THE 澳門郵報 Macau POST DAILY

DIRECTOR: Harald Brüning | YEAR 22 | NO.5425 | MONDAY November 9, 2026 | https://www.macaupostdaily.com | MOP 6.00

Ex-lawmaker gets 12 ½ years in Macau's first national security trial

Staff Reporter

The Criminal Chamber of the Court of the Lower Court (TJB) of the Court of First Instance (TPI) has handed down its judgment in the first case involving offences against the national security of the Macao Special Administrative Region (MSAR).

The judgment was read out on Friday morning in public at the Court of First Instance in Sai Van.

At 10:20 a.m., the 69-year-old defendant, Au Kam San, escorted by prison guards, entered the courtroom and took his seat in the dock.

Four of Au's family members and several dozen members of the public attended to hear the reading of the judgment.

The presiding judge of the collegiate bench read out the judgment, which took about half an hour. After the reading was completed, Au was escorted out of the courtroom by prison guards.

During the sentencing, the presiding judge noted that this was the first case involving a violation of the Law on Safeguarding National Security since the establishment of the MSAR. The presiding judge pointed out that throughout the judicial proceedings, the court appointed Au's defence counsel in accordance with the law to represent him.



A prison van arrives at Macau's Court of First Instance (TPI) in Sai Van on Friday morning ahead of the sentencing of former lawmaker Au Kam San over national security law violations. – Photo: Maria Cheang Ut Meng

The court convicted Au, a teacher by profession, of one count of "subversion of State power", two counts of "establishing ties with organisations, associations, or individuals outside the MSAR to commit acts against national security", and one count of "breach of secrecy".

Based on the sentencing concept of legal concurrence (known in Portuguese as "cúmulo jurídico", also known in English as joinder of sentences) of his convictions, the defendant was sentenced to a single joint penalty of 12 years and 6 months' imprisonment, the presiding judge said.

After hearing his sentence, Au was driven back to his cell in Macau's central prison in Coloane.

The trial, which started on September 16 and concluded on September 18, was held behind closed doors "in order to ensure that no prejudice is caused to the interests of national security", according to a previous court statement.

Macau-born Au served as a directly elected member of Macau's Legislative Assembly (AL) for 20 years, spanning five consecutive terms from September 2001 to September 2021. He chose not to run for re-election in 2021, retiring from the legislature at the end of his fifth term. In July 2025, Au was arrested by the Judiciary Police (PJ) for alleged collusion with foreign forces to endanger national security.

Macau's national security law – the Law on Safeguarding National Security – was enacted in 2009 and amended in 2023.

The court said that it has granted his family permission to visit him regularly in prison. ■ *(More about the trial on pages 6 – 8)*

Macau-born giant panda twins arrive in Chengdu

Staff Reporter

The first pair of giant pandas born in Macau, "Jian Jian" and "Kang Kang", were transported from Macau to Chengdu on a chartered flight yesterday, where they have now started a quarantine period lasting at least one month at the Chengdu Research Base of Giant Panda Breeding.

Born on June 26, 2016 at the Macao Giant Panda Pavilion in Seac Pai Van Park in Coloane, the twins were relocated to the Chengdu Research Base of Giant Panda Breeding to enable them to begin a journey of learning and growth as they enter adulthood. They will further learn environmental adaptation skills and experience a more enriched natural habitat to foster comprehensive physical and mental development.

The Municipal Affairs Bureau (IAM) held a ceremony on the apron of Macau International Airport yesterday morning to bid farewell to the pair. The ceremony was attended by Secretary for Administration and Justice Wong Sio Chak, IAM President Chao Wai Ieng, and about 20 primary school students.

The Air Macau chartered flight took off at 12:15 p.m. and arrived at Chengdu Shuangliu International Airport at 2:25 p.m., according to an IAM statement yesterday.

The two pandas were in good health upon arrival in Chengdu, the statement said, adding that they were subsequently transported to the research base to undergo a quarantine period lasting at least one month.

Before yesterday's departure for Chengdu, the two pandas underwent a one-month quarantine period in Seac Pai Van Park, during which their public display was ended.

The IAM animal care and veterinary team, alongside experts specially sent from the Chengdu Research Base of Giant Panda Breeding, accompanied the two pandas on the plane, closely monitoring them and taking care of their health and safety throughout the flight, the bureau said yesterday.

The bureau stated that after their quarantine at the research base, the twins will move to the Star Cloud Giant Panda Pavilion, which has been upgraded for them. The pavilion simulates a natural habitat environment and is equipped with full-fledged facilities, allowing both to continue to grow up healthily and learn skills to adapt to their semi-wild habitat, enabling them to experience an enriched and natural way of living. ■



IAM animal care team members transport one of the two pandas to the Air Macau chartered plane at Macau International Airport yesterday. – Photo: IAM

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Daoist culture attracts young followers worldwide

In the morning mist on Wudang Mountain in Hubei Province, a young Spaniard dressed in a traditional Daoist robe slowly performed Tai Chi. Each measured movement of his hands and feet conveyed a sense of composure.

– Story on p. 8

Poland in shock as mass shooting shatters sense of security

Police looking for clues turned over every stone and flowerpot in Krakow's eerily empty Main Market Square yesterday as Poland entered two days of mourning for six people mowed down by a gunman with suspected far-right sympathies.

– Story on p. 11

Paraguay's impeached leader charged over shock implosion of bank

Paraguayan prosecutors charged ex-president Santiago Peña and took him into custody on Saturday over a banking crisis that saw millions of people cut off from their money, sparking major protests.

– Story on p. 12

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

Macau police deploy drones against speeding ahead of Grand Prix

Sherwin Hng

The Public Security Police Force (PSP) have launched a special operation targeting illegal vehicle modifications and speeding ahead of the Macau Grand Prix (MGP), using drones to monitor roads from above and ground patrols to intercept suspected offenders, according to a statement released on Saturday.

The operation began on October 31, as some drivers were suspected of using modified vehicles for illegal street racing ahead of the MGP, posing risks to road safety. Noise from modified vehicles has also disturbed residents, the statement said.

The MGP will take place on November 19-22.

During the operation, police deployed drones to monitor traffic along key sections of Estrada de Hac Sá and Estrada Nova de Hac Sá in Coloane, and key roads of the MGP's Guia Circuit. The drones tracked suspicious vehicles driven at high speeds and recorded suspected traffic violations, while ground officers were alerted to intercept them.

As of Saturday, police had issued 13 citations for speeding and intercepted 20 vehicles suspected of illegal modifications. These included one low- and 13 high-capacity motorcycles, as well as six private cars.

Inspections revealed that several vehicles had modified exhaust systems suspected of producing noise exceeding legal limits. Other suspected violations included non-compliant tyres, obstructed or non-compliant registration plates, opaque motorcycle helmet visors, and failure to display the required probationary driver "P" plates.

Police have taken action against the suspected offenders and notified the owners of the modified vehicles to present them to the Transport Bureau (DSAT) for special inspections, according to the statement.

The police said they would continue using drones and other technological tools to strengthen enforcement against illegal street racing, unauthorised vehicle modifications, and noise nuisances. They also urged drivers to comply with traffic regulations and refrain from making illegal modifications to their vehicles. ■



This undated handout photo provided by the Public Security Police (PSP) shows two police officers operating a drone during an enforcement operation.

Macao Customs seizes 2,917 used electronic products worth 1.25 million patacas



This undated handout photo released by the Macao Customs Service on Saturday shows boxes containing 2,917 used electronic products, with an estimated total market value of about 1.25 million patacas, seized at a parallel-trading den near the Barrier Gate on Friday.

Sherwin Hng

Macao Customs Service officers on Friday swooped on a shop suspected of serving as a distribution point for parallel traders near the Barrier Gate (關閘) checkpoint, seizing 2,917 used electronic products worth about 1.25 million patacas in total.

According to a statement released on Saturday, Customs officers have stepped up enforcement efforts in response to changing patterns of parallel-trading activities and intelligence developments. Officers raided the shop while following up on a report.

During the operation, officers questioned a 25-year-old local woman in charge of the shop and suspected of organising parallel traders to smuggle the goods from Macau to the Chinese mainland through repeated small-scale trips, a method commonly known as "ants moving"(螞蟻搬家)。

The woman was unable to produce any import declarations or documents proving the origin of the seized goods. She faces legal proceedings under the relevant provisions of the External Trade Law and could be fined up to 50,000 patacas if found in violation of the law, the statement said.

The seized goods will be confiscated and become the property of the Macao Special Administrative Region (MSAR), the statement added.

The Macao Customs Service urged the public not to engage in cross-border smuggling activities for financial gain,warning that offenders would face legal consequences. ■

Mexico visa-free policy for MSAR passport holders remains unchanged: DSI

Khalel Vallo

The Identification Services Bureau (DSI) said in a Friday statement that Mexico's visa-free entry policy for Macao Special Administrative Region (MSAR) passport holders remains unchanged.

This statement follows an incident in which local residents were denied boarding a flight to Mexico during a transit stopover in Beijing, after airline staff reportedly cited a temporary change to Mexico's visa-free policy.

According to the bureau last week, the travellers were informed at the airport that their travel documents no longer met the visa-free entry conditions for Mexico, preventing them from boarding the flight.

The bureau said that it verified the matter with the Consulate General of Mexico in Hong Kong, which confirmed that the existing visa-free arrangement for MSAR passport holders remains in effect. The statement added that further details are available on the consulate's official Facebook page https://www.facebook.com/share/p/1E8p8mfSQE/. The bureau also informed the affected residents of the situation and provided appropriate assistance.

Residents encountering difficulties while travelling abroad can contact the DSI hotline on 2837 0777 during office hours, or the 24-hour tourism hotline on 2833 3000.

Other assistance channels include the Public Security Police Force's 24-hour overseas emergency assistance hotline on 2857 3333 and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' Global Emergency Hotline for Consular Protection and Service on +86 10 12308.

The statement noted that cases reported through these hotlines will be handled and followed up by the relevant entities in line with established procedures. ■



This image shows the flag of the United Mexican States.

Observatory urges public to brace for mercury drop

Rui Pastorin

Temperatures are forecast to drop to as low as around 16 degrees tomorrow and Wednesday, with the local observatory urging members of the public to stay abreast of the situation and prepare accordingly.

In a statement on its website yesterday, the Macau Meteorological and Geophysical Bureau (SMG) pointed out that winds are expected to "strengthen significantly" today, reaching Force 6 with relatively strong gusts, due to a strong northeast monsoon, while temperatures will gradually drop.

The bureau pointed out that a large temperature difference may be observed during the day and night, noting that members of the public should dress appropriately and take necessary precautions. The weather, meanwhile, is expected to be dry.

As of 9:55 p.m. yesterday, the lowest temperature recorded by the website was around 25 degrees at Taipa Grande (大潭山).

The bureau also issued several reminders for members of the public on the website ahead of the temperature drop. Among these were encouraging vulnerable groups such as seniors, people with chronic illnesses, young children, and pregnant women to take the extra precautions to stay warm; reminding those with respiratory illnesses to beware of dust brought on by strong winds and to pay attention to changes in air quality; as well as to watch out for the discomforts that come with sudden drops in temperature such as respiratory, joint, heart and gastrointestinal issues.

Meanwhile, in terms of cold weather warnings, Macau has two levels, namely the higher "Orange" cold weather alert, which denotes very cold weather in the city, and the "Yellow" cold weather alert, which means that it is cold in Macau. If either is hoisted, the city's cold shelter located in the Ilha Verde district opens its doors to the public. ■



The image shows the seven-day weather forecast for Macauu, released by SMG early this morning.

Published since Aug 2004

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- Ai tools: DeepSeek, Gemini
- Wire services – AFP, Xinhua

Macau POST daily

Macau Weather

TEMPERATURE FALLING.
CLOUDY APART FROM SUNNY PERIODS.
A FEW RAIN PATCHES AT FIRST.
FORCE 5 TO 6 NORTHERLY WINDS WITH GUSTS.
RELATIVE HUMIDITY WILL RANGE BETWEEN 50% AND 90%.

19ºC~25ºC

Source: SMG

Population rises to 688,000 on immigration, live births drop 4.4 pct

Staff Reporter

Macau's population rose by 0.2 percent year-over-year to 688,000 at the end of the third quarter, driven by immigration despite a continued decline in births, the Statistics and Census Bureau (DSEC) has announced.

Between January and September, according to DSEC data, 2,205 mainland Chinese were permitted to settle in Macau, while 761 Hong Kong and Taiwan compatriots as well as foreign nationals were granted the right of abode and 41,256 non-resident workers (NRWs) were granted a work permit.

According to a DSEC statement released on Friday, females accounted for 54.0 percent of the total population, which includes permanent and non-permanent residents as well as non-resident workers.

Live births in the first nine months of the year totalled 2,037, a 4.4 percent drop compared to the same period last year. Males accounted for 52.3 percent of the newborn population.

During the first three quarters, 1,959 deaths were recorded, representing a 7.0 percent increase year-over-year. The total included 58 suicides, down 19.4 percent from the 72 recorded during the first nine months of last year.

Macau continues to maintain one of the world's highest population densities. At the end of September, the territory recorded a population density of 20,599 people per square kilometre, based on a total land area of 33.4 square kilometres. ■



Pedestrians walk through Largo do Senado, Macau's main square, last month. – Photo: Tony Wong

MGP Museum presents new exhibition zones

Rui Pastorin

Ahead of Macau's annual motorsport event the Macau Grand Prix (MGP), which this year marks its 73rd edition, a new exhibition zone opened at the MGP Museum in Zape on Friday that particularly highlights two winning cars in the FIA F4 World Cup and FR World Cup.

