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Govt launches scheme encouraging restaurants to offer seniors healthy fare

Tony Wong

The government yesterday launched a programme encouraging restaurants across the city to offer healthy menus tailor-made for senior citizens, with the aim of making it easier for them to access healthy dishes when dining out.

Restaurants offering at least three healthy dishes suitable for the dietary needs of senior citizens – including ease of chewing, safe swallowing, and deboning – are eligible to join the programme.

The government said yesterday that the programme – officially named Healthy Meals Plan for Elderly Persons – will be an important step to foster the development of the city's silver economy*.

The programme also aims to set up and constantly improve Macau's official standards for healthy meals for seniors and establish an evaluation system on the matter.

The new programme is run by the Social Welfare Bureau (IAS) in collaboration with the Health Bureau (SSM) and the public Macao University of Tourism (UTM). The implementation of the programme is supported by the Municipal Affairs Bureau (IAM) – the public entity tasked with licensing restaurants.

The Social Welfare Bureau is the public entity tasked with planning and implementing the government's policies and initiatives for senior citizens.

Restaurants wishing to join the new programme are required to be members of the Health Bureau's current "Healthy Restaurant" programme first. Restaurants offering at least five dishes officially regarded as healthy can join the Health Bureau's programme. Restaurants in this programme, according to the SSM website, can attract diners seeking healthy-cum-delicious meals – also willing to pay a higher price for this.



Health Bureau (SSM) Director Alvis Lo Iek Long (from left to right), Social Welfare Bureau (IAS) President Wilson Hon Wai, Macao University of Tourism (UTM) Rector Fanny Vong Chuk Kwan, and Cheong Kuai Tat, who heads the Municipal Affairs Bureau's (IAM) Food Safety Department, applaud after symbolically launching the programme yesterday, on UTM's Mong-Ha campus. – Photo: Tony Wong

In the new programme, the Macao University of Tourism is tasked with providing restaurant chefs with free-of-charge special training to enhance their skills to prepare healthy-cum-delicious dishes suitable for the dietary needs of senior citizens.

A ceremony marking the launch of the new programme was held on UTM's Mong-Ha campus on the peninsula yesterday.

Delivering a speech during yesterday's ceremony, IAS President Wilson Hon Wai underlined the government's commitment to achieving the goal of healthy ageing for senior citizens.

Hon said that the new programme aims to encourage the local restaurant sector to provide seniors with more diversified healthy dining choices. This will assist the elderly in improving their dietary habits, enhancing physical strength, preventing and delaying chronic conditions, and raising their quality of life, ultimately creating a win-win-win scenario of "benefiting seniors, developing the restaurant industry, and fostering community inclusion".

Also delivering a speech, SSM Director Alvis Lo Iek Long noted that eating healthily is crucial to the overall health of senior citizens. For seniors to eat healthily, three aspects of conditions must be met: they need to have the respective knowledge; they need to acquire the required skills to practise healthy dietary habits; and a favourable environment fostering their incentives to choose healthy dishes is required.

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Foreign Ministry Commission presents more documentaries to PSC broadcasters



Foreign Ministry Commissioner Bian Lixin addresses yesterday's presentation ceremony at Forum II which was attended by a number of representatives from PSCs. – Photo: Staff Reporter

Staff Reporter

The Office of the Commissioner of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China (PRC) in the Macao Special Administrative Region (MSAR) presented yesterday, for the fifth consecutive year, documentaries to TV stations in Portuguese-speaking countries (PSCs).

This year marks Season 3 of the "Extraordinary Construction, Joint Construction" documentary initiative.

The theme of yesterday afternoon's ceremony at Forum II was "Play the Silk Road Symphony in the New Era and Jointly Build a Community with a Shared Future for Humanity".

In her speech at the presentation ceremony, Foreign Ministry Commissioner Bian Lixin noted that the documentary presents 50 stories illustrating how Chinese builders have worked hand-in-hand with people from participating Belt and Road (B&R) countries to turn architectural blueprints into reality. She said that cooperation between China and PSCs forms an integral part of advancing high-quality B&R development. Moving forward, both sides should expand collaboration across three key areas: upholding the principle of mutual benefit, empowering the modernisation of the Global South, and committing to mutual learning and exchange.

