'roleplaying'

LONDON – A UK man accused of raping a woman whose husband invited strangers to have sex with her told a court yesterday he heard her snoring but thought she was "roleplaying".

Richard Wilkins, 62, has pleaded not guilty to rape and assault by penetration in 2016, when he responded to a Craigslist ad by Philip Young to have sex with his then-wife Joanne, who has waived her right to anonymity.

Wilkins and three other men are standing trial at a court in southern England accused of various sexual offences committed jointly with the husband against Joanne Young. Another man has also admitted similar charges.

Young has admitted multiple counts of drugging and raping her over 13 years. The court was told he invited men to have sex with her while she was asleep or unconscious, presenting it as a "kink" for the couple.

Wilkins told Winchester Crown Court that he heard a "snoring noise" when he approached a blindfolded and bound Joanne Young in bed.

"I considered this was still part of the role-playing scenario that I was acting out," Wilkins said, adding she stopped snoring when he started having sex with her.

He said he did not suspect that she was drugged or drunk and did not know she was not consenting to the scenario.

Earlier this week, a jury heard statements from another defendant, Connor Sanderson-Doyle, 32, who said Philip Young was a "vile monster" for his actions against his wife.

Sanderson-Doyle, who responded to a Craigslist ad when he was 21 in 2016, said he thought it was a couple who wanted to "fulfil our fantasy".

'Sick game'

He said Young was "using pawns in his sick little game".

"I am not stupid and I am not a monster, in hindsight I should have done more," said Sanderson-Doyle, who denies sexual assault by penetration and sexual touching.

The other defendants are Norman Macksoni, 48, accused of rape, and Mohammed Hassan, 38, accused of sexual touching.

The prosecution argued that while the defendants may not have seen Young administer sedatives, they "could patently see its effect".

"They wanted to enact their fantasy and Phil Young's fantasy and they did not care about Jo Young's feelings at all," the prosecution previously told the jury.

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

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

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

Cyberattack targets French blood banks

PARIS – A cyberattack has targeted cold stores housing donated blood supplies in France, authorities said yesterday, the latest in a series of suspected hacks that has raised alarm across Europe.

A "cybersecurity incident" targeting a refrigeration service provider on Monday affected monitoring and control systems at three sites, the French Blood Establishment (EFS) said.

The cold stores – which contained blood samples as well as bags of plasma intended for transfusions and the manufacture of medicines – were programmed to reach 110C instead of -30C, according to French magazine Le Canard enchaîné.

But EFS said there had been "no health impact" and that "no loss of blood products" had been reported.

Institutions and companies are on high alert over cyberattacks in Europe after a series of suspected hacks targeting supermarket refrigeration systems caused widespread disruption in recent days.

Health Minister Stephanie Rist's office said the facilities' monitoring and alarm systems had ensured the safety of the blood supplies.

The health ministry said investigations had begun to establish how the incident happened, but gave no indication of who might be behind the cyberattack. *– AFP*

WHO approves clinical trials on 2 new Ebola vaccines

GENEVA – The World Health Organisation (WHO) yesterday approved clinical trials for two new Ebola vaccines, as doctors fight to control an outbreak in Africa that has killed more than 5,300 people.

"Last month, a vaccine trial began using the Ervebo vaccine, which is approved for Ebola virus, but not for Bundibugyo virus" ravaging the Democratic Republic of the Congo, WHO chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus told reporters.

"Today, WHO expert groups are recommending adding two vaccine candidates to the trial" he added.

Those two – ChAdOx1 BDBV, developed by the University of Oxford with the Serum Institute of India, and Moderna's mRNA-1469 – were developed specifically for the Bundibugyo virus, he explained.

The DRC's National Institute for Biomedical Research is leading the trial, backed by partners including WHO, said Tedros.

"Vaccines are powerful tools, but they are not substitutes for the proven measures that can save lives now: early care, contact tracing, isolation, safe and dignified burials and trusted engagement with communities," he added.

On Monday, the Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (Africa CDC) said Africa's ongoing Ebola epidemic had killed more than 5,300 people, the vast majority of them in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

A total of 10,444 cases have been confirmed, with a fatality rate of more than 50 percent, it added.

– AFP

Pope Leo's Argentina visit: consolation for Francis no-show

Leila Macor

BUENOS AIRES – Pope Leo XIV's upcoming trip to Argentina, the first papal visit in 39 years, is a sort of consolation prize for the homeland of predecessor Francis, who disappointed his compatriots by never returning as pontiff.