The Macau Government Tourism Office (MGTO), which manages the museum, made the announcement in a statement that day.

The new exhibition zone, located in the basement level, showcases the racecars driven by Macau Formula 4 Race – FIA F4 World Cup 2025 champion Jules Roussel from France, and the 2024 winner of the Macau Grand Prix – FIA Formula Regional World Cup race Ugo Ugochukwu from the US.

Both years marked the inaugural editions of each respective race. Ugochukwu's 2024 victory marked the first time that a US racer had won the Macau Grand Prix since 1981, which was then won by US driver Bob Earl.

Moreover, joining the new exhibits in the basement level is the red rescue car in the "Intervention Vehicles and Services" exhibition zone, which is accompanied by a looped video introducing the vehicle through a 3D scan, along with its equipment, according to the statement. The museum's Macau GT Cup – FIA GT World Cup has also been reorganised.



This undated handout photo provided by the Macau Government Tourism Office (MGTO) on Friday shows the newest exhibits on display in the basement of the Macau Grand Prix Museum in Zape.

Aside from the exhibits, museum-goers can take part in the limited-time "ONE TAP AHEAD – Guia Start Challenge" throughout the MGP period, testing one's focus and reaction speed and suitable for one to three players, the statement said.

The statement added that the winning entries of the "Speed · Creativity · Macao" AI Creative Contest, organised by the Macao Artificial Intelligence Youth Education Promotion Association and supported by MGTO, will also be showcased through a looped video at the Museum's Multi-function Room on 15 November.

Members of the public can visit the museum from 10:00 a.m. through 6:00 p.m. from Wednesday through Monday. One can find more details on mgpm.macaotourism.gov.mo/en, where ticketing can also be found.

Racers from all over the world will be taking on Macau's legendary and demanding 6.2-kilometre Guia Circuit from November 19 through 22 for the 73rd MGP, featuring seven race categories. ■



The Young Post

MONDAY November 9, 2026

ABOUT The Young Post

The Macau Post Daily's The Young Post will be published every Monday to present and discuss topical issues that may interest not only the younger but also all the other generations.



Saint Paul School students Koko Wong Ka Chon (left) and Sabina Ieong Cheng talk to the Post on October 24.

Saint Paul School student Koko Wong Ka Chon conducts a school tour on the campus for students come from Pui Va Middle School.





Pui Va Middle School student Kyle Chu Tsz Wang (centre), Alex Chong Seng Hin (left) and Venus Ao Ieong Pui Kei pose before talking to the Post.

Students from Pui Va Middle School and Saint Paul School participate an ice breaking game.





Saint Paul, Pui Va schools' exchange fosters youth engagement with public issues

Armindo Neves

With the aim of cultivating young people's interest in and sense of responsibility towards public issues, Saint Paul School, Macau and Pui Va Middle School of Macau held a collaborative exchange day on October 24 at Saint Paul School's campus.

According to a statement released on that day, the event - themed around UNESCO Global Media and Information Literacy Week, an annual international initiative observed from October 24 to 31 to promote critical thinking, digital rights, and the ethical use of information - also aimed to expand students' opportunities to practise English and foster inter-school ties.

The statement noted that the exchange centred on English language communication, inter-school collaboration, critical thinking, and responsible expression. Through English club experience-sharing sessions, student-led campus tours, themed ice-breaking games, and a visual co-creation workshop, students from both schools used English in genuine interactive settings to talk about their experiences of building student societies and to explore how information is selected, presented, understood, and disseminated.

The activities integrated media and information literacy into concrete tasks. Guiding students through everyday forms of expression - including name tags, character descriptions, news framing, image creation, and exhibition texts - the sessions encouraged reflection on identity presentation, information credibility, differing viewpoints, and communication ethics. Working through mixed grouping, relay-style creation, English-guided tours, and impromptu Q&A sessions, students jointly completed themed works, putting into practice the annual event motif: "We All Share Responsibility".

Three Pui Va Middle School of Macau students reflected on the day. Kyle Chu Tsz Wang said that from their very first meeting, participants plunged into an English reasoning game, noting that interactive learning was far more enjoyable than listening to a one-way lecture. She added that she came away appreciating everyone's duty to discern the authenticity of online content.

Venus Ao Ieong Pui Kei admitted that whilst speaking English with peers from another school felt awkward at first, participants gradually warmed to one another. Discovering like-minded peers outside her own school broadened her horizons, and she pledged to verify information before forwarding it in future.

Alex Chong Seng Hin said that by speaking up and trying harder during the activity, he came to appreciate the appeal of English. All three students noted that through drawing and dividing tasks within their groups, they effectively conveyed the theme of shared responsibility. They also expressed admiration for the St Paul's students' confidence, composure, clear division of labour, and creativity.

Three Saint Paul School students also gave their thoughts. Musa Lei Iek Lam said the most enjoyable aspect was seeing her classmates move from shy to relaxed and friendly. She took the initiative to chat with others, acting as a communication bridge, and felt that genuine interaction was more valuable than classroom grammar lessons.

Sabina Ieong Cheng said the activity encouraged everyone to speak entirely in English, praising the host students for their thorough preparation and lively atmosphere.

Koko Wong Ka Chon recalled how memorable it was to personally resolve an issue during a presentation malfunction, adding that he learnt to accommodate differing opinions online and verify sources before drawing conclusions. All three Saint Paul students said they had gained a sense of enthusiasm, strong communication skills, and a well-prepared attitude from their Pui Va peers.

Chris Chou Ion Pang, an English language teacher at Pui Va Middle School, said that the event's co-ordination emphasised anxiety reduction, game-based learning, and peer support so that both Pui Va and Saint Paul students felt the activity was in a party room rather than a traditional classroom. Small tasks helped build a sense of achievement and broke down the barrier of being afraid to make mistakes. He also added that the media literacy component trained students to distinguish fact from opinion, prioritising self-expression over strict grammar to encourage independent critical thinking in an age of information overload.

Bonnie Kou Pui Ieng, an English language teacher at Saint Paul School, said that teachers from both schools first outlined the event format before brainstorming with students to refine the plan through multiple rounds of feedback. She observed that although students are exposed to media literacy concepts, they often copy and paste when completing homework; she hoped this practical exercise would foster true fact-checking abilities.

Vice Principal of Pui Va Middle School Mary Sun said the cross-school initiative stemmed from a shared commitment to enhancing English language proficiency and peer learning. She expressed her hope of establishing a long-term cooperation mechanism with Saint Paul School in the future.

Curriculum Director of Saint Paul School Philip Lai Pak Cheong added that the heads of both English panels had independently wished to launch inter-school activities, making the first day of Global Media and Information Literacy Week an ideal occasion for students to learn event planning, problem-solving, and second-language communication.



Teachers and students from Pui Va Middle School and Saint Paul School pose during October 24th exchange day on Saint Paul School's campus. Photos courtesy of Pui Va Middle School.

Police to launch app spotting deepfake videos



Participants start their race outside the UM Library yesterday as Security Chan Tsz King blows the air horn. – Photos: Tony Wong



Judiciary Police (PJ) Director Sit Chong Meng delivers a speech yesterday before the race began.

Tony Wong

The Judiciary Police (PJ) yesterday held an anti-fraud-themed footrace for the first time, with the aim of consolidating residents' awareness – university students in particular – of preventing themselves from falling victim to fraud – fake police scams in particular.

Delivering a speech before the race began, PJ Director Sit Chong Meng pledged the police's commitment to a more targeted approach to anti-fraud education campaigns so as to strengthen university students' ability to stay alert to ever-changing fraudulent tactics.

Speaking to reporters after the race, Sit said that the Judiciary Police's anti-fraud mini-programme on WeChat will add a new function next year to help residents identify fake images, audio, and videos created by deepfake AI technology.

The footrace, which also included a game-booth carnival, was held on the University of Macau's (UM) campus yesterday morning.

The running event comprised a 5-km race and a 2-km fun run, drawing participation from 600 residents, including university students and teachers.

Top security officials Secretary for Security Chan Tsz King, Customs General Director Adriano Marques Ho, and PJ Director Sit Chong Meng joined the 2-km fun run.

The fun run was also joined by officials from several other public entities involved in the government's anti-fraud initiative, and representatives from higher education institutions, banks, and gaming operators cooperating with the government's anti-fraud campaign.

In addition to PJ officers, the event was also joined by police officers from Hong Kong and Hengqin.

Delivering his speech before the race started, Sit noted that in recent years, phone scams and online fraud have been on the rise globally. In particular, scams where fraudsters impersonate police or judicial authorities often deal a devastating emotional and financial blow to defrauded students and their families.

Sit noted that to implement the strategy of tackling fraud through early prevention with a focus on youth, the Judiciary Police, in collaboration with the Education and Youth Development Bureau (DSEDJ), launched the "Campus Anti-Fraud Vaccination Programme" in 2024.

Phone & online fraud falls 40 pct in Jan-Sept

Sit said that through close cooperation between the police and higher education institutions, the programme has entered its third year with fruitful results. In the first three quarters of this year, the combined number of phone scams and online fraud in Macau continued their downward trend, falling around 40 per cent year-on-year. Notably, the number of scammed university students dropped 60 per cent year-on-year. These figures clearly demonstrate that large-scale, continuous public education on fraud prevention has built a solid immune barrier for the public, particularly for university students, Sit said.

Sit underlined that despite the achievements in bringing down the number of defrauded students, the police have by no means let their guard down. As scammers continue to create new fraudulent tactics – such as using AI technology and deep psychological manipulation – new types of scams have become highly deceptive, leading to some young people still falling victim, he said.

Sit said that the phenomenon demonstrates that anti-fraud information "cannot just be disseminated to residents' eyes and ears". Instead, he said, anti-fraud campaigns must be conducted in a way that ensures residents gain a genuine understanding of the information. Consequently, Sit said, anti-fraud education campaigns must shift from broad coverage to a precise and targeted approach, turning post-incident remedies into proactive, pre-emptive measures.

To this end, Sit said, the Judiciary Police have strengthened their collaboration with telecom operators since earlier this year. By leveraging AI and big data technologies, they will proactively screen for potential scams to intervene at an early or even pre-incident stage, Sit said, adding that the new measure has proven effective in fraud prevention. Since then, the PJ Anti-Fraud Coordination Centre has detected numerous early-stage fraud cases involving university students, he said.

Moreover, Sit said that the Judiciary Police decided to organise an anti-fraud running race for the first time with the aim of fostering a strong anti-fraud atmosphere across university campuses, enhancing fraud awareness among students, especially freshers.

Sit said that both the Hong Kong and Hengqin police forces joining the local event highlighted the three regions' firm determination to prevent and combat fraud together.

In addition to the Judiciary Police's anti-fraud mascot "Anti-Fraud Genie" (防騙小精靈), the Hong Kong Police Force's anti-fraud mascot "The Little Grape" (提子) and the Hengqin Public Security Bureau's anti-fraud mascot "Police Little Bear" (警察小熊) also joined yesterday's event on the UM campus.

Speaking to reporters after the race, Sit noted that the combined number of phone scams and online fraud recorded in the first three quarters of this year stood at 385, a year-on-year decrease of around 40 per cent. The total losses resulting from these cases amounted to 200 million patacas, a year-on-year decrease of 6.7 per cent.

No students scammed since Sept

In the first three quarters of this year, Sit said, 17 victims of phone scams and online fraud combined were university students. Nevertheless, no students have been defrauded since the beginning of September, Sit said, adding this has demonstrated the effectiveness of the "Campus Anti-Fraud Vaccination Programme".

Sit also said that the PJ anti-fraud mini-programme on WeChat will add a new function next year to help residents identify fake images, audio, and videos created by deepfake AI technology.

After the new function is launched, smartphone users can upload suspicious photos or videos onto the anti-fraud mini-programme to check their genuineness. ■

MGP Family Carnival ends in Tap Siac



Children race on a mini Guia Circuit during yesterday's 73rd Macau Grand Prix Family Carnival in Praça do Tap Siac. – Photo: Khalel Vallo

Khalel Vallo

The two-day 73rd Macau Grand Prix Family Carnival concluded in Praça do Tap Siac yesterday, giving residents and visitors interactive racing activities ahead of the four-day event, which will take place from November 19 to 22.

According to a statement by the Culture and Sports Bureau (DSCD) on Saturday, the opening ceremony was held at 2:45 p.m. that day and was attended by DSCD Director Deland Leong Wai Man, Macao Government Tourism Office (MGTO) Director Maria Helena de Senna Fernandes, Macau Grand Prix Organising Committee Coordinator See Lei Si Leng, and representatives of the event's sponsors and partners.

Themed around the Guia Circuit, the carnival featured a recreated circuit, a mini racetrack, and interactive games designed for families, the statement said, adding that children could take on roles such as racing drivers, flag marshals, mechanics, medical and race-control staff, gaining an introduction to the different operations involved in the Macau Grand Prix (MGP).

The activities included racing simulators, a mini Guia Circuit, driver training, crane operations, and professional mechanic experiences. Visitors could also learn about motorsport and obtain MGP-themed souvenirs.

The statement noted that the 73rd Macau Grand Prix (MGP) will feature seven races, including the Macau Grand Prix – FIA Formula Regional World Cup, Macau GT Cup – FIA GT World Cup, Macau Guia Race – Kumho FIA TCR World Tour Event of Macau, and the 58th Macau Motorcycle Grand Prix.

Other pre-MGP activities will feature an auto show in Praça do Tap Siac this weekend, while MGP-themed games and simulators will be available at Anim'Arte NAM VAN on November 13–15 and 20–22, the statement said.