Kou Hoi In, chairman of the Board of Directors of TDM, said in a speech that over the past five years, TDM has drawn upon Macau's bilingual Chinese-Portuguese capabilities to handle the Portuguese translations and distribution of these documentaries. This, Kou said, has allowed Chinese documentaries to reach audiences in Portuguese-speaking countries. TDM will continue using broadcasting media to foster closer ties among peoples and write a new chapter in cultural exchange along the Belt and Road, the former president of the local legislature said.

A number of guests from Portuguese-speaking countries noted in their speeches that the documentaries offer a modern perspective for understanding China, and expressed their hope to deepen future cooperation between both sides. ■

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Wang Yi holds positive, constructive phone talks with Rubio on China-US ties

Foreign Minister Wang Yi yesterday held positive and constructive phone talks with US Secretary of State Marco Rubio. *– Story on p. 7*

Many AI companies will adopt advertising: Criteo CEO

Many AI platforms will end up eventually adopting advertising, the CE of the online advertising agency Criteo says, as investors are focused on whether the technology will ever be profitable. *– Story on p. 10*

Pope draws huge crowds at Argentina shrine before Peru homecoming

Pope Leo XIV drew vast crowds to Argentina's holiest shrine yesterday, the final day of his visit before he departs for Peru, where he spent nearly two decades as a missionary. *– Story on p. 11*

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Political Smearing in the Name of Human Rights Advocacy: Further Analysis with Legal Application in the Case of Au Kam San

Commentary by Fang Quan, Associate Vice President and Dean of the Faculty of Law Macau University of Science and Technology (MUST)

Recently, the Lower Court of the Macao Special Administrative Region (SAR) delivered its verdict, in accordance with the law, on the case involving [former lawmaker] Au Kam San, who was suspected of endangering national security. All sectors of Macao society maintain a highly unified stance on this case, fully supporting the SAR's judicial ruling and firmly opposing any external interference. However, certain Western non-governmental organisations (NGOs) have once again published an article that contain groundless comments and flagrant provocations. Their writings demonstrate a pervasive disregard for the law of the SAR, as well as a lack of basic knowledge of jurisprudence.

The aforementioned article characterises Au Kam San's criminal acts, which endanger national security, as so-called 'peaceful political activity' ('atividade política pacífica' in the Portuguese article), and describes individuals like Au as 'people actively participating in socio-political activities', attacking the judgment as a criminalisation of the exercise of free speech. In reality, the key to distinguishing criminal acts that endanger national security from so-called 'peaceful political activity' lies neither in whether the acts are carried out in a 'violent' manner, nor in whether the actor claims to be 'peaceful'. Rather, it lies in whether the subjective purpose and objective behaviour meet the constitutive elements prescribed by law. The ruling in the case of Au Kam San indicates that the Court found him to have 'colluded with multiple overseas organisations successively'. The information he disseminated was 'manifestly replete with political advocacy for the subversion of state power' and consisted of 'false and clearly distorted' materials, with the objective of 'inciting hatred among Macao residents toward the Central Government'. Clearly, such actions have crossed well beyond the boundaries of so-called 'peaceful political activity', such as expressing dissent or making demands within a legal framework. By contrast, mere policy criticism or the expression of demands – even if harsh and critical in content – will not be penalised under charges of endangering national security. In short, as long as an act subjectively possesses the intent to infringe upon the legal interests of national security, and the objectively completed act is prescribed by the Law on Safeguarding National Security, it satisfies the constitutive elements of the relevant crime of endangering national security. It absolutely cannot be conflated with so-called 'peaceful political activity' or the 'exercise of freedom of speech'.

The article describes the case of Au Kam San as a so-called 'closed-door trial'. It is universally known that the public nature of judicial proceedings is a general principle of procedural law, yet applying non-public trials as an exception for national security cases is likewise a common practice in the international community. Article 14, Paragraph 1 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights stipulates that 'the press and the public may be excluded from all or part of a trial ... for reasons of ... national security'. Examples include the layered sealed system set up by the United States Classified Information Procedures Act (CIPA), which reduces the danger to national security to a minimum. Germany's Courts Constitution Act (Gerichtsverfassungsgesetz – GVG) explicitly stipulates that a court may decide to close all or part of a trial to the public when there is a risk of endangering national security. Portugal's Law No. 2/2014, the State Secrets Regime, similarly amended its Code of Criminal Procedure to align with the protection of state secrets. As