At the entrance to Buenos Aires Cathedral, where the late Pope Francis served as archbishop for 15 years, a TV screen shows images of him kissing the feet of the faithful.

Next to it, a poster advertises the open-air mass that US-born Leo will celebrate next Monday in Buenos Aires, on the second-leg of his South American tour.

The memory of Francis, Latin America's first pope, looms large over the visit of his successor.

For 23-year-old Sol Burgos, his arrival is a source of solace.

"Argentina was deeply hurt to lose its pope," she told AFP at the door of the cathedral.

But Pope Leo's close ties to the world's most Catholic continent, cultivated over long years as a missionary and then archbishop in Peru, helped smooth the transition, she said.

"Thank God the new pope has also had a connection with Latin America!"



A woman walks past a mural depicting Pope Leo XIV in Buenos Aires on Monday. Leo will visit Argentina between Sunday and next Wednesday. *– AFP*

Avoiding 'political earthquake'

Francis visited several countries in Latin America, including neighbouring Brazil, during his 12 years as leader of the world's 1.4 billion Catholics.

But he studiously avoided his own, an absence that disappointed many and fuelled ongoing speculation about why.

The most widely held view is that he feared a visit would be seen as endorsing the divisive centre-left Peronist movement in power for much of his papacy, until Libertarian President Javier Milei's win in 2023.

"He couldn't or didn't want to come," Rubén Lozano, a 73-year-old from the northern province of Santa Fé, said on a recent visit to the capital.

"In order to avoid creating divisions he [Francis] said to himself: 'OK, I won't go to Argentina for the moment and everything will remain peaceful.'"

Milei, who before becoming president copiously attacked Francis over his criticisms of capitalism and perceived leftist political stances, took the same view.

"I have no doubt that Pope Francis wanted to come, and I think he didn't come because he knew that if he did, it would cause a political earthquake," Milei told Argentina's Radio Mitre last month.

In a 2023 book-length interview, Francis argued being pope was a political role but that he drew the line at party politics.

The current archbishop of Buenos Aires, Jorge García Cuerva, has downplayed comparisons between the current and former Vatican leaders.

"The successor of Peter [regarded as the first pope] is coming, not the successor of Francis," he said in August.

Mending divisions

Leo will be greeted by Milei at the foot of his plane when he arrives on Sunday from Uruguay.

After a giant open-air Mass in the capital he will travel to the central city of Córdoba and to a basilica near Buenos Aires that attracts millions of pilgrims each year.

The last pope to visit Argentina was John Paul II in 1987.

García Cuerva has billed the new papal visit as a chance to mend divisions in Argentine society, between the rich and poor, left and right.

Leo will land in a country reeling after three years of biting austerity – Milei's cure for years of overspending and rampant inflation.

The Catholic Church has fiercely criticised the price paid by the poor for Milei's swingeing budget cuts and deregulation.

Taking a leaf from Francis's book, Leo has put the poor and marginalised at the centre of his papacy.

"I see Leo as a sort of continuation...of the imprint that Francis left on the Vatican and the church," said Lozano. *– AFP*

Far-right wave 'unravelling', says Spain's Sanchez after US vote

MADRID – The global far-right is "unravelling", Spain's Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez said yesterday as he celebrated the Democrat victory in US elections which saw them seize control of Congress in a rebuke to President Donald Trump.

"It happened in Brazil. It just happened in the US. And it will soon happen in Spain," said Sánchez, a global progressive star but whose premiership is in peril in snap elections he called for November 29.

The far-right wave of his rivals is "no longer growing, it is unravelling," he added.

The decisive victory by Democrats, who took both the Senate and the House of Representatives as well as a string of wins in deep Republican strongholds across the country, came days after the unexpected re-election of leftist Luis Inácio Lula da Silva as Brazil's president.

With less than four weeks to Spain's vote, however, polls point to a potential loss for Sánchez – one of Europe's last remaining socialist leaders – against the main conservative People's Party (PP).

It is predicted to win the most seats but fall short of a majority, meaning the far-right Vox party could become Spain's kingmakers.

Migration and housing have dominated public debate in Spain in recent months, but the election campaign has been overshadowed by a horrific train crash in Urda, south of Madrid, last week which killed at least 69 people. *– AFP*

Court orders Meta to halt training on Brazilian media content

SÃO PAULO – A São Paulo state court ordered US tech giant Meta on Tuesday to stop collecting content to train its AI models from Brazilian media outlets in three national press associations.

The preliminary injunction, seen by AFP, comes after the associations filed a civil suit alleging that Meta – owner of Facebook, Instagram, Threads and WhatsApp – had demanded free access to content in exchange for continued use of its platforms.