Meanwhile, the inaugural "Macao City Culture Festival" outside Macau Tower will also run from this Saturday to November 22, featuring cultural exhibitions, intangible cultural heritage performances, and activities at several locations. Its opening ceremony, alongside that of the Macau Grand Prix, is slated for this Saturday at 3:00 p.m. in the square. ■

Lower Court hands down judgment in Macau's first national security case, sentencing defendant to 12 ½ years in prison

Statement by Lower Court (TJB) of the Court of First Instance (TPI), Nov. 6, 2026, 10:48 a.m.

The Lower Court today [Friday] handed down its judgment in the criminal case in which Au Kam San (the defendant), a Macao resident, was suspected of committing crimes against national security. In this case, the Public Prosecutions Office (MP) indicted the defendant on March 27, 2026 on suspicion of committing crimes against national security. The defendant subsequently requested an opening of the preliminary hearing stage (*instrução*). Following complementary investigation and the preliminary hearing debate, the preliminary hearing judge issued a ruling on July 2 confirming and upholding the Public Prosecution Office's indictment, committing the defendant to trial for three counts of "subversion of State power", three counts of "establishing ties with organisations, associations, or individuals outside the Macao Special Administrative Region (MSAR) to commit acts endangering national security", and one count of "breach of secrecy".

This is the first case involving a violation of the Law on Safeguarding National Security since the establishment of the MSAR. Throughout the proceedings, as the defendant did not retain a lawyer himself, the Court appointed a defence counsel for him in accordance with the law. The appointed defence counsel, duly accepted and recognised by the defendant, maintained close communication and contact with him to conduct his defence, and the defendant fully exercised his legal right to defence. Furthermore, the Court also lawfully granted requests submitted by his family members for regular visits.

The Criminal Chamber of the Lower Court held trial hearings for the case between September 16 and 18, 2026.

Based on the prudent, overall and objective analysis of all evidence (including the defendant's statements, witness testimonies, seized items, communication records, and relevant criminal investigation reports), the Collegiate Bench formed its conviction and found the vast majority of the facts set out in the indictment proven. During the trial hearings, the defendant did not contest most of the facts underpinning the indictment; he also admitted that colluding and establishing ties with external organisations constituted a crime and agreed with the defence arguments presented by his lawyer.

Regarding the charges of "subversion of State power" and "establishing ties with organisations, associations, or individuals outside the MSAR to commit acts endangering national security"–arising from unlawfully establishing ties with hostile external organisations and colluding with them to carry out acts endangering national security–the proven facts demonstrate that the defendant, Au Kam San, personally and over an extended period, provided assistance and cooperation to hostile external organisations. This involved gathering, preparing, and publicly disseminating various images and information that were manifestly filled with political claims aimed at subverting State power, as well as being false and obviously distorted. He thus used the unlawful means of establishing ties with hostile external organisations to collude with them in inciting hatred among Macao residents against the Central People's Government, with the intent to overthrow and undermine the fundamental system of the State established by the Constitution of the People's Republic of China (PRC). These subversion acts persisted even after the revised Law on Safeguarding National Security came into effect in 2023. There is no doubt that the defendant's conduct simultaneously constitutes both the crime of "subversion of State power" and "establishing ties with organisations, associations, or individuals outside the MSAR to commit acts endangering national security". However, as there exists an apparent concurrence between the two offences, the defendant must be punished by law solely for the more severe crime, namely "subversion of State power".

Regarding the charges of two counts of "subversion of state power" and two counts of "establishing ties with organisations, associations, or individuals outside the MSAR to commit acts endangering national security" stemming from establishing ties with several external organisations, the Collegiate Bench found it proven that between 2023 and 2024, the defendant successively established ties with multiple external organisations. He personally assisted them in collecting false and manifestly distorted information and conspired with them to publish it, aiming to provoke hostile acts by foreign states against the PRC and the MSAR, incite hatred among MSAR residents against the Central People's Government, and disrupt the smooth progress of the 6th Chief Executive Election of the MSAR. The defendant's conduct fully satisfies the essential elements of establishing ties with organisations, associations, or individuals outside the MSAR to commit acts endangering national security, warranting conviction on two counts of this charge. Regarding the two counts of "subversion of State power" based on the same set of facts, the Collegiate Bench held that reasonable doubts remained as to whether the defendant's conduct substantively reached the degree of overthrow or harm required by the statutory definition of that crime; therefore, applying the principle of *in dubio pro reo*, it acquitted the defendant of those two counts of "subversion of state power".

Regarding the crime of "breach of secrecy", according to the facts found proven by the Collegiate Bench, the defendant, in his former capacity as a member of the Legislative Assembly in 2021, disclosed confidential information to external organisations. He had gained knowledge of this information while participating, as a member of the Legislative Assembly's Follow-up Committee for Land and Public Concessions Affairs, in a closed-door meeting regarding the renewal of gaming concessions. This conduct fully satisfies the crime of "breach of secrecy" under Article 348 of the Penal Code.

On the grounds of the judgment, the Collegiate Bench recorded that the series of acts committed by the defendant severely violated the legal interests protected by the relevant provisions. Although the defendant is a first-time offender and confessed to a considerable portion of the facts, his level of intent was extremely high, and both the unlawfulness of the crime and its potential consequences were very grave.

Based on the proven facts and applicable legal provisions, following deliberation, the Collegiate Bench handed down the following decision:

– Acquittals on the two counts of "subversion of State power" arising from establishing ties with various external organisations;

– Regarding the charge of "establishing ties with organisations, associations, or individuals outside the MSAR to commit acts endangering national security" for unlawfully establishing ties with hostile external organisations and conspiring with them to perform acts endangering national security: no separate penalty is imposed, as there is an apparent concurrence between this offence and the charge of "subversion of state power" based on the same facts;

– Conviction as a principal offender for a completed crime of "subversion of state power", under Article 9(1) of Law No. 2/2009 (Law on Safeguarding National Security), as amended by Law No. 8/2023, with a sentence of 11 years and 3 months' imprisonment;

– Conviction as a principal offender for a completed crime of "establishing ties with organisations, associations, or individuals outside the MSAR to commit acts endangering national security", under Article 13(1)(3) & (4), in conjunction with Article 13(2)(2) & (4)(1) of Law No. 2/2009, as amended by Law No. 8/2023, with a sentence of 3 years and 9 months' imprisonment;

– Conviction as a principal offender for a completed crime of "establishing ties with organisations, associations, or individuals outside the MSAR to commit acts endangering national security", under Article 13(1)(2) & (4), in conjunction with Article 13(2)(2) & (4)(1) of Law No. 2/2009, as amended by Law No. 8/2023, with a sentence of 3 years and 9 months' imprisonment;

– Conviction as a principal offender for a completed crime of "breach of secrecy", under Article 348(1) of the Macao Penal Code, with a sentence of 9 months' imprisonment.

Under Article 71 of the Penal Code, following the rules on legal concurrence (*cúmulo jurídico*), the overall sentence range for the defendant is between 11 years and 3 months and 19 years and 6 months. After deliberation, the Collegiate Bench decided to sentence the defendant Au Kam San to a single combined penalty of 12 years and 6 months' imprisonment.

Several dozen citizens, representatives of the news media, and family members of the defendant attended today's public reading of the judgment.

END

Editor's Note: The Macau Post Daily *arranged, reviewed, and edited the translation of this unabridged statement from Chinese*

MSAR Government Firmly Supports Judicial Organs in Adjudicating First National Security Case in Accordance with the Law: statement

Statement by Macao SAR Government, Nov 6, 2026

The Government of the Macao Special Administrative Region (MSAR) respects and supports the ruling delivered today [Friday] by the MSAR courts in accordance with the law regarding the first case involving a violation of Macao's Law on Safeguarding National Security.

The Criminal Chamber of the Lower Court adjudicated and delivered its judgment on Macao's first national security case independently and in accordance with the law, fully safeguarding the legitimate rights of the defendants and other litigation participants. The MSAR Government calls on all sectors of society to respect the court's ruling, support the judicial organs in exercising their judicial power in accordance with the law, and uphold judicial fairness and the tradition of the rule of law.

Safeguarding national security is the constitutional responsibility of the MSAR. The MSAR Government's stance on safeguarding national security, respecting judicial independence, and defending the rule of law is firm, steadfast, and unshakeable. Moving forward, the MSAR Government will continue to strictly enforce Macao's Law on Safeguarding National Security, prevent, suppress, and punish acts endangering national security in accordance with the law, and continuously deepen education on national security and the rule of law. This will further strengthen the MSAR's line of defence in safeguarding national security, protect Macao's long-term prosperity and stability as well as the fundamental interests of the public, and ensure the steady and sustained implementation of the "One Country, Two Systems" principle with Macao characteristics.

Editor's Note: The translation of the unabridged statement from Chinese was arranged, reviewed and edited by the Post. *Words within square brackets added by the* Post.



Undated handout photo of Macao SAR Government Headquarters. – Photo courtesy of GCS

Macao SAR Govt Strongly Condemns External Forces for Interfering in Internal Affairs and Smearing Judiciary

Statement by Macao SAR Government, Nov 7, 2026

The Government of the Macao Special Administrative Region (MSAR) expresses its strong dissatisfaction with and firm opposition to the unfounded remarks made today [Saturday] by the European External Action Service, the US Congressional-Executive Commission on China, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and individual members of the European Parliament regarding the first national security case adjudicated by the courts of the MSAR in accordance with the law.

[The convict] Au Kam San is a Chinese citizen. The adjudication by the MSAR's courts, in accordance with the law, of his case involving offences endangering national security is entirely an internal affair of the MSAR. The judicial independence of the MSAR is strictly safeguarded by the Macao Basic Law. The MSAR Government respects and supports the independent adjudication of cases by the judicial authorities in accordance with the law. The MSAR's judicial authorities have consistently adhered to statutory procedures strictly, upheld procedural fairness, conducted trials in accordance with the law and delivered judgments publicly, fully safeguarding the lawful rights and interests of the parties concerned.

Macao's Penal Code and Law on Safeguarding National Security adhere to the principle of legality in defining offences and prescribing penalties, and provide rigorous and clear definitions of all offences. The court convicted and sentenced the accused, Au Kam San, strictly on the basis of the applicable legal provisions and the facts established by the evidence. Any relevant arbitrary interference and unjustified accusation will not be tolerated.

Macao's Law on Safeguarding National Security and its supporting legislation are consistent with the Macao Basic Law, the international human rights covenants applicable to Macao and international practice. While safeguarding national security, they also protect, in accordance with the law, the rights and freedoms enjoyed by residents. No organisation or individual should use "human rights" or "freedom" as a shield for engaging in unlawful activities that endanger national security.

The Macao SAR Government calls on external parties to respect the rulings of the MSAR's courts and firmly opposes any groundless accusations, smears or interference directed at Macao's judicial proceedings.

Editor's Note: Translation from Chinese provided by the Macao Government Information Bureau (GCS) edited by the Post. *Words within square brackets added by the* Post.

Macao SAR Legislative Assembly Firmly Supports Court Ruling, Strongly Opposes External Interference in Judicial Independence



This photo taken in April 2025 shows the main entrance to the Macau Legislative Assembly Building in Nam Van. *– Staff Reporter*

Statement issued on Nov. 7, 2026

The Criminal Chamber of the Lower Court of the Macao Special Administrative Region (MSAR) delivered its judgment yesterday [Friday] in the national security trial involving former legislator Au Kam San.

The Legislative Assembly firmly supports the judicial organs in independently rendering the ruling in accordance with the law, and considers that the trial fully embodies the spirit of the rule of law. The Legislative Assembly expresses strong dissatisfaction with and resolutely opposes the unwarranted comments and malicious attacks on Macao's legal principles made by the European External Action Service, the Congressional-Executive Commission on China of the USA, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, and certain members of the European Parliament.

In Macao, no one is above the law. Any act that challenges the fundamental state system established by the Constitution, undermines the constitutional order as defined by the Constitution and the Macao Basic Law, or violates the Law on Safeguarding National Security, must be severely punished in accordance with the law. As a former member of the Legislative Assembly, [the convict] Au Kam San was expected to strictly abide by the law and uphold his oath of office. However, he long engaged in collusion with overseas organizations and, during the performance of his duties, disclosed confidential information obtained from closed-door Legislative Assembly meetings to foreign entities. Such acts clearly violate legal provisions and must incur corresponding legal consequences.

Macao's judicial system is explicitly protected under the Basic Law, and courts independently exercise adjudication power free from interference. The trial of Au Kam San's case strictly followed the Law on Safeguarding National Security and other applicable legal provisions, with full protection afforded to the suspect's procedural rights throughout the process. Any remarks or actions that attack, pressure, or undermine the MSAR's lawful judicial proceedings constitute a serious violation of the rule of law.

The Legislative Assembly emphasises that the Au Kam San case is purely an internal affair of the Macao SAR. No external force has the right to interfere. The Legislative Assembly once again urges relevant countries and institutions to respect China's sovereignty and immediately cease all acts of interference in China's internal affairs and the internal matters of the MSAR.

Editor's Note: Translation from Chinese provided by the Macao Government Information Bureau (GCS) edited by the Post. Words within square brackets added by the Post.

Macao Liaison Office Firmly Supports Macao Judiciary in Lawfully Handing Down Judgment in its First National Security Case

Statement issued on Nov. 6, 2026

A spokesperson for the Liaison Office of the Central People's Government in the Macao Special Administrative Region (MSAR) expressed [on Friday] firm support for the MSAR judicial organs in trying the case of Au Kam San, who stood accused of committing crimes endangering national security, in accordance with the law and delivering a fair verdict.

The lawful trial and sentencing in Macao's first national security case fully demonstrate judicial fairness and the authority of the rule of law. They also fully reflect the MSAR's firm determination and strong willpower to punish crimes endangering national security in accordance with the law, serving as a vivid practice and an important milestone in the MSAR's effective fulfillment of its constitutional responsibility to safeguard national security.