Undated file photo of Fang Quan (方泉) – Photo courtesy of MUST Scholars Hub

for the case of Au Kam San, there is a legal basis for a non-public trial, i.e., a conditional exceptional procedure established by Article 9, Paragraph 2 of Law No. 9/1999, the Basic Law of Judicial Organisation. The application of this procedure relies on the substantive prerequisite that 'a public trial would damage national security interests', and strictly adheres to conditions and procedures requiring a request by the Public Prosecutions Office, confirmation by the Committee for Safeguarding National Security, and a decision by the judge. A non-public trial is not equivalent to a secret trial; even if the trial is closed to the public, the defendant's defence lawyer and other participants in the proceedings participate in the entire process and enjoy full procedural rights, fully reflecting a prudent balance between judicial justice and national security interests.

The article accuses the Court of being 'disproportionate' in sentencing Au Kam San to 12 years and six months in prison. The so-called 'principle of proportionality' is typically applied in administrative law, whereas in criminal law, it is expressed as the 'principle of commensurability between crime and punishment', meaning severe punishments for severe crimes, minor punishments for minor crimes, and proportionality of sentencing. The counts of offences which Au Kam San was found guilty include one count of 'subversion of state power', for which he was sentenced to 11 years and three months in prison, and two counts of 'establishing contact with organisations, groups, or individuals outside the Macao Special Administrative Region to commit acts endangering national security', each drawing a sentence of three years and nine months in prison; and one count of 'breach of secrecy', for which he was sentenced to nine months in prison. Under the provisions of Article 71 of the Macao Penal Code regarding the legal concurrence of crimes, the minimum limit of the sentencing range the court could impose is the highest individual penalty among the various sentences, namely 11 years and three months in prison; the maximum limit of the sentencing range is the sum total of all individual penalties, namely 19 years and six months in prison. The judge also explicitly pointed out two aspects of sentencing considerations: on one hand, the suspect is a first-time offender and admitted to a substantial portion of the criminal facts; on the other hand, the suspect's degree of intent was extremely high, and both the degree of unlawfulness of the relevant crimes and the potential consequences were exceptionally severe. Under these considerations, the final sentence of 12 years and six months in prison is clearly closer to the minimum limit of the statutory range. Thus, how then can there be any issue of being 'disproportionate'?

The article further accuses the judgment of violating the Macao SAR's obligations to safeguard litigation rights under international human rights treaties and criteria. In fact, throughout the entire legal process of the case, as Au Kam San did not hire a lawyer on his own, the Court appointed a defence lawyer to represent him in accordance with the law. The appointed lawyer was recognised and accepted by Au and maintained close communication and contact with him to conduct his defence. Au Kam San fully exercised his right to defence according to the law. In addition, the Court also approved regular family visits in accordance with the law. The Court's judgment further shows that regarding certain allegations, the judge considered that doubts remained as to whether the relevant behavior satisfied the statutory elements of the offence; based on the principle of in *dubio pro reo* (the presumption of innocence in case of doubt), the court found him not guilty of those specific charges. Thus, it is evident that the Macao SAR Court's handling of the case of Au Kam San strictly adhered to statutory procedures, upheld procedural justice, and fully protected the legitimate rights and interests of the party involved. How is the case a violation of the relevant covenants?

As for the article's attacks on the 'Holistic Approach to National Security', they are even more nonsensical. The 'Holistic Approach to National Security' is the outcome of a sovereign state independently defining its security boundaries and autonomously choosing its security pathway in the midst of profound changes unseen in a century based on its own security situation. It takes 'the security of the people as its ultimate goal' and explicitly anchors itself on 'promoting international security', bringing both 'one's own security and common security' into overall planning. By directly characterising this choice, which is based on a different philosophy of security, as the 'suppression of human rights', the criticisers only expose their true objective of carrying out political smearing under the guise of human rights advocacy. ■

Editor's Note: The translation of the commentary from Chinese was arranged and edited by the Post. *The Chinese original text was previously published in* Macao Daily News. *Words within square brackets added by the* Post.