The judge set a daily fine of one million reais (about US$180,000) if Meta fails to comply.

Meta had placed the requirement in its new terms of service for businesses set to take effect on November 20.

Given the short timeline, Judge Guilherme Madeira Dezem issued his ruling without waiting for a response from the company.

He agreed that the damage to the media outlets would be "irreversible" once the AI were trained using their content.

"Imposing on media outlets the free and universal surrender of their copyrighted works as a toll for remaining connected to the channels through which the contemporary public consumes news constitutes a manifest abuse of rights," he wrote in the ruling.

The judge suspended that section of the new terms of service and prohibited Meta from penalising media outlets that rejected them.

Meta will have five days after notification of the ruling to present its defence.

"The preliminary injunction is a very positive sign that there are limits to the abuse of economic power," said Marcelo Rech, executive president of the National Association of Newspapers (ANJ), one of the plaintiffs, in a statement.

According to the associations, the ruling marks the first time in any country in favour of a coalition of media organisations opposing Meta's new terms of service. *– AFP*

Brazilian lawmakers approve Lula's security reform

BRASÍLIA – The Brazilian Senate has approved a reform measure aimed at cracking down on organised crime, a step proposed by President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva days after his re-election.

Insecurity featured as a major concern among voters in the hard-fought presidential election between Lula and his right-wing rival Flávio Bolsonaro.

The leftist leader defeated the son of jailed former president Jair Bolsonaro in a runoff on October 25.

Tuesday's broad approval of his security reform notches another win for Lula, who can now fulfil a campaign promise to create a public security ministry.

The text strengthens the role of the federal government in dealing with insecurity, typically a state responsibility, as well as funnelling more resources to anti-crime efforts.

It also toughens sentences for leaders and members of criminal factions that control large areas of Brazilian cities, including favelas in Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo.

In May, the United States designated Brazil's two largest criminal groups, the Red Command (CV) and First Capital Command (PCC), as terrorist organisations.

The decision drew the ire of Lula, who viewed it as a threat to Brazilian sovereignty.

Flávio Bolsonaro, whose father is an enthusiastic ally of US President Donald Trump, said he had requested the designation.

The right-wing senator fled to the US following his election loss, when his passports were cancelled in connection with a money-laundering investigation.

He tapped into rising insecurity on the campaign trail and had promised to lower the age of criminal responsibility to 16, and to 14 for serious cases.

Lawmakers excluded an article that would have lowered the age of responsibility, currently at 18, opting to discuss the issue separately. *– AFP*

Lyon coach Fonseca follows his heart to Sporting Lisbon

LIGUE 1

LYON – French club Lyon confirmed yesterday the departure of Portuguese coach Paulo Fonseca to Sporting Lisbon with a compensation fee of five million euros (US$5.6 million) paid to the Ligue 1 side.

Fonseca, 53, joined Lyon in January 2025 as a replacement for Pierre Sage and had been under contract until the end of this season.

"Paulo came to see me last week to say that he had received an offer from Sporting and had accepted it, explaining that it was a choice of the heart as it is his boyhood club," Lyon sporting director Matthieu Louis-Jean told AFP.

"I wasn't expecting this at all. I tried to understand his reasons, but it quickly became clear that, for him, it was an offer he couldn't refuse and for us, it would be difficult, because you can't keep someone against their will."

The former Porto, Shakhtar Donetsk, Lille and AC Milan coach guided Lyon to a fourth-place finish last term, but they missed out on this season's Champions League league phase after losing in the play-offs.

Fonseca's spell at Lyon came during a turbulent financial period. In June 2025, French football's financial watchdog provisionally relegated the club to Ligue 2 before the decision was overturned on appeal, subject to a strict programme of cost-cutting measures and player sales.

The club also stuck by Fonseca after he was given a nine-month domestic ban last year for an angry altercation with a referee.

While thanking Fonseca for his commitment, Lyon expressed "deep regret" regarding what they described as an "unexpected decision" mid-season with the club third in Ligue 1.

Lyon are expected to appoint a permanent successor during the upcoming international break, with former Braga coach Carlos Vicens reportedly among the leading candidates.

Assistant Jorge Maciel will take charge of Lyon on an interim basis for the club's next two matches, today's Europa League fixture against Real Sociedad and Sunday's Ligue 1 trip to Brest.

The Europa League game will be played at 1:45 a.m. tomorrow morning Macau time.