Safeguarding national sovereignty, security, and development interests is the supreme principle of the "One Country, Two Systems" policy. The verdict in Macao's first national security case powerfully demonstrates that the bottom line of national security must not be crossed, and the spirit of the rule of law in Macao must not be challenged.

Any illegal or criminal act that endangers national security or undermines Macao's prosperity and stability will surely be severely punished by the law. The Macao Liaison Office will, as always, firmly support the Macao Special Administrative Region in preventing, suppressing, and punishing acts endangering national security in accordance with the law, effectively safeguarding national sovereignty, security, and development interests, maintaining Macao's long-term prosperity and stability, and ensuring the steady and sustained progress of Macao's "One Country, Two Systems" cause.

Editor's Note: The Macau Post Daily *arranged, reviewed, and edited the translation of this unabridged statement from Chinese. Words within square brackets added by the* Post.

Strictly Punishing Criminals Who Endanger National Security in Accordance with the Law, Steadfastly Building a Strong Barrier for Macao's Prosperity and Stability

Commentary by Gang Ao Ping

The courts of the Macao Special Administrative Region (MSAR) on Friday handed down a lawful verdict on Au Kam San for crimes endangering national security.

This fully demonstrates the Macao SAR's firm resolve to safeguard national security, highlights the robust efficacy of Macao's legal system and enforcement mechanisms for national security, and serves as a reminder to remain mindful of potential dangers in times of peace, maintain constant vigilance against national security risks, and continually fortify the barrier protecting Macao's prosperity and stability.

The verdict of the MSAR court powerfully declares that national security is an uncrossable red line. Under the guise of so-called "democracy" and "freedom", Au colluded for a long time with external forces to engage in anti-China and destabilising activities in Macao, severely endangering national security and inflicting grave harm on Macao's prosperity and stability—crimes that are clear and undeniable. The MSAR court lawfully convicted Au of "subversion of State power", "establishing contact with organisations, groups, or individuals outside the Macao SAR to perform acts endangering national security", and "violation of confidentiality obligations", sentencing him to twelve years and six months' imprisonment. This judgment forcefully defends the authority of the rule of law and sends a clear, unambiguous message: anyone or any organisation, regardless of the pretexts they employ or the backing they possess, will face strict legal punishment if they dare to commit acts or activities that endanger national security.

– Continued on p.8

Xi votes in local legislative election in Beijing



President Xi Jinping, also general secretary of the Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Committee and chairman of the Central Military Commission (CMC), casts his ballot on Friday to elect deputies to the Xicheng district people's congress at the Huairentang polling station of the Zhongnanhai electoral district in Beijing's Xicheng District. *– Xinhua*

BEIJING – President Xi Jinping cast his ballot at a polling station in Beijing on Friday to elect deputies to a local people's congress.

Xi, also general secretary of the Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Committee and chairman of the Central Military Commission, voted at the Huairentang polling station of the Zhongnanhai electoral district in Xicheng District to elect deputies to the Xicheng district people's congress.

Xi stressed efforts to practice whole-process people's democracy, uphold Party leadership, and strengthen oversight throughout the election process to ensure that deputies who meet the people's expectations are elected.

Around 3:30 p.m. on Friday, Xi arrived at the polling station, gave his voter registration card to staff for verification, and got a ballot. He cast his ballot after filling it.

Noting that the election of deputies to people's congresses is an important foundation for upholding, improving and practicing the people's congress system, Xi underlined the need to give full play to democracy, strictly act in accordance with the law, and ensure that the election is carried out fairly and cleanly.

On Friday afternoon, other senior leaders – Li Qiang, Zhao Leji, Wang Huning, Cai Qi, Ding Xuexiang and Li Xi – cast their ballots in person, while Han Zheng entrusted a staff member to vote on his behalf.

Former leader Hu Jintao also entrusted a staff member to vote on his behalf.

Friday saw citizens vote at 13,054 polling stations across Beijing to elect 4,898 new deputies to the people's congresses at the district level and 11,137 deputies to the township-level people's congresses.

– Xinhua

Strictly Punishing Criminals Who Endanger National Security in Accordance with the Law, Steadfastly Building a Strong Barrier for Macao's Prosperity and Stability

Continued from p.7

The Macao SAR has consistently attached high importance to, and conscientiously fulfilled, its constitutional responsibility to safeguard national security. In 2009, implementing the provisions of Article 23 of the Macao Basic Law, it enacted and implemented the Law on Safeguarding National Security. In 2016, in accordance with the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress's interpretation of Article 104 of the Hong Kong Basic Law, Macao proactively amended its Legislative Assembly Election Law, making it explicit that candidates must uphold the Basic Law and pledge allegiance to the Macao Special Administrative Region of the People's Republic of China, thereby implementing the principle of "patriots administering Macao". In 2018, it established the Committee for Safeguarding National Security of the Macao SAR, chaired by the Chief Executive. In 2023, in line with the holistic approach to national security, it revised the Law on Safeguarding National Security, further improving the legal system and enforcement mechanisms for national security. As the first case brought under Macao's national security legislation since its enactment and implementation, the investigation, trial, and verdict of Au's case mark the effective implementation of Macao's national security legal system and enforcement mechanisms, reflecting the Macao SAR's firm, consistent, and unremitting efforts to safeguard national security.

The overall social situation in Macao is currently stable. However, we must remain clear-headed: elements attempting to destabilise Macao and external hostile forces have never abandoned their plotting to disrupt Macao. Through various so-called reports and bills, they fabricate and spread false narratives, straining to defame Macao's rule of law and human rights situation, while distorting and smearing the practice of "One Country, Two Systems". During the trial of Au's case, they pointed fingers and openly interfered. This exposes the true nature of Au's collusion with external forces, confirms the irrefutable nature of his crimes, and reminds people that Macao is by no means free from peril. Only by enhancing our awareness of potential risks, adhering to bottom-line thinking, and resolutely punishing acts and activities that endanger national security can we effectively prevent and resolve risks, ensuring the steady and sustained implementation of the "One Country, Two Systems" practice.

We firmly believe that the Macao SAR will undoubtedly adhere to coordinating development and security, fully and accurately implement laws on safeguarding national security, guide high-quality development with high-level security, and write a new chapter in the successful practice of "One Country, Two Systems" with Macao characteristics, making even greater contributions to building a strong country and advancing national rejuvenation!

Source: Hong Kong and Macao Affairs Office (HKMAO)

Editor's Note: The translation of the unabridged statement from Chinese was arranged, reviewed and edited by the Post

Daoist culture attracts young followers worldwide

HANGZHOU – In the morning mist on Wudang Mountain in Hubei Province, a young Spaniard dressed in a traditional Daoist robe slowly performed Tai Chi. Each measured movement of his hands and feet conveyed a sense of composure.

Alex Mieza recently shared a video of this performance on his Instagram account. "Tai Chi isn't just slow movement. It's a quiet way to build real internal strength," he wrote.

The post garnered more than 3,000 likes and over 100 comments. One Spanish-speaking user described the practice as beautiful, noting that although it looked like dancing, it required considerable strength and concentration.

The post offers a glimpse into growing international interest in Daoism, a Chinese religious and philosophical tradition featuring teachings on balance, harmony and living in accordance with nature, which are attracting a new generation of followers and enthusiasts worldwide.

On social media platforms like TikTok, Instagram and YouTube, more videos featuring traditional wellness practices such as Tai Chi, Qigong and Baduanjin, as well as Daoist philosophy, are posted, reaching audiences far beyond China.

Accounts dedicated to these subjects are gaining traction in English-, Spanish- and French-speaking communities, with practitioners and content creators introducing the Daoist traditions via physical exercises and philosophical discussions.

At the 6th International Daoism Forum, which concluded on Friday in Hangzhou, capital of Zhejiang Province, delegates explored why Daoism resonates with young people navigating the pressures and uncertainties of modern life.

Under the theme "Cultivating Virtue Through the Dao, Fostering Harmony Under Heaven," participants discussed five topics: contemporary value and global transmission of Daoist culture, technological development, healthy living, and talent cultivation.

For Lee Moden, vice president of the British Daoist Association, Daoist culture offers people an opportunity to slow down and reconnect with themselves.

"It provides a space for them to begin to settle down and realize the value of what that space helps them realize in themselves," Moden said.

Moden added that young people today are often caught in a cycle of constantly feeling compelled to respond to messages, promote themselves on social media and create new identities.

Daoist cultivation, by contrast, allows people to let go of constant striving and the constant personal desire to achieve all the time, Moden said.

For Fan Ao, dean of academic affairs at Shanghai Taoist College, located in east China, a key source of Daoism's appeal lies in its inclusiveness.

In a world where different cultures constantly interact and sometimes clash, young people need ways to navigate diversity, with confidence in their own culture and inclusiveness toward other cultures, Fan said.

Chen Zhiwei, honorary president of the youth group of the Taoist Federation of Singapore, sees Daoism's appeal in more practical terms.

Many young people face insecurity and stress in their daily lives and Daoist approaches offer ways to cope with pressure and anxiety, Chen said.

"Daoism is not simply about worshiping deities with incense. If you truly understand the word 'Dao,' it is a principle that keeps you healthy, long-lived and happy," he said.

For many younger followers and enthusiasts, approaching Daoism does not necessarily mean formally adopting the religion. Some are drawn to its physical practices, while others explore its philosophy as a way to tackle real-world issues.

In Singapore, the Daoist community has been exploring ways to engage younger generations, Chen said. Initiatives include digitizing resources, making temple activities more youth-friendly, and simplifying programs to lower the threshold to participation.

Moden said short videos could help attract young people to Daoism. "If these videos help people become curious, if they think this philosophy is interesting, or they see Tai Chi, Qigong and find it intriguing, that is good. It acts as a gateway," he said.

But social media cannot replace teachers and cannot replace an environment for cultivation, Moden noted.

Fan stressed the importance of continuous study of classical texts rather than relying solely on fragmented online content. Shanghai Taoist College, notably, has been working to interpret Daoist classics in contemporary language, he added.

– Xinhua



Members of Spain's Castellers de Vilafranca perform a traditional Catalan human tower, or "castell", during a cultural exchange event at Zojoji Temple in Tokyo yesterday, as the UNESCO-recognised troupe tours Japan showcasing the 200-year-old tradition. – AFP

Japanese man with 'grudge against society' stabs bookshop worker: police

TOKYO – Japanese police arrested a 33-year-old man who admitted to stabbing a bookshop worker in Osaka yesterday, a spokesman told AFP, adding that the suspect said he "held a grudge against society".

The man, identified as Satoshi Okamoto, allegedly used a kitchen knife to stab the worker - who called police immediately afterwards - at a branch of national chain Maruzen & Junkudo in the heart of Japan's second city.

Police did not elaborate on the victim's condition, but there was no fear for his life.

The suspect, who had remained inside the shop until his arrest, admitted the stabbing and told officers, "I held a grudge against society as a whole", according to the police spokesman briefing AFP on a customary condition of anonymity.

Violent crime is relatively rare in Japan, but there have been occasional stabbings and attacks in recent years committed by socially isolated individuals airing grievances against the world at large. *– AFP*

Crew member missing as Indonesian water-bombing helicopter crashes

JAKARTA – A helicopter battling Indonesian wildfires crashed into a river yesterday as it scooped water, an official told AFP, with two crew members rescued and one still missing.

The crash in Borneo Island's South Kalimantan province was the second in days involving a firefighting helicopter, after a military chopper plunged into the waters off Borneo on Wednesday, killing three people.

Two Australian nationals had survived yesterday's incident and were "safe", said Berton Panjaitan, a spokesman for the national disaster mitigation agency, while the third member of the crew, an Indonesian, remained unaccounted for.

Dramatic video footage showed the firefighting helicopter being slowly dragged downward after filling its bucket from the Barito River, eventually plunging nose-first into the water.

The Southeast Asian archipelago has for months been struggling to control blazes that have burned through large swathes of Sumatra, Borneo and Papua islands, causing choking haze that drifted to neighbouring Malaysia, East Timor and Singapore.

"This incident occurred while the air fleet was conducting a water-bombing operation," spokesman Berton said of yesterday's crash.

"In footage captured by an amateur video, the helicopter appears to lose control while manoeuvring after scooping up water from the river with a bambi bucket."

The Eurocopter EC225LP Super Puma belonged to a company the disaster mitigation agency had contracted for water-bombing operations, he added.

On Wednesday, a helicopter carrying eight people crashed during a mission to fight fires in Tanjung Puting National Park, home to animals including critically endangered Bornean orangutans.

The incident occurred while the aircraft was scooping seawater for water bombing, according to an army statement, which added that the accident's cause was under investigation.

Aside from ground-based firefighters, Indonesia has relied heavily on air operations to fight the fires that have destroyed more than 1.9 million hectares, according to deforestation monitor Nusantara Atlas.

The fires are driven in part by a strong El Niño weather phenomenon, which in Indonesia typically causes drought. *– AFP*

Japan's ex-prosecutor who accused boss of rape says dignity 'shattered'

Natsuko Fukue

OSAKA – A Japanese former prosecutor who accused her boss of rape said on Friday her "dignity was shattered into pieces" as she recounted the alleged assault at a high-profile trial.

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

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

After hearings resumed last week following a two-year pause, Hikari recalled how she froze with fear as she was allegedly raped, and thought: "He might kill me."

"I couldn't move. I couldn't ask for help," she told the courtroom from behind a partition, while audibly sobbing.

Hikari said her alleged attacker had "stripped her of her dignity as a prosecutor, as a woman and as a mother".

"My dignity was shattered into pieces," she told the courtroom packed with reporters and members of the public.