Macau braces for weekend rain, temperature rollercoaster: SMG

Khalel Vallo

Macau is expected to see increased rainfall and rising temperatures over the weekend before another cold air mass reaches the coast of Guangdong in the middle of next week, bringing cooler weather again, according to a statement by the Meteorological and Geophysical Bureau (SMG) yesterday.

The statement said that Macau recorded its lowest temperature since the start of autumn on Tuesday at 16.1 degrees Celsius, under the influence of a cold air mass.

However, the cooler conditions are expected to be short-lived, with temperatures gradually rising over the coming days as the cold air moves away.

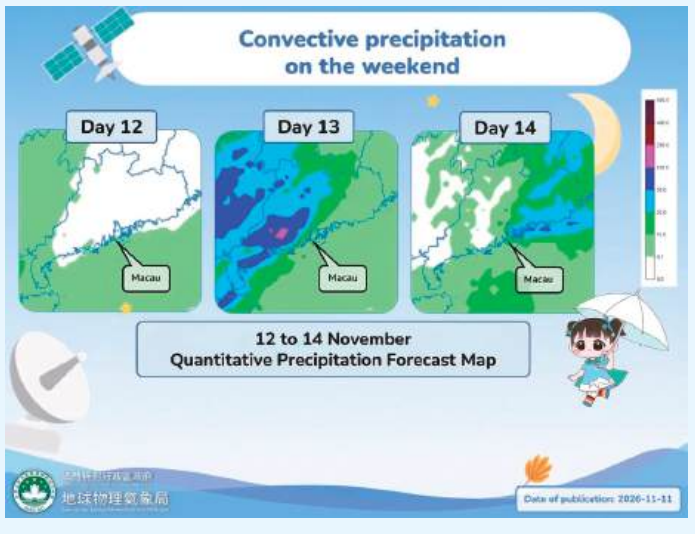
An upper-level disturbance is forecast to affect southern China and the Guangdong coast tomorrow and the day after, bringing more cloud cover and showers to Macau, the statement said, adding that some periods may see heavier rainfall due to atmospheric conditions favourable for convection, while thunderstorms are also possible in inland areas of Guangdong.

The local observatory advised residents planning outdoor activities over the weekend to take rain gear.

Temperatures are expected to rise initially, with the difference between daytime and nighttime temperatures narrowing, the statement noted, adding that another cold air mass is forecast to reach the Guangdong coast around November 18 and 19, bringing stronger northerly winds and a drop in temperatures.

The observatory said the extent of the expected temperature drop remained uncertain and that it would continue monitoring the weather conditions, the statement noted, describing the outlook for the coming week as a transition from cooler conditions to warmer, rainy weather, followed by another spell of cooler weather.

The observatory advised residents, particularly older people, young children and those in poor health, to monitor weather updates and adjust their clothing accordingly, the statement noted. ■



This infographic provided by the local observatory yesterday shows its precipitation forecast map from today to Saturday; translation from Chinese arranged by the Post.

China, PSC film fest to launch tomorrow

Rui Pastorin

Tomorrow will see the launch of the "China and the Portuguese-speaking Countries Film Festival", the Culture and Sports Bureau (DSCD) said in a statement yesterday, kicking off with the screening of the Brazilian documentary "Milton Bituca Nascimento", which revolves around the celebrated musician and his 2022 farewell tour, at Anim'Arte NAM VAN.

The festival, integrated in the 8th "Encounter in Macao – Arts and Cultural Festival between China and the Portuguese-speaking Countries [PSCs]", is themed "Resonance of Light and Shadow" and features close to 30 works from China and Portuguese-speaking countries and regions.

The statement noted that the festival's four core sections are: "Selection of Portuguese-language Music Films," focusing on music culture across PSCs; "The Literary Revival," featuring three screen adaptations of works by emerging Chinese writers (Dreaming of Mother and Home, Reflections in the Lake, and Take Off); "Premieres of Chinese and Lusophone Films"; and "Chinese-Portuguese Short Films."

Moreover, with the coming 73rd Macau Grand Prix (MGP), "Senna", a documentary about the legendary F1 champion Ayrton Senna (1960-1994) will also be presented.

The festival will also see a variety of outreach activities enabling one to "learn about filmmaking and its cultural contexts from different perspectives", the statement said, ranging from talks to performances.