– AFP/MPD



Manchester United's Brazilian striker Matheus Cunha celebrates with fans after scoring their third goal during the UEFA Champions League, league phase football match against Roma at Old Trafford in Manchester, north west England, on Tuesday. – AFP

Football shorts

Barca's Rodri misses Atletico visit with hamstring injury

LALIGA

BARCELONA – Barcelona midfielder Rodri has been ruled out of Sunday's La Liga clash with Atletico Madrid because of a hamstring injury.

Rodri was substituted at half-time of Barcelona's 3-0 Champions League win over Aston Villa on Tuesday.

"Tests have confirmed a minor injury to his right hamstring," said Barcelona in a statement yesterday.

"He will miss next Sunday's match against Atletico Madrid. His exact recovery time will depend on how the injury develops."

La Liga leaders Barcelona visit second-placed Atletico, the 30-year-old midfielder's former side, looking to retain top spot.

Spanish media have reported Rodri could miss up to a month, which would rule him out of Spain's Nations League matches against the Czech Republic and England.

World Cup winners Spain have already reached the Nations League quarter-finals. *– AFP*

Palace's Mateta banned for three games after red card appeal fails

Premier League

LONDON – Crystal Palace striker Jean-Philippe Mateta will serve a three-match ban after officials rejected an appeal against his red card in Saturday's 2-0 Premier League defeat at Tottenham.

The France international, 29, was sent off in the 13th minute at the Tottenham Hotspur Stadium after a late challenge on Spurs captain Micky van de Ven.

Mateta was originally shown a yellow card by referee Michael Oliver, but it was upgraded to red following a VAR review.

He will be suspended for Palace's league match at home to Liverpool on Sunday, in addition to fixtures against Coventry and Hull later this month.

A statement from the Football Association said: "An independent regulatory commission has dismissed claims of both wrongful dismissal and excessive punishment in relation to Jean-Philippe Mateta." *– AFP*

Real Madrid set to appoint tennis great Nadal to board

LALIGA

MADRID - Real Madrid plan to appoint retired tennis superstar Rafael Nadal to their board of directors, the club said yesterday.

Nadal, a 22-time Grand Slam winner, has been an honorary club member since 2011 and shares a strong relationship with Madrid president Florentino Perez.

"For Real Madrid and for all Madrid supporters, it is a source of immense pride that a figure of his sporting and human stature - a benchmark of Spanish and world sport - should become part of our board of directors and, in this role, contribute to the present and future of our club," said Los Blancos in a statement.

Real Madrid's socios - members - are expected to ratify Nadal's appointment at the club's general assembly on November 21.

"I want to thank president Florentino Perez and the board for proposing that I join the board of directors of Real Madrid," wrote Nadal on social media platform X.

"I have accepted this proposal with great excitement, I'm eager to learn and to contribute everything I can."

Nadal, 40, won a record 14 French Open singles titles in a glittering career.

In 2023 Nadal said one day he would like to be Madrid president, but did not know if he was qualified for the post.

Ahead of club elections this year Nadal distanced himself from reports that he would stand as a candidate.

Perez triumphed in June, beating Enrique Riquelme. *– AFP*

Chelsea's Anselmino earns Argentina call-up

BUENOS AIRES – Uncapped defender Aaron Anselmino has been named in Argentina's squad for friendlies against Uruguay and Costa Rica, the Argentine Football Association said on Tuesday.

The 21-year-old Chelsea player is part of a new-look side following the retirement of 2022 FIFA World Cup-winning captain Lionel Messi last month.

Also missing from the Albiceleste squad were fellow world champions Cristian Romero, Lautaro Martinez and Rodrigo De Paul.

The 28-man list includes Mariano Troilo, who earned his first Argentina call-up last year but has not yet made his international debut. Meanwhile, Roma striker Santiago Castro returns following his first appearance for the Albiceleste in a 7-0 friendly win over Burkina Faso in October.

Argentina will face Uruguay at La Bombonera in Buenos Aires on November 13 and Costa Rica at the Mario Kempes Stadium in Cordoba four days later. *– Xinhua*

Japan boss accepts 'reality' as Asian Cup shift muddies departure

Football

TOKYO – Japan coach Hajime Moriyasu said yesterday that he would "accept reality" after the 2027 Asian Cup's postponement from January to December likely cost him his last shot at silverware before stepping down.

The Asian Football Confederation said the tournament in Saudi Arabia would be pushed back almost a year due to "exceptional circumstances" in the region, following Houthi attacks on the host country.

Moriyasu was due to lead Japan at the tournament early next year before being replaced by current Under-23 coach Go Oiwa, but he could now leave at the end of this year.