She said that Kitagawa did not stop even though she told him she felt sick and wanted to go home.

'Kept quiet'

Kitagawa told the court last week that sex took place but repeated his not-guilty plea and denied that she was unable to resist.

After being detained for more than two years, he was released on bail last month after paying a bond of 10 million yen (US$63,000).

Hikari has previously said she was not used to drinking strong alcohol and lost her memory halfway through an office gathering in 2018.

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

Hikari said she kept quiet after the alleged rape and that Kitagawa had pleaded with her not to go public, saying it would be a damaging scandal for the prosecutor's office and even threatening to harm himself.

Hikari said she experienced post-traumatic stress disorder and that her mental health worsened after she learned in 2024 that people close to Kitagawa, especially an assistant prosecutor – who Hikari says is his lover – had spread malicious rumours about her.

On Friday, she said she "could not control her emotions, suffered from headaches and couldn't sleep" because of mental illness.

She added that she "could not even hold hands" with her husband after the alleged rape.

"My past, present and future felt tainted," she said.

No independent enquiry

As part of her testimony, Hikari also furnished intimate details of her personal and sexual life, and medical history.

Her lawyer, Kazuko Tanaka, noted after the hearing that court testimony can re-traumatise sexual assault victims.

The verdict is expected in March.

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

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

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



Thailand's King Maha Vajiralongkorn (centre) and Queen Suthida (centre right) ride their barge along the Chao Phraya River during the Royal Barge Procession in honour of Queen Suthida, in Bangkok on Friday. – AFP

New kids on the block: Overgrown Tokyo station hires weed-munching goats

TOKYO – Two white goats deployed by rail staff in central Tokyo to munch overgrown grass have become social media stars in Japan, with commuters and residents flocking to the busy business district to see the cute creatures.

One-year-old male "Nagi" and two-year-old female "Pokke" arrived at their temporary new home – an empty lot near JR Yotsuya Station in the commercial hub of Shinjuku – last month.

East Japan Railway (JR East) said on X that the move was "an eco-friendly way to remove weeds".

The animals have become a major attraction for local schoolchildren and professionals – who come to snap photos during lunch breaks – as well as a hit on social media.

Tamae Noguchi, 60, an employee at a nearby company, told AFP she was "really happy to be able to see goats right here in the middle of the city".

"They're eating their feed so energetically that just watching them makes me feel energised too," she said.

"Just looking at living creatures really lifts your spirits."

Edward Asis, a 38-year-old university student from the Philippines, told AFP the goats were "very cute".

"It's a great way, natural way of trying to get rid of all this grass," he said.

The trial in the 900-square-metre vacant lot started on October 9 and will last until around December, "but will end once the grass within the premises has been completely eaten," JR East said in a statement to AFP.

Compared to use of grass cutters and herbicides, "using goat grazing not only enables continuous weed control but also makes it possible to reduce the environmental impact," it added.

The company has implemented similar trials using goats elsewhere, but it is their first inside the circular Yamanote line, the central core of Tokyo.

In 2016, around 10 sheep were installed close to Paris' major ring road to clear grass, despite complaints from the public and animal welfare groups over concerns they were breathing polluted air. *– AFP*

Eisenkot given tough task of forming Israeli govt over Netanyahu

Yaelle Ifrah, Gianluca Pacchiani and Shaun Tandon

JERUSALEM – Israel's former military chief Gadi Eisenkot yesterday was given the tough task of forming a government, giving him weeks to cobble together a coalition to replace Benjamin Netanyahu, the country's longest-serving prime minister.

Israel's president yesterday officially tasked Eisenkot with forming a new government, warning that the country faces uncertainties after elections in the United States.

"The State of Israel needs a stable government," President Isaac Herzog said, pointing to the "new political reality" in the United States.

Eisenkot said he was open to Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and one of his far-right allies joining but under him as the new leader.

"If members of Likud and the Religious Zionist Party truly believe this is a time for unity, as they told the president, I cannot conceive of any reason why they would not support a government under my leadership and the principles I have presented," Eisenkot said, referring to Netanyahu's party and that of the far-right finance minister Bezalel Smotrich.

Eisenkot, 66, a political novice who has vowed to bridge Israel's deep polarisation under Netanyahu, met with Herzog who formally gave him the mandate to form a government with an initial deadline of 28 days.

Eisenkot, born to a family of working-class Moroccan immigrants, would be the first Sephardic prime minister – a descendant of Jews from the Middle East or North Africa – in a country long dominated by an Ashkenazi elite with ties to Europe.

Netanyahu, who has been prime minister on and off for nearly two decades and has led war on Gaza, Lebanon and Iran since the October 7, 2023 attacks, lost support in last month's election but no side claimed an outright majority.

In consultations last week with Herzog, Eisenkot received recommendations from parties accounting for 67 lawmakers, against 46 for Netanyahu.

But the vote count included Israeli Arabs, whose seat haul surged to a historic high on anger over Netanyahu's government, which includes far-right firebrands who have openly sought to marginalise the community.

Wooing the ultra-Orthodox

Avigdor Liberman, a former Netanyahu aide turned sharp critic who nonetheless shares his hawkish views, has been adamant against any alliance with Israeli Arabs, descendants of Palestinians who stayed after Israel's creation in 1948.

Taking back one of his signature campaign pledges, Liberman instead voiced an openness to an alliance with ultra-Orthodox Jews, whose almost singular priority is ensuring that they remain exempt from military service.

The exemption for the ultra-Orthodox – whose two main parties had been aligned with Netanyahu but could push Eisenkot to a majority – has been a source of growing resentment for many Israelis as reservists fight on multiple tours of duty.



Israel's President Isaac Herzog (right) and Israeli opposition bloc leader Gadi Eisenkot pose with the signed mandate to form a new government during a press conference at the presidential office in Jerusalem yesterday. – AFP

Liberman said yesterday he still backed conscription for all Israelis but that he had to make "difficult decisions" for the higher priority of ousting Netanyahu, who faces corruption charges that could land him in jail if he loses power.

But he remained adamant that he would never ally with Israeli Arabs.

"I will not lend a hand to the establishment of such a government, which in my view will harm security and bring Netanyahu back to power," Liberman wrote on X.

Liberman, whose party at seven votes is the smallest within the opposition bloc, denied speculation he was trying to engineer a deadlock that could result in him becoming prime minister.

Born in Moldova and with a party base originally from Russian-speaking immigrants, Liberman said that commentators' views on his motives had "sometimes a distinctly racist tone".

Naftali Bennett, the second strongest opposition leader after Liberman, has also been outspoken against the ultra-Orthodox community's military exemption and has stayed quiet since Liberman's about-face.

'National emergency'

Eisenkot has called for a "national emergency" government that would remove Netanyahu, calling him "a fundamental threat to the very existence of Israeli democracy".

He has ruled out a unity government headed by Netanyahu, who has repeatedly called for a broad coalition with himself at the top.

Eisenkot appears to be suggesting that he is willing to start off with a minority government – relying on outside votes from Israeli-Arab parties – while still working to find a stable government with majority support.

Assaf Shapira, a political expert at the Israel Democracy Institute, said that Eisenkot would face an especially fragile government if it only has 48 lawmakers, even if others promise to keep it in power.

"To pass laws, you need strong support from other parties," Shapira said, explaining that an Eisenkot minority government would be forced into extensive negotiations on every piece of legislation.

Eisenkot has vowed to repair Israel's international reputation and put an end to rampant violence against Palestinians by extremist West Bank settlers supported by Netanyahu's government.

He has warned Netanyahu he does not have the mandate for another attack on Iran but has also largely backed his war decisions.

Commanding the military during the 2006 war with Hezbollah, Eisenkot devised the so-called "Dahiya doctrine" that calls for massive force against civilian infrastructure where enemies operate, a policy critics say amounts to a war crime.

In Tel Aviv, Neri Bar-On, who works in educational technology, said he expected Eisenkot to succeed in forming a government.

"But the problems run deeper," he said.

"The country is facing a massive internal conflict; even if he manages to form a government, it won't solve the underlying issues." *– AFP*

Trump vows comeback as bitter showdown with Congress looms

Matthew Pennington

WASHINGTON, DC – US President Donald Trump vowed a political comeback yesterday after his Republican Party lost control of both houses of Congress in midterm elections that amounted to an unequivocal repudiation of his turbulent presidency.

The devastating result leaves Trump politically hamstrung as he enters the remaining two-year 'lame duck' period of his White House tenure, while opening the door to multiple investigations by the Democrat-controlled Congress of the president, his family and senior members of his administration.

"America took a giant step back in History with the results of the last Election," Trump said in a post on Truth Social, adding that the stock market that had grown during his tenure took a loss after the vote.

"But have no fear, we will be back, BIGGER AND STRONGER THAN EVER BEFORE!"

While the resounding election loss last Tuesday has prompted soul-searching among Republican lawmakers, Trump has sounded defiant.

On Friday, he appointed hardline advisor Stephen Miller as his new chief of staff, signalling a bare-knuckle fightback.

Democrats, meanwhile, have pledged to hold the Trump administration to account and fight against Miller, architect of Trump's tough immigration policy.

Amid Democrat threats for administration officials to "lawyer up," Trump said on Saturday he was ordering the Justice Department to examine Democratic threats to impeach members of his administration, likening it to "extortion."

'They can come after us'

That stance stoked a war of words between top Republicans and Democrats on US political shows yesterday.

Attorney General Todd Blanche, a former personal lawyer for Trump and now head of the Justice Department, vowed to actively defend Trump and senior members of his administration.



US President Donald Trump signs a helmet while greeting workers after speaking at the construction site of the East Wing ballroom at the White House in Washington, DC, on Wednesday. – AFP

"You have members of Congress who, after Tuesday, have done nothing but threaten everything that's happening in this administration," Blanche told CNN, citing impeachment threats against Miller after his appointment.

"If they try to come after Stephen Miller...instead of actually just conducting oversight and leading, of course the Department of Justice will be there to defend him."

Robert Garcia, the ranking Democrat on the House Oversight Committee, took aim at Blanche, saying one role of Congress under the US constitution is to hold the executive branch to account.

"All he wants to do is protect Donald Trump, is protect Donald Trump's cabinet and administration officials. That is not his job," Garcia told CNN, vowing to stop corruption and investigate "those that are committing crimes against the American public."

"They can come after us however they want. We're not going to be intimidated," added Garcia.

With control of committees in both chambers, Democrats can summon officials, demand documents and hold public hearings, putting Trump and his senior aides under intense scrutiny.

Likely subjects include the Trump family's business and cryptocurrency dealings, government contracts involving billionaire Elon Musk, cuts to federal agencies, immigration enforcement and the conduct of the Iran war.

During his first presidency, Trump himself was impeached by the House of Representatives twice, but on both occasions he was acquitted by the Senate. *– AFP*

Poland in shock as mass shooting shatters sense of security

Damien Simonart and Bernard Osser

KRAKOW, Poland – Police looking for clues turned over every stone and flowerpot in Krakow's eerily empty Main Market Square yesterday as Poland entered two days of mourning for six people mowed down by a gunman with suspected far-right sympathies.

Poland's deadliest gun rampage in decades – in which a British man and an Austrian woman were among the victims – has left the country feeling vulnerable to the mass shootings that have spread across Europe in recent years.

Dozens of police scoured the square the day after the frenzied killings in which the alleged 24-year-old gunman with a semi-automatic rifle drove around firing at random before a final battle with police.

Six people died and 15 others, including two police who halted the rampage, were wounded, according to authorities. Investigators found the bodies of the suspect's parents and a sister at his home.

The gunmen wore military fatigues and there were more weapons in his car. Interior Minister Marcin Kierwinski said the gunman appeared to be "fascinated by far-right ideologies".

Germany, France and other European countries have already seen such brutal killings in markets and other public spaces. But Poland had been spared.

"I'm absolutely devastated," Weronika Filar, 27, a Krakow resident, told AFP.

"It's one of the safest places on Earth genuinely... I did not expect anything like this to happen to us," she said. "Our city will never be the same."

Krzysztof Stepien, a part-time city guide, held up a sign offering tours to other parts of the city that remained open. But he was also in shock.

"We've heard of various incidents of this sort happening elsewhere in Europe," the 28-year-old said. "Nothing like this has ever happened here, and I hope it never will again."

Attack on 'our way of life'

Polish prosecutors launched a terrorism investigation.

A special Mass was held at Krakow Cathedral yesterday. Candles and flowers appeared around the stricken square and black ribbons were placed on the national flag.

"We want, we need and we must be together," Cardinal Grzegorz Rys, archbishop of Krakow, wrote as he announced the special service.

Filar added that she was "very proud" of the way the country has reacted to the tragedy.

"Society is united and we are very strong together because of what has happened."

Millions of zlotys were quickly collected to help the two wounded police officers who confronted the gunman.

One, Jakub Kulik, has been named as the hero of the drama. Social media images showed him shooting and wounding the gunman despite being hit himself.

"Our highest praise goes to the heroic police officers who risked their lives in the line of duty," said Prime Minister Donald Tusk.



Police officers patrol yesterday next to Krakow's Main Market, a day after a gunman opened fire killing six people and wounding around a dozen others in the historic centre of the Polish city. – AFP

Police had appealed for blood donors to help Kulik "who without hesitation confronted an armed attacker". Long queues formed outside donor centres that were besieged with offers and said they could not cope.

But behind the solidarity and the pride, people know that Poland, already close to the frontline of the Ukraine-Russia war, has now changed.

This was also "an attack on Poland, on our way of life," the centrist Rzeczpospolita daily wrote in an editorial.

It was an attack on "a value we held so dear – that sense of security, which, as it turns out, was merely an illusion," added commentator Boguslaw Chrabota in the editorial.