Meanwhile, regarding tomorrow's screening of the documentary highlighting Nascimento's career, life and Brazilian music culture, the programme also features a Fado performance and interactive activities including experimentation with traditional instruments, a workshop on making a cardboard Portuguese guitar, and table football, the statement added.

After the opening, films will be screened at Cinematheque•Passion from November 16 to December 7, with more ticketing details on: www.cinematheque-passion.mo.The programme can also be found on culture.dscd.gov.mo/fcp/2026/en. ■



This poster provided by the Culture and Sports Bureau (DSCD) yesterday promotes the China and Portuguese-speaking Countries Film Festival.

Mozambican singer Stewart Sukuma to join Macao Chinese Orchestra for cross-cultural concert

Khalel Vallo

Mozambican singer Stewart Sukuma will make his local debut with the Macao Chinese Orchestra (OCHM) on Saturday, aiming to merge traditional Mozambican music and Chinese orchestral sounds in a concert at the Macao Cultural Centre (CCM) in Nape.

The concert, part of the 8th "Encounter in Macao – Arts and Cultural Festival between China and Portuguese-speaking Countries", will take place at 8:00 p.m. at CCM's Grand Auditorium. Tickets are available through the "Enjoy Macao" ticketing platform https://ticketing.enjoymacao.mo/en/programme/P-660208.

Sukuma, one of Mozambique's most internationally recognised musicians, has spent more than 40 years performing across Africa, Europe and the Americas. His music draws on marrabenta*, a popular Mozambican style, while incorporating Afropop, contemporary fusion and jazz influences.

During a meet-and-greet session yesterday at the centre, Sukuma said that he had sought to enrich marrabenta by combining it with other traditional Mozambican styles, as well as international musical influences. He described marrabenta as "cheerful, lively and energetic", while noting that Mozambique, like Macau, has a diverse musical culture.

At the concert, Sukuma will perform alongside the orchestra under the direction of its music director and chief conductor, Zhang Lie.

Sukuma highlighted the cultural significance of the instruments, noting that the timbila (a traditional wooden xylophone) originated in the Zavala district of Inhambane Province, while the mbira (a traditional African lamellophone, aka "thumb piano") is associated with Mozambique's Manica Province and is also shared with neighbouring Zimbabwe. He said the musicians were pleased to introduce these sounds to Macau and collaborate with the Macao Chinese Orchestra.

Meanwhile, Zhang said that the orchestra had previously worked with musicians from Portuguese-speaking countries (PSCs) and regions, including Portugal, Brazil, and Cabo Verde. He described the latest collaboration as an opportunity to explore the musical characteristics of Mozambique and bring them into dialogue with Chinese traditional music.

Sukuma also described the collaboration as an opportunity to discover the sounds and complexity of Eastern music. Reflecting on his career, he said that coming from a small province in Mozambique, he had not always known what opportunities existed beyond his home country, making the invitation to perform in Macau particularly meaningful.



Mozambican singer Stewart Sukuma (right) and Macao Chinese Orchestra chief conductor Zhang Lie pose after yesterday's meet-and-greet session at the Macao Cultural Centre (CCM) in Nape. – Photo: Khalel Vallo

Organised by the Culture and Sports Bureau (DSCD), the festival is supported by the Macao Government Tourism Office (MGTO), Municipal Affairs Bureau (IAM), and public broadcaster TDM. ■

**Marrabenta is the vibrant, upbeat urban dance music genre of Mozambique, characterised by its fast-paced rhythm, accordion melodies, and acoustic or electric guitars. Originating in the capital city of Maputo (then Lourenço Marques) during the 1930s and 1940s, the name itself comes from the Portuguese verb rebentar, meaning "to break" or "to burst," colloquially adapted in Mozambique's indigenous Ronga and Changana languages to describe music so lively and energetic that it could "break" the strings of a poorly made guitar or make dancers move until they drop. – Gemini*

Barra Slow Festival to return late Nov, marks event's 1st anniversary

Rui Pastorin

The Barra Slow Festival is marking its first anniversary, returning with yet another edition slated for November 27- 29 that will have over 180 stalls, along with performances, discussion sessions and workshops.