Japan Football Association technical director Masakuni Yamamoto declined to clarify the situation as Moriyasu named his squad to face Brazil and Paraguay in friendlies in Singapore this month.

Moriyasu, Japan's longest-serving coach, said the development of the country's football was more important than his personal situation.

"If the Asian Cup had gone ahead then I would have given my all to win the title in those seven games, but at the same time I thought those seven games wouldn't be lost if the tournament didn't happen," he said.

"If those seven games were to be rescheduled then the new management team could make good use of them looking ahead to the next World Cup.

"I just accept reality and do my best in the job right in front of me," he added.

Yamamoto said the timing of the coaching handover would be decided within the JFA.

As well as this month's games, Japan were set to play an Asian Cup warm-up friendly against a yet-to-be-named opponent in Osaka on December 30.

Yamamoto could not immediately confirm if the game would now go ahead.

Moriyasu said the Asian Cup postponement had not affected his squad selection to play Brazil and Paraguay.

Brazil knocked Japan out of this year's World Cup in the last 32 with an injury-time goal in a 2-1 win.

"We have always tried to give our best in the matches right in front of us and also connect that to the future," he said.

"The postponement of the Asian Cup hasn't changed anything in that regard."

Moriyasu picked Aston Villa goalkeeper Zion Suzuki and Crystal Palace midfielder Daichi Kamada, as well as calling up Coventry City winger Tatsuhiro Sakamoto for the first time in more than five years.

Monaco forward Takumi Minamino was recalled after missing the World Cup through injury.

Japan beat Brazil for the first time in a friendly in Tokyo in October last year.

"For Japan to become a team that can win the World Cup we need to have a higher winning percentage against teams from South America," said Moriyasu.

– AFP



Bayern Munich's French defender Dayot Upamecano (second left) reacts after his goal was disallowed during the UEFA Champions League first round day 4 football match against Club Atletico de Madrid at Metropolitano Stadium in Madrid on Tuesday. Bayern won the game 2 – 0. – AFP

Chinese paddlers suffer worst defeat in Youth Olympic history

Cao Jianjie and Hu Jiali

DAKAR – China will leave the Youth Olympic Games without a table tennis medal for the first time after Li Hechen suffered a shock quarterfinal defeat to Colombia's Emanuel Otalvaro in the men's singles yesterday, completing a disappointing campaign for the traditional powerhouse.

Li's 4-1 loss came a day after compatriot Yao Ruixuan was eliminated from the women's singles. The pair had also exited the mixed doubles on Sunday, ending China's hopes of adding to its dominant record at the competition.

China swept all three table tennis gold medals at each of the previous two editions of the Youth Olympics, with Wang Chuqin and Sun Yingsha winning all three titles at the most recent edition.

Li struggled from the outset against Otalvaro, losing the opening three games before pulling one back. The Chinese rallied from 9-6 down to level the fifth game at 10-10, but Otalvaro claimed the next two points to seal an 12-10, 13-11, 11-3, 10-12, 12-10 victory.

"I hadn't expected to beat my Chinese opponent 4-1, as this was the first time we had played against each other. I also served very well," said Otalvaro, whose high-toss serves repeatedly troubled Li.

While China endured a disappointing campaign, Japan continued to impress, with 13-year-old Miku Matsushima advancing to the women's singles semifinals after sweeping Poland's Katarzyna Rajkowska 11-4, 11-7, 11-8, 11-6.

Matsushima, the younger sister of men's world No. 1 Sora Matsushima, had already claimed gold in the mixed doubles alongside Ryuusei Kawakami on Tuesday.

"I want to become an Olympic champion," she said.

The Japanese leads the girls' under-15 and under-17 world rankings and sits second in the under-19 category, while holding the No. 205 spot in the senior rankings.

Matsushima, the youngest of four siblings who all play table tennis left-handed, said her family had played an important role in her development.

"When we are together, my eldest brother Sora gives me some advice," she said.

"My family members are now spread across different places, all pursuing table tennis, so I feel I should work even harder. My parents also send me messages with advice on techniques and strategies."

Matsushima acknowledged that her path to the semifinals had not been straightforward. She was pushed to six games by Thailand's Kulapassr Vijitviriyagul on Tuesday before prevailing 11-4, 11-6, 9-11, 11-7, 8-11, 11-9.

"But I toughed it out," she said.

Elsewhere, South Korea's Lee Seung-soo advanced to the men's singles semifinals with a 4-1 victory over Türkiye's Gorkem Ocal.