Chrabota accused Polish politicians of fostering divisions within a country where centrist prime minister is battling nationalist President Karol Nawrocki and a vociferous far right.

"Polish Breiviks are emerging," warned Chrabota, referring to the neo-Nazi Anders Behring Breivik, who killed 77 people in Norway on July 22, 2011. *– AFP*

What the end of UN peacekeeping in Western Sahara means

Youcef Bounab

TUNIS – For the first time in more than three decades, the UN Security Council has failed to renew the mandate for its peacekeeping mission in North Africa's disputed Western Sahara.

The vast mineral-rich desert territory, home to significant phosphate reserves and fishing resources, was a Spanish colony until 1975.

It is largely controlled by Morocco but has been claimed for decades by the Algeria-backed Polisario Front, and remains on the UN list of non-self-governing territories.

Why are the peacekeepers leaving?

Morocco considers Western Sahara part of its territory and has proposed autonomy under Moroccan sovereignty, while the Polisario seeks full independence.

The UN mission, MINURSO, was created in 1991 to organise a self-determination referendum that has never taken place.

Its mandate expired on October 31 after Russia and the United States vetoed rival Security Council resolutions.

Washington proposed extending the mission while effectively dropping the referendum option and making Morocco's autonomy plan the basis for future talks.

Eleven of 15 council members supported that approach, but Russia rejected it as one-sided.

Instead, Moscow sought to renew MINURSO unchanged, only for Washington to block the move.

"Washington has been enthusiastic about imposing a solution, but it's explicitly biased in this conflict," said Jacob Mundy, a Western Sahara expert and professor at US-based Colgate University.

The US recognised Western Sahara as Moroccan in 2020 when Rabat normalised ties with Israel under a deal backed by President Donald Trump.

A win for Morocco?

Morocco backed the US proposal but also saw a smaller victory in Russia's veto, which effectively ended MINURSO's mandate.



This handout photograph provided by the Moroccan Maghreb Arabe Presse (MAP) newswire shows Morocco's King Mohammed VI (centre) chairing a working session with Prime Minister Fatima Ezzahra el-Mansouri (back, left), royal adviser Fouad Ali El Himma (front, left), Minister of the Interior Abdelouafi Laftit (back, right) and Inspector General of the Royal Armed Forces Lieutenant General Mohammed Berrid, at the Royal Palace in Rabat on Wednesday, after the United Nations began the process of ending its peacekeeping mission in Western Sahara. – AFP

Rabat welcomed the mission's end as "an important step toward the definitive closure" of the issue at the UN, adding its initial functions were now "outdated".

"For Morocco, the veto was the second-best option," said Riccardo Fabiani, senior analyst at the International Crisis Group.

Moroccan Foreign Minister Nasser Bourita met Russian counterpart Sergei Lavrov in Moscow two days before the vote, and later admitted Rabat had not tried to stop Russia from using its veto.

Rabat sees MINURSO's exit as "the end of UN scrutiny... and another step towards normalising Moroccan control over the territory", Fabiani explained.

Morocco "was going to win either way", added Hamish Kinnear of UK-based consultancy Verisk Maplecroft.

"If the US-drafted resolution passed, Morocco's plan would have been established as the only framework for a political solution – effectively ruling out the possibility of a UN-facilitated referendum," he explained.

UN peacekeepers were first deployed with the consent of both Morocco and Polisario, but "what Morocco is saying now is it no longer consents to MINURSO", Mundy said.

What do other sides say?

The Polisario said it would hold Morocco "fully responsible for any serious repercussions" for regional security following the council's vote.

Algeria, Morocco's regional rival and host to thousands of Sahrawi refugees, said Russia's veto was "inevitable", arguing the US proposal's "excessive partiality" sought to "legitimise a situation of occupation".

For Morocco, UN efforts have long stalled, with Bourita recently saying the kingdom was "free to choose the path and framework it wants".

Rabat's autonomy plan has already gained growing support from countries including France, Britain and Spain.

Last year, the Security Council gave the plan unprecedented backing, calling it the "most feasible" solution.

But for many analysts, the issue is still far from over.

What's next?

The UN has already begun winding down MINURSO, and said this month the liquidation process should be completed "as soon as possible".

The organisation stressed, however, that the mission's departure does not affect the Sahrawi people's "inalienable right to self-determination".

Morocco promptly said it was "coordinating and supporting" the mission's exit.

"Morocco is now betting to continue to normalise its control over Western Sahara while trying to remove it from the UN list of non-self-governing territories," analyst Fabiani said.

But the end of MINURSO could also remove a long-standing buffer between Morocco and the Polisario.

Without peacekeepers on the ground, Kinnear said Morocco would have "greater latitude to conduct operations against the Polisario".

The kingdom has reiterated its commitment to a ceasefire despite repeated Polisario violations since 2020. But tensions with Algeria have remained high since Algiers severed diplomatic ties in 2021.

Last month, Algeria said it was deploying troops to Niger to protect energy assets, which many saw as an unusual break from its traditional non-intervention policy.

"That was no coincidence," Mundy said. "I think it's a signal."

"Algeria feels surrounded – with Libyan instability driven by the Emirates on one side and Morocco being closely allied with Israel on the other," he added.

Kinnear said direct clashes between Morocco and Algeria were unlikely, but "Rabat will have to weigh Algiers' increasingly assertive foreign policy in the context of Western Sahara". *– AFP*

Paraguay's impeached leader charged over shock implosion of bank

Tomás Viola

ASUNCIÓN – Paraguayan prosecutors charged ex-president Santiago Peña and took him into custody on Saturday over a banking crisis that saw millions of people cut off from their money, sparking major protests.

Peña, Paraguay's youngest-ever president at 47, was removed from office by the Senate on Friday, just three days after the collapse of a leading bank with which he had business links.

He had offered to resign but lawmakers impeached him instead, stripping him of the immunity he would have enjoyed had he stepped down.

In a fast-moving sequence of events, Peña was brought before prosecutors on Saturday and charged with "breach of trust and mismanagement for personal gain."

Ueno Bank was a popular online bank that held accounts for nearly half of Paraguay's 6.5 million people, plus more than US$800 million in government funds.

Its collapse rocked this small, normally stable country, leading to street protests.



This handout picture released by Paraguay's Chief Public Prosecutor's office shows impeached Paraguayan President Santiago Peña (front) arriving at the Chief Public Prosecutor's Office in Asunción on Saturday. Paraguayan authorities placed impeached president Santiago Pena under house arrest on Friday, shortly after his removal from office over a massive banking crisis. *– AFP*

Peña, who came to power in 2023, owned shares in the bank's holding company, Ueno Holding, until he sold them last year.

He is accused of using his influence as president to steer millions in government deposits to Ueno Bank and of hiding or downplaying its financial woes, even though he was warned about questionable loans and solvency issues.

Peña is also accused of a conflict of interest for naming former Ueno Bank director Carlos Carvallo to run Paraguay's Central Bank.

Peña's lawyer Ricardo Preda denied the charges against his client and said that in Paraguay, it is not the president but rather a minister who decides where government money is deposited.

After a hearing with Peña on Saturday, Judge Hernán Otazu told reporters he had ordered the former president taken into pre-trial custody and held at the same Asunción facility where he was taken after his removal from office on Friday.

The judge froze the assets of Peña and Carvallo, who faces the same charges as the former president, plus one of falsifying government documents.

Peña declined to make a statement during the hearing, Otazu said.

The Central Bank said it has started paying out money to Ueno Bank customers caught up in the collapse and that more than 50 percent have recovered their funds.

Giovanni Catolinom, 40, was not one of them. He trembled as he told AFP that funds from his new travel agency – around U$16,000 – were still trapped in the bank.

"I lost 16 years of work," he said, crying.

Peña was replaced by Vice President Pedro Alliana, who promised not to abandon the depositors, including pensioners, affected by Ueno Bank's demise.

On the streets of Asunción there was rejoicing over Peña's ouster.

But news that Alliana, who is from the same right-wing Colorado Party as Peña, would take over angered some demonstrators.

"He's from the same team, he knew about it [the trouble at Ueno Bank]," Edson Vázquez told AFP.

US ally

The collapse of Ueno Bank rocked usually stable Paraguay.

Thousands of people took to the streets furiously demanding their money back after the Central Bank took control of Ueno Bank, citing fears for its solvency.

Peña's removal was a further blow for US President Donald Trump's network of right-wing allies in South America.

Trump's favourite for Brazilian president, Flávio Bolsonaro, was defeated by left-wing incumbent Lula Inácio Lula da Silva last month.

Alliana is slated to serve out the remainder of Peña's term, which ends in 2028. *– AFP*

Guinea Bissau partially lifts curbs on political activities

BISSAU – Guinea-Bissau's ruling junta on Friday partially eased curbs on the activities of political parties imposed following a coup a year ago, but stopped short of allowing rallies, authorities announced.

The army seized power in the perennially unstable west African nation days after a presidential vote, overthrowing president Umaro Sissoco Embaló and suspending the electoral process.

The junta has scheduled presidential and legislative elections for December 6, promising a return to civilian rule.

However, the electoral commission has said that the conditions for organising those polls have not been met.

The partial lifting of restrictions on the activities of political parties only comes into effect on November 24, the high military command said in a statement.

Parties will be able to resume some meetings but they must inform the high military command beforehand, junta spokesman Col. Jaime Valentin told AFP.

The new measure does not apply to "political rallies, marches and street demonstrations", he said.

"The measure is aimed primarily at ensuring the functioning of political organisations without compromising national security and public order," the statement said.

The country has been gripped by political and security turmoil in recent weeks.

Embaló told AFP that he would return from exile in Morocco and stand in the elections, but the junta said that "security conditions" had not been met for his return.

Some of Embaló's close associates have been removed from key positions by the junta in recent weeks. *– AFP*

S African freed after capture in Mozambique

JOHANNESBURG – A South African man who was among a group of people captured in an attack in Mozambique a month ago has been released unharmed, the government said last week.

The early September raid on a hunting camp in northern Niassa province was reportedly linked to Islamic insurgents who have been active in neighbouring Cabo Delgado province for years.

Police said at the time that 11 people were captured and one killed.

The 30-year-old was released last Sunday and was on his way back home, the foreign ministry said.

"At the time of his capture, he worked as a mechanic at a camp," it said in a statement.

The Zitamar news agency reported that a ransom was privately paid to release three people who had been working at the camp.

Seven others remained unaccounted for, it said.

The South African government said it did not negotiate or pay ransom for the release of hostages.

Reports at the time said three US hunters were airlifted from the camp after the attack.

Insurgents linked to Islamic State (IS) have carried out attacks in Cabo Delgado on civilians and security forces that included beheadings and abductions.

Cabo Delgado has enormous reserves of gas, which have attracted the attention of energy giants including France's TotalEnergies, Italy's ENI and US company ExxonMobil. *– AFP*

Spain puts the squeeze on olive oil producers to avoid glut

MADRID – Spain has ordered olive oil producers to withdraw 12 percent of their output from the market and store it till September 2027 to prevent a bumper harvest from driving down prices.

This will remove around 188,000 tonnes of olive oil from the market, the agriculture ministry said in a statement on Friday.

"The aim is to regulate supply in order to improve and stabilise the functioning of the market and the sector," it said.

Spain is the world's largest olive oil producer, accounting for around 40 percent of global output, according to the International Olive Council.

Mild temperatures and abundant rainfall during the spring have created favourable conditions for what Spain expects to be its fourth-largest harvest on record.

The agriculture ministry forecasts Spanish olive oil production of 1.6 million tonnes in the 2026-27 season, up 23 percent from the previous season.

The 12-percent requirement will apply to each mill's cumulative monthly production, regardless of the category of olive oil, with producers free to choose which type to store and whether to use their own or external facilities.

The government said the measure, which farming associations have lobbied for, could be modified from December 31 depending on how production develops.

During a visit to an olive oil cooperative in Andalusia on Friday, Spain's main olive oil-producing region, Agriculture Minister Luis Planas said the traditional olive grove was "vital" to the country.

"It has high production costs, and if prices fall below a certain threshold, there can indeed be problems with profitability," he told reporters, adding that the measure had never previously been applied.

The Spanish olive oil market has recovered from a period of low production caused by drought and heatwaves during the 2022-23 and 2023-24 seasons, when prices soared to record levels.

The sharp increase in the price of olive oil prompted many Spanish households to switch to cheaper alternatives such as sunflower oil. *– AFP*



Pope Leo XIV holds a football jersey bearing his name in Spanish ("León") as he is presented with the gift during a prayer vigil at the Centenario Stadium in Montevideo on Saturday. *– AFP*

Chelsea shocked by Sunderland, Liverpool cruise

Steven Griffiths

LONDON – Chelsea suffered a shock 1-0 defeat at Premier League strugglers Sunderland, while Liverpool got back on track with a 3-1 win against lowly Crystal Palace yesterday.

Xabi Alonso's Chelsea arrived at the Stadium of Light hoping to bolster their bid to qualify for the Champions League via a top-four finish.

Instead, they departed red-faced after an embarrassing loss to third-bottom Sunderland, who celebrated a league victory for only the second time this season.

Fifth-placed Chelsea have already been beaten four times in 10 league matches under former Real Madrid boss Alonso.

Chelsea were rocked in the 36th minute when Enzo Le Fee converted a penalty after Brian Brobbey was up-ended by Levi Colwill.

Blues boss Xabi Alonso was furious that Chelsea were not given a foul on Cole Palmer in the build-up to the spot-kick.

Liverpool had been beaten by Arsenal in the Premier League and Fenerbahce in the Champions League before arriving in south London, sparking pointed questions about Andoni Iraola in the former Bournemouth manager's first season in charge at Anfield.