Themed "Coffee Moment × Design Delight", the upcoming event is organised by the District Development Center of the General Union of Neighbourhood Associations of Macao, (UGAMM), widely known as Kai Fong, giving event details in a recent statement. The festival is also held in conjunction with TOPLAY Market Coffee Festival and the UNFOLD Art & Design Fair.

Among the highlights is the return of the TOPLAY Market Coffee Festival, which sees 40 specialty brands from the Chinese mainland, Seoul, Busan, Bangkok, Singapore and Kuala Lumpur, as well as 15 local cafés, the statement said. Champion baristas and founders from various brands will also be on site, while the "Macao Slow Living Collection" will feature baristas, creative talents, independent makers, and snacks.

Music performances will be held at the Bamboo Space and the newly added "Dock Area Vinyl Open-Air Living Room", with highlights including CY LEO (Ho Cheuk Yin), who the statement said is "widely regarded as the finest harmonica player in the world", ROSEMANCES, thetiredeyes, Chan I and Herson Si, along with DJ sets.

The statement pointed out other new venue additions with the opening up of the idle space in the former customs headquarters building in Barra as the second venue of another highlight: the UNFOLD fair, marking the first time that it will be held across two venues, while there will be over 105 creative design and publishing units.

While admission to the festival is free, the UNFOLD fair requires one to purchase a ticket, which also covers a Brazil-themed exhibition presented by a Brazilian visual-culture studio for the 2026 China–Brazil Cultural Year, and the Macau premiere of the artists' book group show "This Is Not a Book", according to the statement. The section also sees "The Table Is Set: Evi O.'s Food Book Design", being slated to showcase over 40 book designs by Evi O. ■



This undated handout photo recently provided by the District Development Center of the General Union of Neighbourhood Associations of Macao shows audience members watching a performance during a previous edition of the Barra Slow Festival.

Boner's interpretation on the word "Pataca"



Boner wins WALL LORDS Macau stage after 2-day graffiti showdown

Interview by William Chan

Jakarta-born graffiti artist Boner has won the Macau stage of "!Outloud x WALL LORDS 2026 International Graffiti Competition", following two days of live painting and competition at the Nam Van Lake Anim'Arte Graffiti Area.

The event concluded on Saturday as part of the ninth !Outloud International Street Art Festival 2026 — STILL & NEXT. Organised by the Macau City Visual Arts Society and funded by the Cultural Development Fund, the competition brought together eight graffiti artists from China, Indonesia, South Korea and Thailand.

Boner was selected as champion after the jury assessed the artists' lettering originality, visual balance and onsite completion. He will receive full sponsorship for round-trip airfare and accommodation to represent the Macau stage at the next stop of the international WALL LORDS tour.

The jury comprised South Korean graffiti pioneer Jay Flow, experienced artist Semi and Australian street artist Vans. Vans said the participating artists' technical ability exceeded his expectations, particularly in line control, colour transitions and lettering structure.

"Although the participating artists this time mainly come from Asia, their line control, colour transitions and lettering structure techniques far exceeded my initial expectations," Vans said on Saturday. "Their overall execution and onsite control gave the jury a massive surprise."

SINIC, a Hong Kong-based graffiti and street artist and one of the organisers of Wall Lords, told the *Post* in an exclusive interview on Friday that the competition has been running for more than 10 years and has developed a strong reputation in Asia. Artists are invited through an open call before organisers select participants whose work and experience suit the battle format.

"This is the first time Wall Lords has been held in Macau," SINIC said. "The competition already has a certain reputation in Asia, so when we open the call, artists in the community will know about it. We then select participants who are capable of taking part."

The competition was held beside Nam Van Lake and required each artist to develop a large-scale work over two days. The artists began their pieces on the first day and returned to refine details and complete them on the second. This year's challenge centred on lettering the word "Pataca", allowing each participant to interpret the subject through a personal style and visual language.

For SINIC, the battle format is important because it is becoming less common. Graffiti is often created in informal or unauthorised settings, while large-scale murals are increasingly commissioned as completed works. A structured competition connected to an arts festival remains unusual. "Graffiti does not often enter a formal system connected to an arts festival. That is why we have continued doing this. It is still relatively rare in Asia and internationally." He noted that this edition's winner, Boner, will be awarded a ticket and hotel stay to participate in the next edition of WALL LORDS.