– Xinhua



Germany's Alexander Zverev reacts to a point against Italy's Lorenzo Musetti during their men's singles match on day three of the Paris ATP Masters 1000 tennis tournament at the Plenitude Arena in Nanterre, on the outskirts of Paris, yesterday. Zverev made a losing start to his reign as world number one yesterday as the two-time Grand Slam champion went down 7-6 (7/5), 6-2 to an inspired Musetti at the Paris Masters.

Playing his opening match in the round of 32 in the French capital, the German accumulated errors to tamely exit the tournament against the 24-year-old Italian.

Former world number five Musetti became the fifth man to defeat a player in his opening match as the world number one. *– AFP*

DAKAR 2026 YOUTH OLYMPIC GAMES Medal Tally

Rank	National				
1	JPN	6	1	2	9
2	CHN	4	3	1	8
3	RUS	3	2		5
4	EGY	3		1	4
5	NZL	2	3		5
6	CRO	2	2		4
7	RSA	1	3	1	5
8	GER	1	2	1	4
9	AUT	1	1	1	3
9	HKG	1	1	1	3
9	LTU	1	1	1	3
12	NED	1	1		2
12	ROU	1	1		2
14	ARG	1		3	4
15	BRA	1		1	2
15	FRA	1		1	2
15	TUR	1		1	2
18	AZE	1			1
18	CUB	1			1
18	CZE	1			1
18	ECU	1			1
18	KAZ	1			1
18	KEN	1			1
18	KSA	1			1
18	SGP	1			1
18	SLO	1			1
18	UKR	1			1
18	USA	1			1
29	TPE		2	2	4
30	GRE		2	1	3
30	IRI		2	1	3
32	SRB		2		2
33	IND		1	2	3
34	AUS	1	1		2
34	ESP	1	1		2
34	INA	1	1		2

WTA says protecting players 'key priority' in face of abuse, threats

Tennis

Peter Stebbings

Hong Kong – The WTA told AFP that protecting players is "a key priority" as former Australian Open champion Sofia Kenin and Britain's Katie Boulter yesterday became the latest women's tennis stars to be abused online.

Kenin lost in three sets to British teenager Mika Stojsavljevic at the Hong Kong Open and within minutes the American's Instagram page began receiving abusive and offensive messages.

Among the comments were references to the 27-year-old's appearance and remarks about her parents, much of it graphic and littered with swear words.

A comment from an account set to private and with no profile picture or followers wrote: "You're not even human. Do you realise how many families you've bankrupted around the world?"

The Women's Tennis Association (WTA) believes that there is clear evidence linking betting and some of the more serious abuse.

"Protecting players and the wider tennis family from online threats and abuse is a key priority for the WTA," said a spokesperson.

Boulter last year spoke out about the scale of the online hate, including death threats, directed at her and other players.

"I think it just kind of shows how vulnerable we are," Boulter told the BBC, saying it was hard sometimes to work out what was a real-life threat and what wasn't.

The 30-year-old Boulter followed Kenin in being defeated in Hong Kong yesterday, with abuse starting to roll into her Instagram page even before her match with the American Claire Liu finished.

On Tuesday, Boulter's fellow Briton Jodie Burrage suffered a first-round exit at the Chennai Open in India.

The 27-year-old later shared a story on her Instagram page showing the abuse, including death threats, that she was sent in the aftermath.

Much of the abuse players get is through direct messages.

Germany's Eva Lys tagged the WTA from her Instagram handle and asked: "When will something be done?"

The WTA said it has given Burrage extra support, including on the ground in Chennai, while investigations are under way to identify those responsible.

Women tennis players were subjected to more than 12,000 abusive posts and messages on social media in 2025, according to a report in July.

Among the steps that the WTA has taken along with other tennis bodies is the establishment in 2023 of an online monitoring service.

Through that system, abusers can be identified, investigated and in serious cases reported for prosecution.

Abusive comments can also be flagged for removal from the relevant websites, although social media platforms have been accused of not doing enough.

AFP has contacted Meta, which owns Instagram, for comment. *– AFP*

Death is big business in Ivory Coast, where funerals cost fortunes

Soulé Dia

ABIDJAN, Ivory Coast – Valérie Bli Lou is a shopkeeper from a modest family, but she is determined to give her late father the sumptuous funeral that Ivorian tradition demands – whether she can afford it or not.

Dancing through the night in a flowing burgundy-and-black tunic at her father's wake in Yopougon, a working-class neighbourhood in Ivory Coast's economic capital, Abidjan, the 60-year-old recounted the hardships of organising and paying for this lavish tribute to his life.