Liverpool's Argentinian midfielder Alexis Mac Allister (left) goes head to head with Crystal Palace's Colombian midfielder Jefferson Lerma during the English Premier League match between Crystal Palace and Liverpool at Selhurst Park in south London yesterday. – AFP

But Alexis Mac Allister headed Liverpool in front at Selhurst Park from Dominik Szoboszlai's cross after 40 minutes.

Florian Wirtz bagged Liverpool's second with a composed finish from Bradley Barcola's cross in the 54th minute.

It was Wirtz's first league goal this season and only the second in all competitions for the inconsistent German playmaker this term.

Alexander Isak finished off Wirtz's pass in the 89th minute to wrap up fourth-placed Liverpool's much-needed victory after a two-game losing streak.

It was Liverpool's fourth consecutive away league win this season.

Eddie Nketiah's stoppage-time penalty after a foul by Milos Kerkez was no consolation for Palace.

Palace manager Pierre Sage - hired to replace Oliver Glasner in the close-season is on the brink of being sacked after his side slumped to the bottom of the table following their seventh defeat in 10 league matches.

Seagulls flying high

Brighton extended their superb start to the season, climbing to second place with a 2-0 win against Brentford at the Amex Stadium.

While Fabian Hurzeler's side might not have the staying power to challenge Arsenal for the title, they have established themselves as contenders for a Champions League place.

Diego Gomez's 25-yard rocket gave the Seagulls the lead in the 15th minute.

Brentford striker Igor Thiago was sent off for clattering Chema Andres in the face midway through the first half.

Pascal Gross doubled Brighton's advantage with a 42nd minute penalty after Keane Lewis-Potter fouled Luka Vuskovic.

The Seagulls' sixth win in their last seven league games lifted them above third-placed Manchester City and within five points of champions Arsenal, who beat Hull on Saturday.

Evanilson maintained his hot streak in Bournemouth's 2-1 win at Ipswich.

The Cherries' Brazilian forward struck with a clinical finish in the fifth minute, taking him to seven goals in his last eight games.

An own goal from Leif Davis in the 46th minute increased Bournemouth's lead and Jack Clarke's 73rd minute penalty wasn't enough to rescue Ipswich. – AFP



Inter Miami's Brazilian midfielder Casemiro (centre) celebrates with his teammates after a goal during a Major League Soccer (MLS) regular-season match against Charlotte FC at Nu Stadium in Miami, Florida, on Saturday. The game ended in a 3 all draw. – AFP

'Huge dream' to play for England with Jude, says Jobe Bellingham

DORTMUND – Borussia Dortmund midfielder Jobe Bellingham said Saturday he hoped to fulfil a "huge dream" by playing alongside brother Jude after being called up to the England squad.

On Friday, England manager Thomas Tuchel named Jobe, 21, in England's 25-man squad for November's Nations League fixtures with Croatia and Spain.

Speaking after Dortmund's 2-1 home win over Elversberg in the Bundesliga, Jobe said he and brother had acted out playing together for England when they were kids.

"It's really good. I don't want to get too carried away, but it's obviously a big dream for me and for Jude as well," the younger Bellingham told DAZN.

"Since we were young, we reenacted that so many times in the garden or wherever, in the park, playing for England together.

"So it's a huge dream. It's not happened yet, so I don't want to jinx or say it too early, but yeah, I'm really excited."

Jobe has captained England's under-21s but this is his first senior call-up.

Real Madrid midfielder Jude, 23, who also made his England debut while playing for Dortmund, now has 60 England caps.

Jobe took time to adapt to the Bundesliga since joining in 2025 but has impressed this season and has become an established member of Dortmund's starting XI.

Speaking on Friday, Dortmund coach Niko Kovac praised Jobe's development and dedication to improving his game.

"He is really a complete football freak. He studies his own game and the games of other players to learn from the best in his position.

"And he's a really great lad and he's got an excellent attitude. I'm really happy for him that he can now wear the jersey of his national team next to his brother.

"It's something quite special, not just to play for your country, but to play alongside your brother. It's incredible." – AFP

Football shorts

Argentina FA to appeal World Cup final sanctions to CAS

BUENOS AIRES – Argentina's football association (AFA) announced on Saturday it had appealed to the Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS) against the sanctions FIFA imposed on it over World Cup final incidents.

Midfielder Leandro Paredes was the hardest hit with a 10-game ban and US$90,000 fine for his role in clashes with Spain players.

He grabbed Eric Garcia by the throat and wrestled Gavi to the ground while holding his substitute's bib, which led to an escalation in the incidents on the field after the final that Spain won 1-0 at the MetLife Stadium in New Jersey on July 19.

The AFA was fined US$321,000 for breaches of FIFA's disciplinary code relating to using a sports event for making demonstrations of a non-sporting nature, team misconduct, and discriminatory chants and gestures by its supporters.

Nahuel Molina and Thiago Almada were also hit with bans and fines, as was Roberto Ayala, a member of Argentina's coaching team.

In a statement, AFA said FIFA's appeals body had rejected their complaint against the sanctions handed out to Paredes and the association, but had reduced Molina's punishment from a seven-match ban and US$90,000 fine to four games and $60,000.

AFA also stated it would now take its appeals against its own and Paredes's sanctions to CAS. – AFP

Veteran Neuer joins Bayern's long injury list

MUNICH – Veteran Bayern Munich goalkeeper Manuel Neuer is set for a spell on the sidelines with a foot injury, compounding the German champions' absentee woes.

Neuer came off just before half-time with an injury to his right foot in Saturday's 2-1 win at Mainz.

In a statement issued yesterday, Bayern said Neuer would be "out for the time being" with a torn tendon in his foot.

Bayern did not indicate how long Neuer would miss, but German media reported he would be out for at least two months.

Playing his 550th Bundesliga match, Neuer became the oldest player in a league match in Bayern's history when he took the pitch aged 40 years and 225 days.

The German champions are already without coach Vincent Kompany who is recovering from an illness, while Jamal Musiala, Luis Diaz, Ismael Saibari and Serge Gnabry are also long-term absentees.

Despite Neuer's absence, Bayern are well served in the goalkeeper department, with number two Jonas Urbig one of three goalies called up to Jurgen Klopp's Germany squad on Thursday.

Neuer, a two-time Champions League winner, has already missed five matches this season with injury and has indicated this would likely be his last campaign. – AFP

Napoli hold leaders Lazio in Serie A

ROME – Serie A leaders Lazio dropped points for just the second time this season as they were held to a 1-1 draw away to struggling Napoli yesterday.

Davide Frattesi gave the Romans a deserved lead but Napoli drew level early in the second half through an Alfonso Pedraza own goal.

Napoli were under pressure to deliver a result after defeats to Juventus and Porto saw the squad sent into a training retreat in a bid to revive their flagging form.

But they could only claim a point against Gennaro Gattuso's unbeaten outfit, whose remarkable form continued as they moved two points clear on top on 29 points, 14 ahead of Napoli in 10th place.

The visitors, targeting a seventh league win in a row and fifth consecutive away victory in Naples, started strongly as Gustav Isaksen and Josip Sutalo drew diving saves from Vanja Milinkovic-Savic.

The Romans went in front in the 28th minute when Frattesi raced on to Tijjani Noslin's through ball and finished emphatically for his fourth goal of the season.

Lazio's opener sparked a reaction from Napoli as Christos Mandas denied Rasmus Hojlund before half-time substitute Pedraza inadvertently turned a cross into his own net early in the second half.

The hosts came closest to a winner as Scott McTominay tested Mandas with a low shot before Kevin De Bruyne saw a shot charged down by the Greek goalkeeper and the rebound cleared off the line by Reda Belahyane. – AFP

Australia overpower Fiji to make Women's Rugby League World Cup final



Fiji's Luisa Yaranamua (right) is tackled by Australia's Jessica Sergis during the Women's Rugby League World Cup semi-final match between Australia and Fiji at the Sydney Football Stadium in Sydney yesterday. – AFP

Rugby

SYDNEY – Abbi Church scored four tries as powerhouse Australia rallied to beat a gutsy Fiji 30-14 yesterday and set up a women's Rugby League World Cup final against New Zealand as they chase a fourth successive title.

Despite being overwhelming favourites, the Jillaroos were under the pump in the first-half and went to the break drawing 8-8 in chilly Sydney.

But they fired up on their return to seize control and there was no way back for the Fijians.

"We were always so excited to come up against Fiji, we knew it would be a really good test for us," said Australia captain Isabelle Kelly.

"But we know we need to be a lot better if we want to take home that trophy next week. So go back to Brisbane and I guess reflect on where we can be."

Australia have won the last three World Cups after New Zealand took the honours at the first three from 2000-2008.

The Kiwi Ferns punched their ticket to the November 15 decider in Brisbane by surging past Samoa 32-0 in Newcastle on Saturday.

Despite scoring 242 and conceding just six points in the group stage, Australia found themselves under immense early pressure and Fiji's Luisa Yaranamua kicked a penalty on 11 minutes to give them a shock lead.

It was the first time since the 2013 World Cup final that the Jillaroos had not scored the opening points in any international.

Incredibly, Fiji bagged a try with Yaranauma throwing a dummy before barging over, then she added the extras to put them 8-0 in front.

Australia responded with two tries in four minutes, the first through Church in the corner then from Tamika Upton exploiting a gap.

Both conversions were missed and they went to the break level-pegging before a much better second-half.

Church's darting run earned her a second try and Jaime Chapman added another and this time Jocelyn Kelleher converted both for a 20-8 advantage.

Church collected a high kick to complete her hat-trick then sealed the game with a weaving long-distance run. – *AFP*

Medal Tally

Rank	National				
1	CHN	10	3	2	15
2	JPN	8	3	4	15
3	RUS	6	4		10
4	EGY	4	1	2	7
5	CRO	3	3		6
6	FRA	3	1	2	6
7	KEN	3			3
8	NZL	2	3		5
9	ROU	2	2		4
10	POR	2	1	1	4
11	AZE	2	1		3
12	SUI	2		2	4
13	SEN	2		1	3
14	ECU	2			2
15	RSA	1	4	1	6
16	TPE	1	3	3	7
17	BRA	1	2	1	4
17	GER	1	2	1	4
17	GRE	1	2	1	4
20	HKG	1	1	3	5
21	AUT	1	1	2	4
22	ESP	1	1	1	3
22	LTU	1	1	1	3
22	USA	1	1	1	3
22	VEN	1	1	1	3
26	NED	1	1		2
26	SGP	1	1		2
28	ARG	1		4	5

China, Senegal shine in beach wrestling at Dakar 2026 YOG

DAKAR – China's Zhao Min won the women's 75kg beach wrestling gold at the Dakar 2026 Youth Olympic Games (YOG) on Saturday, while host nation Senegal also had a successful day in beach wrestling, winning its first-ever two gold medals at YOG.

Zhao went unbeaten in her three group-stage bouts before defeating Senegal's Elisabeth Ebedo Diatta in the semifinals. She then beat India's Taniya in the final.

Taniya scored the opening point, but Zhao quickly drew level. The two wrestlers then engaged in a tight contest, with Zhao scoring a decisive point just 1.2 seconds before the final whistle to clinch the gold.

"Perhaps I had too long a break after the semifinal and my body had cooled down. In those final few seconds, I wasn't thinking about anything. I was just focused on wrestling," Zhao said.

"I just kept telling myself not to think too much. Once you step into the circle, before the wrestling even begins, you never know who is stronger," she added.

In other beach wrestling events, Venezuela's Wilfredo Grabiel Rodriguez Gonzalez won the men's 60kg title, while Senegal's Elisabeth Diatta and Maguette Diop triumphed in the women's 55kg and men's 80kg categories, respectively.

Diop said the victory was particularly meaningful as Senegal became the first African nation to host an Olympic event.

"Winning the gold medal here in Senegal with my people, I'm just so proud. It was not easy at all, but we did it," he said.

Four more gold medals were up for grabs in beach wrestling yesterday in Saly.

In gymnastics, China's men's team, comprising Yang Lanbin, Li Lezheng and Zhao Ruiyang, topped the qualification standings with a total of 159.228 points to book its place in today's team final. The Chinese gymnasts delivered solid performances in floor exercise, rings and vault.

As for the individual all-around qualification, Britain's Uzair Chowdhury led the field with 80.798 points, followed by Yang with 79.897 and Japan's Naoto Shiroiwa with 79.265. Li placed fifth with 77.131, while Zhao finished seventh with 76.197.

Under the competition rules, the top 18 gymnasts advance to the individual all-around final, with each delegation allowed a maximum of two athletes. Yang and Li will therefore represent China in tomorrow's final.

"The vault was what I was most satisfied with today," Yang said after the competition, adding that the landing was beyond expectations.

Yesterday, Chen Ziyan, Zhong Qi and Xie Guying represented China in the women's gymnastics qualification, while China's women's 3x3 basketball team will take on Czechia in the quarterfinals.

Athletics will also get underway, with 10 gold medals on offer. China's Zhang Keyi will line up in the women's 100m hurdles, Zhang Hangyu in the men's 100m and Liu Han in the men's 400m. – *Xinhua*

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Emotional Eala stunned by Liu in HK final

Tennis

HONG KONG – Philippines tennis trailblazer Alex Eala dissolved into tears as she reflected on a "life-changing" season after falling agonisingly short of a second WTA Tour title yesterday.

The second seed was stunned 6-3, 6-0 by Claire Liu in the final of the Hong Kong Open as the American ranked 102 won her first tour title.

Eala is at a career-high 17 in the world after a breakout year in which the 21-year-old clinched her maiden title, in Washington DC, in August.

That victory made her the first player from the Philippines to win a tournament on the WTA Tour.