The competition also extended beyond the professional artists. !Outloud has also set up a free wall for local people to try out graffiti art, inviting local residents, students and aspiring creators to use spray paint and take part in an open session. The WALL LORDS graffiti on Praia Grande will not be removed - it will stay there until the next graffiti artists cover it. Now locals can see the eight pieces of artwork from Wall Lords finalists at the Macau Stage at Anim'Arte. Meanwhile, during the festival, the organisers have invited artists to create new pieces in Praça de Ponte e Horta.





Jakarta-born graffiti artist Boner sprays at Anim'Arte in Nam Wan on Friday. – Photos provided by !Outloud









Mainlander attempts to sexually assault woman in hotel: police

Sherwin Hng

The Judiciary Police (PJ) arrested a 31-year-old man from the Chinese mainland for attempting to sexually assault a female friend in a hotel guestroom, PJ spokesman Cheong Kim Fong said during a regular press conference yesterday.

According to Cheong, the suspect, surnamed Huang, works as a clerk. The victim is a non-local young woman, and the two had known each other for about three years as platonic friends. Huang had persuaded her to visit Macau by claiming that he was skilled at gambling and could help her win money at casinos.

Cheong refrained from disclosing the victim's exact age.

The woman arrived in Macau with Huang on Monday. They checked into a hotel room in the city centre registered under his name, having agreed to take turns using the room to rest. At around 9:00 p.m. that evening, Huang left to gamble, leaving the woman alone in the room, Cheong said.



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

At around 5:00 a.m. the following day, Huang returned and entered the room under the pretext of using the bathroom. He then pushed the woman onto the bed, restrained her body and arms, and repeatedly touched her, attempting to commit sexual acts on her.

Cheong added that the woman resisted and shouted for help, alerting other hotel guests, who called the police. Public Security Police (PSP) officers arrived at the scene and apprehended Huang before referring the case to the PJ for investigation.

Investigators found multiple scratches and abrasions on the woman's forearms. Huang also had several scratch marks on his face, neck, and chest, which were consistent with injuries sustained during the woman's resistance.

Cheong said the evidence gathered, including the injuries sustained by both parties, provided strong indications that Huang had used violence to commit acts of a sexual nature on the woman.

Huang was transferred to the Public Prosecutions Office (MP), facing charges of sexual coercion.

According to Article 158 of the Macau Penal Code, sexual coercion is punishable by two to eight years' imprisonment. ■

Old building near Red Market to be redeveloped



The image released by Macau Urban Renewal Limited (MUR) yesterday shows a recent photo of the building and an artist's rendition of the future redeveloped building.

Tony Wong

An old residential building located near the Red Market will be redeveloped with technical support provided by the government-owned Macao Urban Renewal Limited (MUR), with the project expected to start next year, the company said in a statement yesterday.

The building, located on the corner of Avenida do Almirante Lacerda (罅些喇提督大馬路) and Avenida do Ouvidor Arriaga (雅廉訪大馬路), was previously a residential building for civil servants working for the Post and Telecommunications Bureau (CTT).

The building's ground floor currently houses a public library. According to previous news reports, the Post and Telecommunications Bureau still holds about 20 per cent ownership of the building. The remaining units in the building are privately owned.

Yesterday's statement said that MUR has obtained written authorisation from the property owners of the building – authorising the company to provide technical support for the building's redevelopment.

The statement noted that the building is over 57 years old. The seven-storey building consists of two ground-floor shop units, the library and 18 residential units.

The redevelopment will be financed by the building's property owners.

The statement said that under the government's guidance and support, MUR has launched preliminary preparations for the redevelopment project and arranged start-up funds. After incorporating the owners' feedback on the design, MUR completed the draft redevelopment plan and submitted it to the Land and Urban Construction Bureau (DSSCU) for approval last month, aiming to start demolition next year.

Upon completion, the building height will remain unchanged, and property owners will, in principle, receive a new unit of similar size under a "one unit for one unit" swap model. The new building will optimise unit layouts and install lifts for convenience, significantly improving the living environment, accessibility, and quality of life. ■

Myanmarese arrested after cigarette end sparks fire outside shop in Nape: police

Sherwin Hng

The Judiciary Police (PJ) arrested a 31-year-old non-resident worker (NRW) from Myanmar after a discarded cigarette end sparked a fire outside a shop in Nape on Tuesday morning, PJ spokesman Cheong Kim Fong said during a regular press conference yesterday.