Death is big business in Ivory Coast, where families are expected to say goodbye to their loved ones with massive, music-fuelled feasts tinged with moments of both joy and sadness.

Bli Lou said that including the three cows she bought, she had already paid more than 2.5 million CFA francs (US$4,275) for her father's funeral rites – more than 15 times the average monthly salary in the west African country, according to the World Bank.

There would be more expenses to come, she said: transporting the coffin to a cemetery 500 kilometres away, building a tomb and hosting and feeding hundreds of guests at the burial.

Bli Lou, who is Christian, told AFP she was "proud" to be covering the expense, despite the difficulty.



A pedestrian walks past a vendor selling funeral flower wreaths in Yopougon, a popular neighbourhood of Abidjan, last month. – AFP



Workers move coffins at Ivosep, Ivory Coast's leading funeral services and mortuary company, in Treichville, a popular district of Abidjan, last month. – AFP

"My father is like my second God. I must honour him," she said.

Tears and dancing

When Bli Lou's father died in July, she did not have the money to organise a funeral in line with tradition.

So, she did what many families do: paid to preserve his body in a morgue, at the rate of about 7,000 CFA francs a day, while she got together the funds she needed with the help of family and friends.

She finally managed to put together the wake at a vast centre in Yopougon known for hosting funeral events, where crowds of mourners converge every Saturday.

Families often have to reserve weeks in advance.

The centre was holding four wakes in all on the October night Bli Lou celebrated her father.

Families had hired bands, set up sprawling arrays of tents and decorated chapels with portraits of their late loved ones inside.

The feasts were a mix of tears and music, embraces and dancing.

'Pressure'

At another wake, a DJ read out the names of those who had contributed cash or otherwise helped with the ceremony.

The family said they had paid more than five million francs in all, imposing a mandatory contribution on every relative.

Some went into debt to come up with the money.

"There's a lot of pressure," said one family member, Mathias Zouh.

"Our parents and grandparents did it, so we do it, too. Otherwise, it would reflect badly on you in the village."

Funerals are so important in some Ivorian communities they unleash competition and rivalries between families, said anthropologist Leo Montaz, who has studied the subject.

"Everyone wants to show how important he is and reaffirm his social status," he said.

For Muslims, Ivory Coast's other major faith, funerals must be organised more quickly – but the multiple ceremonies involved are still often expensive.

The importance of funeral rites has given rise to a booming industry in the country.

In Yopougon, stores offer coffins, funeral clothing, artificial flowers, headstones, jewellery and scents for perfuming the dead.

Gertrude Brou has worked in the industry for 15 years, selling funeral articles and dressing the dead.

"There's a need for funerals, and it's a job that earns you a good living," she said.

Her colleague Georges agreed, saying he had built his house and sent his children to study abroad thanks to his funeral parlour.

"It's a thriving profession," he said. *– AFP*

French film-fest convenes Oscar hopefuls in Los Angeles

Paula Ramon

LOS ANGELES – Five films hoping for nods in the international film category are screening at The American French Film Festival (TAFFF) in Los Angeles, which kicked off on Tuesday.

The American celebration of Francophone cinema – which is marking its 30th anniversary in Hollywood – this year includes the French entry "Minotaur," a film from the exiled Russian director Andrey Zvyagintsev along with four films co-produced by France.

Romania's submission to the Academy – "Fjord," starring Sebastian Stan and Renate Reinsve – is featured, along with the Belgian film "Coward," set during World War I and directed by Lukas Dhont.

Japan's entry "All of a Sudden" directed by Ryuske Hamaguchi and "Strawberries" representing Morocco are also heavy hitters on the line-up.

"Filmmakers from everywhere are choosing France as the place to make their work," said Anouchka van Riel, deputy director of the festival, told AFP.

"This year's programme tells the story for us."

The festival opened on Tuesday with the premiere of "In Waves," which centres on the California surf scene and is Netflix-bound.

Also debuting this week is the epic "De Gaulle," a two-part production by director Antonin Baudry that chronicles the political, military and personal challenges the French general faced during World War II.

"This is an almost unique example in modern history of a very loyal civil servant rebelling against his own government because his government is immoral," said Baudry, who also co-wrote the screenplay.

"He was seen like a fool. Now everybody thinks he was wise," the filmmaker told AFP.

Baudry said that while the story could resonate at any time, "it's comforting today to see how a lonesome man inspired people to hope before they had reasons to hope, to fight before they had weapons to fight."