Eala, set to rise to 15 in the world next week, started the year ranked 50th.

"This season has changed my life, it's changed my life for the better," Eala, who finished the final with heavy strapping on her right leg, told the crowd afterwards.

Becoming emotional as she addressed her team in the stands, she said: "I'm incredibly proud of the work we've put in this year.

"We're the only ones that truly know what it took to arrive to this point in our journey.

"This is only the beginning."

Despite being the underdog, the unseeded Liu broke in the eighth game of the first set for a 5-3 lead at Victoria Park.

The American squandered the first set point but gobbled up the second to leave the large number of Eala fans in the arena stunned.

Eala, who had needed treatment for her knee in the first set, was immediately under pressure on her own serve at the start of the second set.

Liu eventually broke after an attritional opening game to grab the lead and, with that, Eala's resistance was broken.

Liu did not drop a set all week. – *AFP*

‘Grand Theft Auto’ set for blockbuster return after 13 years



A pedestrian walks past a mural displayed by Colossal Media for Rockstar Games’ Grand Theft Auto VI (GTA) in Williamsburg, New York, on Thursday. The game is set to be released worldwide on November 19. – AFP

Kilian Fichou

Fans of the violent “Grand Theft Auto” video game franchise are just two weeks away from getting their hands on the latest edition, which has taken almost a decade to make and has become the most expensive title in history.

The franchise allows players to act out gangster fantasies – shooting up bars, crashing cars – in fictional renderings of US cities where the soundtrack piped through in-game radio is almost as important as the cutting-edge visuals.

GTA VI, which comes 13 years after its predecessor, is expected to break sales records when it lands on November 19 thanks in part to a monumental marketing campaign that kicked off in late 2023 with the first official trailer.

“It is going to be the biggest entertainment launch of all time,” Chris Dring of The Game Business outlet told AFP.

The previous edition, GTA V, is still the second-biggest selling game ever – it took just three days to rack up US$1 billion in sales, two days less than the movie “Avengers: Endgame”.

The budget of GTA VI has reportedly ballooned to over US$1 billion – far higher than any other game or film – and projections have it on track to make several billion in its first week, which would smash all records for any cultural product.

‘Top creators’

‘GTA VI’ has two main protagonists, former drug-runner Jason and newly released ex-con Lucia, who try to survive in Vice City, a reimagining of Miami.

Lucia is the first playable woman character in a main edition of the almost 30-year history of a franchise.

During the 1990s and 2000s the game’s graphic depictions of sex, violence and misogyny became notorious – tabloid media outrage boosting the title’s notoriety and helping sales to skyrocket.

Rockstar Games has spent eight years developing the sixth edition, a process beset by difficulties including the leak of development footage and code for the game online in 2022.

But expectations are sky-high.

“They’ve spent a long time on this game, but they are probably the top game entertainment creators in the world,” said Dring.

Analysts expect the game to have an impact on the entire video game sector, including on console sales and accessories.

Several other studios delayed the release of new games to avoid being caught in the hype cycle around GTA VI.

Analysis firm Sensor Tower said the game had already generated around US$750 million from pre-sales.

Surveys suggested almost one-third of the 49 million people who use PS5 and Xbox Series consoles in the United States intended to buy the game.

“The purchase intent that we’re seeing on ‘Grand Theft Auto’ is far away above any other game we’ve ever tracked,” said Mat Piscatella of consultancy Circana.

“For me, it’s the game of the decade,” Jocelin Lebeau, 39, a gamer who works for the French military, told AFP at a recent event in Paris. “I’m ready to buy it sight unseen.” *– AFP*

Paris’s Crazy Horse cabaret comes to Dubai – with less nudity

Sahar Al Attar

DUBAI - On stage at a luxury hotel, dancers from Paris’s iconic Crazy Horse cabaret are rehearsing for their debut performance in Dubai – but with less nudity than the original version.

The suggestive choreography and subtle lighting of Crazy Horse, a Paris staple since the 1950s, will be on display in Dubai, a city trying to project normality despite the Middle East war.

The women’s silhouettes are visible in the half-light, with bare shoulders and legs. But, with local sensibilities in mind, the show will not be topless.

“In Paris, they’re not very dressed,” explains Andree Deissenberg, the group’s chief creative and brand officer.

“Here they have more costumes, the same lighting,” she adds.

The oil-rich United Arab Emirates (UAE) is a Muslim-majority, expat-heavy country of about 10 million people and more than 9,000 mosques.

Crazy Horse’s permanent show on The Palm, the chic, palm tree-shaped development and magnet for the well-heeled, opens on Thursday under the shadow of the Middle East war.

Dubai, the conservative Gulf’s commercial hub and most progressive city, was frequently targeted in the war’s early months with The Palm struck on day one, February 28.

Crazy Horse’s “Dubai Edition” retains many hallmarks of the show created in Paris in 1951 by Alain Bernardin, which prides itself on an artistic brand of nudity.

There, lighting projections bathe the dancers in patterns such as stripes and polka dots, a departure from the feather-filled cabarets of the Lido or Moulin Rouge.

Dubai will also feature the first Crazy Horse aerial act. But the atmosphere is more opulent and less intimate than the Parisian basement where the cabaret was born.

At the auditorium inside a plush, shoreline resort, guests will watch from velvet armchairs where they can order dinner and drinks.

‘Moment of hesitation’

Brio Mindset, one of the troupe’s 18 dancers, praises the work of the teams who created nearly 500 costume items.

“We had to adapt to Dubai’s customs and requirements, which we did with great elegance and chic,” says the 28-year-old, wearing a red robe to match her lips and stiletto heels.

After the closure, several years ago, of spin-offs in Las Vegas and Singapore, Crazy Horse chose Dubai for its only permanent show abroad.

The project emerged from a partnership struck in early 2025 with a Dubai-based French entrepreneur.

With nearly 20 million visitors per year, a population that is 90 percent expatriate and an unusual degree of openness for the Arab world, Dubai seemed to offer an ideal setting.

But the war, triggered by US and Israeli strikes against Iran, nearly derailed everything.

At the height of Iran’s retaliatory attacks on the Gulf, “there was a brief moment where we hesitated”, Deissenberg says.

The threat of renewed strikes remains. But Crazy Horse’s local partner is “quite confident... that Dubai will be a vibrant hub again”, she stresses.

“People in regions of war... say you need to live and things need to go on,” Deissenberg adds. *– AFP*

John Malkovich reflects on limits of friendship in ‘Wild Horse Nine’

Paula Ramon

LOS ANGELES – US actor John Malkovich has close, longtime friends, but unlike his character Chris in the new dark comedy “Wild Horse Nine,” he thinks there are limits on what one can ask them to do.

Directed by Oscar-winning filmmaker Martin McDonagh, the movie follows two CIA spies in the lead-up to the US-backed 1973 coup in Chile.

As the spies – played by 72-year-old Malkovich and Oscar winner Sam Rockwell – visit Easter Island against a tense sociopolitical backdrop, veteran agent Chris asks his partner to end his life as he knows his days are numbered.

“I think asking a friend to take your life is about as big an ask as one can make,” Malkovich told a news conference in Los Angeles last week.

“I wouldn’t do it,” he added, laughing.

Malkovich described the rapport between the characters: “They argue about odd things... whether they should kill people while they’re eating, or how gay is cheese in various countries.”

The actor, who has been nominated for an Academy Award twice but never won, has generated significant Oscar buzz for his performance in “Wild Horse Nine,” especially after winning the Volpi Cup for Best Actor at this year’s Venice Film Festival.

Malkovich said he was drawn to the project by McDonagh’s script.

“He’s a terrific writer of dialogue,” Malkovich said.

“He’s a terrific writer of writing about men, I think, and their various complications... their relationships with themselves and with other men, their need for other men in their lives and their rejection of that need.”

McDonagh, a playwright and director, has been nominated for Best Original Screenplay at the Oscars three times, most recently for 2022’s “The Banshees of Inisherin.”

Steve Buscemi, who plays the CIA’s Latin American bureau chief in “Wild Horse Nine,” said the film hinges on the characters, rather than the plot.

“The story really is the relationships and what these characters have to do, what they ask of each other, how they relate to each other,” he told the news conference. *– AFP*



John Malkovich speaks onstage at the BAFTA New York Screening of “Wild Horse Nine” at AMC Lincoln Square Theater on Thursday in New York City. – AFP

World Weather

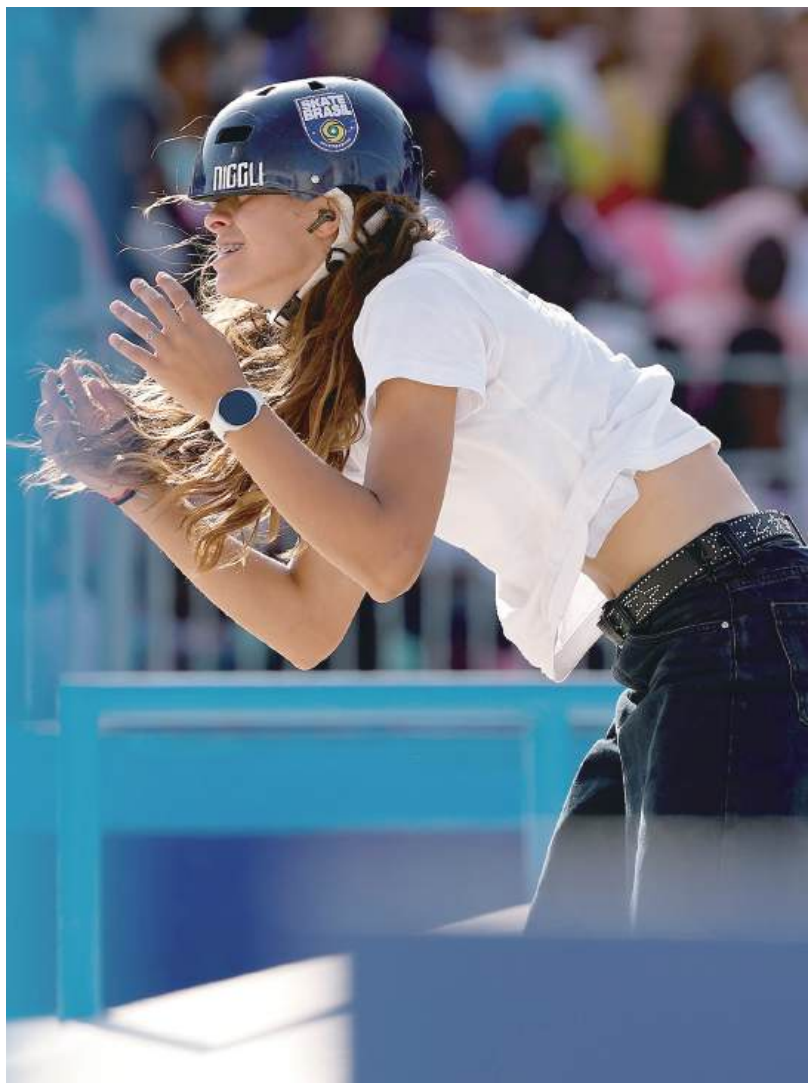
CHINA		ASIA-PACIFIC		WORLD		LUSOPHONE	
Beijing	-2°C~11°C	Manila	23°C~32°C	New York	8°C~16°C	Lisbon	18°C~22°C
Shanghai	7°C~14°C	Bangkok	23°C~35°C	London	5°C~11°C	Rio de Janeiro	18°C~21°C
Hong Kong	14°C~25°C	Tokyo	9°C~12°C	Frankfurt	3°C~9°C	Luanda	25°C~28°C
Taipei	15°C~23°C	Singapore	24°C~32°C	Vancouver	8°C~11°C	Maputo	15°C~27°C
Guangzhou	11°C~23°C	Kuala Lumpur	23°C~31°C	Paris	8°C~10°C	Dili	23°C~33°C
Nanjing	3°C~12°C	Jakarta	24°C~35°C	Moscow	2°C~6°C	São Tomé	25°C~33°C
Guilin	8°C~17°C	Seoul	0°C~12°C	Las Vegas	12°C~24°C	Praia	23°C~33°C
Xi’an	-2°C~11°C	Sydney	11°C~20°C	Monte Carlo	14°C~16°C	Bissau	23°C~35°C





Senegal's Babacar Mbaye (top) and Georgia's Davit Mdzevashvili compete at the Beach Wrestling Men 60kg Finals Bronze Medal Match during the Dakar 2026 Youth Olympic Games at Saly Beach West in Saly, Senegal on Saturday. – AFP

China's Li Lezheng competes during Parallel Bars rotation of Artistic Gymnastics Men's Qualification at Dakar 2026 Summer Youth Olympic Games at Dakar Expo Center in Diamniadio, Senegal, on Saturday. – Xinhua





Duda Ribeiro of Brazil reacts during the skateboarding women's street final at Dakar 2026 Summer Youth Olympic Games at Complexe Tour de l'Oeuf in Dakar, Senegal, on Thursday. – Xinhua

Swiss' Mike Smits competes with horse Barentin De Rampan at the jumping individual final jump-off during the Dakar 2026 Youth Olympic Games at the Equestrian Center in Diamniadio, on Friday. – AFP



Saleha Nerdjes Berrached (left) of Algeria and Maria Alhaddadein of Jordan compete during the Triathlon Women's Individual race at Dakar 2026 Summer Youth Olympic Games in Saly, south of Dakar, Senegal, on Friday. – Xinhua



Senegal's Elisabeth Diatta (right) and Japan's Reisa Kojima compete at the Beach Wrestling Women 55kg Finals Gold Medal Match during the Dakar 2026 Youth Olympic Games at Saly Beach West in Saly, Senegal on Saturday. – AFP