Art 'that gets you through'

The Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences (AMPAS) is set to announce its shortlist for the best international feature film Oscar in December.

TAFFF, traditionally held one month earlier, has sought to position itself as a launchpad for French-language contenders.

The war drama "Coward" starring Emmanuel Macchia and Valentin Campagne – who shared the best actor award at Cannes – arrives at TAFFF following a successful run on the festival circuit.

Dhont, who also co-wrote the screenplay, drew inspiration from photographs of WWI soldiers in the trenches who turned to theatre amid the conflict.

"For me that idea of creation in the midst of so much destruction was such a hopeful and inspiring thing," Dhont told AFP.

"These men, traumatised, were actually moving to this more hopeful place," he continued, saying the soldiers "were actually liberating themselves from the archetype of the soldier and just, you know, playing women, dancing on a stage, making music."

Dhont described his film as being about "the place of art as the thing that gets you through."

He said he views film festivals as the ideal setting for such a story, saying they "are so much about art as an act of resisting the violence of the world."

In the non-fiction category, TAFFF will also present "Inside Gaza" – a documentary that followed a team of AFP journalists trapped and working in the Palestinian territory during the initial months of the Israeli offensive that followed the October 7, 2023 attack by Hamas.

TAFFF concludes this Sunday. *– AFP*



Chinese-American actress Stephanie Hsu attends the opening night of The American French Film Festival (TAFFF) with the "In Waves" screening at the Directors Guild of America (DGA) Theater in Los Angeles on Tuesday. – AFP



TAFF Executive Producer and Artistic Director François Truffart addresses the opening night of The American French Film Festival (TAFFF) with the "In Waves" screening at the Directors Guild of America (DGA) Theater in Los Angeles on Tuesday. – AFP

World Weather

CHINA	ASIA-PACIFIC	WORLD	LUSOPHONE
Beijing 1°C~18°C	Manila 22°C~33°C	New York 18°C~24°C	Lisbon 11°C~20°C
Shanghai 12°C~20°C	Bangkok 24°C~34°C	London 7°C~11°C	Rio de Janeiro 23°C~32°C
Hong Kong 22°C~29°C	Tokyo 13°C~19°C	Frankfurt 0°C~11°C	Luanda 24°C~28°C
Taipei 21°C~30°C	Singapore 25°C~33°C	Vancouver 9°C~11°C	Maputo 22°C~33°C
Guangzhou 21°C~30°C	Kuala Lumpur 23°C~32°C	Paris 5°C~11°C	Dili 23°C~33°C
Nanjing 10°C~20°C	Jakarta 24°C~35°C	Moscow 1°C~5°C	São Tomé 24°C~32°C
Guilin 16°C~21°C	Seoul 5°C~18°C	Las Vegas 10°C~21°C	Praia 24°C~31°C
Xi'an 6°C~19°C	Sydney 13°C~22°C	Monte Carlo 13°C~17°C	Bissau 23°C~35°C

Liu Lili (left) of China and Carolina Guerra Gonzalez of Germany hug after their women's solo gold medal race of the rowing coastal beach sprints at the Dakar 2026 Summer Youth Olympic Games in Saly, south of Dakar, Senegal, on Tuesday. - Xinhua





An officer salutes as the Singapore's flag is raised at the Women's Taijiquan Combined Final Taijiquan during the Dakar 2026 Youth Olympic Games at Dakar Expo Centre (CICAD) in Diamniadio, Senegal on Tuesday. - AFP

Gold medalists team Kenya, silver medalists team Australia and bronze medalists team Madagascar take a selfie after the victory ceremony for the women's rugby sevens event at Dakar 2026 Summer Youth Olympic Games in Dakar, Senegal, on Tuesday. - Xinhua





Emanuel Otalvaro (right) celebrates with his mother after the table tennis men's singles quarterfinals against Li Hechen of China at the Dakar 2026 Youth Olympic Games in Diamniadio, Senegal, yesterday. - Xinhua

Venezuela's Valeria Frannerys Dudamel Alvarado (right) hugs Egypt's Sondos Sonbol after winning the silver medal at the Women's Changquan Combined Final Changquan during the Dakar 2026 Youth Olympic Games at Dakar Expo Centre (CICAD) in Diamniadio, Senegal on Tuesday. - AFP





Gold medalists Zain Hido (left to right), Mitchell Chemtai and Elizabeth Naliaka of Kenya react during the victory ceremony for the women's rugby sevens event at Dakar 2026 Summer Youth Olympic Games in Dakar, Senegal, on Tuesday. - Xinhua