According to Cheong, the suspect, surnamed Saw, works in the food and beverage industry. He's suspected of discarding a cigarette end without properly extinguishing it, causing a fire after the wind blew it into a pile of miscellaneous items outside a nearby shop.

Cheong noted that the Judiciary Police received a report from the Fire Services Bureau (CB) at 7:05 a.m. on Tuesday that miscellaneous items outside a shop in Nape had caught fire. The blaze left the building's exterior wall blackened, while the financial losses were still being assessed. No injuries were reported.

Investigators identified Saw, who works at a shop near the scene. According to the investigation, he had been smoking outside the shop before discarding the cigarette end on the ground and leaving without ensuring it was fully extinguished. The wind subsequently blew it towards the pile of items, sparking the fire, Cheong said.

At around 9:30 a.m. that morning, PJ officers went to Saw's workplace and took him in for questioning before arresting him.

Saw is suspected of committing the crime of arson and was transferred to the Public Prosecutions Office (MP) for further investigation.

According to Article 264 of the Macau Penal Code, arson is punishable by imprisonment between three and 10 years. ■

This image downloaded from the Judiciary Police (PJ) website shows its official logo.

Govt launches scheme encouraging restaurants to offer seniors healthy fare

Continued from p.1

In the first aspect, Dr Lo said, the government has launched various activities and competitions – alongside online and offline information dissemination – to equip seniors with correct healthy eating knowledge.

In the second aspect, Dr Lo said, the government has adopted new technology to empower seniors to practise healthy dietary habits. For instance, through the "My Health" component of their Macao One Account app, seniors can take a photo of food allowing them to instantly view calories and determine if the dish is healthy, thereby helping them put healthy behaviours into practice, Lo said.

In the third aspect, Dr Lo said, a favourable environment is also important to help seniors practise healthy eating.

Dr Lo pointed out that his bureau has launched its "Healthy Restaurant" programme, which has so far been joined by 383 restaurants across the city, offering residents more diversified healthy dining choices.

Dr Lo said that the new programme goes a step further by focusing on the specific dietary needs of senior citizens – such as ease of chewing, safe swallowing, and deboning. ■

** The silver economy refers to the economic opportunities arising from a growing population of older adults. It encompasses goods and services specifically designed to meet the needs of seniors, including healthcare, technology, housing, and leisure. This sector is driven by longer life expectancies and increasing disposable income among the elderly. It also promotes active ageing and aims to improve the quality of life for this demographic. Ultimately, the silver economy represents a significant and expanding market for innovation and business development. It is also known as "silver-haired economy". – DeepSeek*

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Macau Weather

CLOUDY APART FROM SUNNY PERIODS.
FORCE 3 TO 4 EAST TO NORTHEASTERLY WINDS.
RELATIVE HUMIDITY WILL RANGE BETWEEN 55% AND 85%.

20ºC~27ºC

Source: SMG

Chinese firms showcase robots, flying cars and open AI models at Lisbon Web Summit



Robots perform at the opening ceremony of the four-day Web Summit 2026 in Lisbon on Monday. *– Xinhua*

LISBON – From AI-powered robots designed to work in shops to a vehicle carrying a detachable aircraft, Chinese companies at the four-day Web Summit 2026 in Lisbon are showcasing technologies that could reshape how people work, travel and develop artificial intelligence (AI).

The exhibits and discussions offer a glimpse of Chinese innovation at different stages of development, highlighting how advances in AI and manufacturing are opening up new applications.

Chinese robotics company Galbot exhibited its G1 robot, equipped with a wheeled base and two arms. Using AI to understand its surroundings and perform physical tasks, the robot is designed to operate in settings such as convenience stores, pharmacies, and factories.

For Ahti Heinla, co-founder of autonomous delivery robot company Starship Technologies, China's rapid technological progress is impressive.

Heinla told Xinhua that China's technological advances have drawn attention in Europe and the United States, highlighting China's manufacturing strength and scale as advantages in developing physical AI.

"China is a massive manufacturing power," he said, expressing confidence in the potential for complementary cooperation between Chinese and European companies.

While Starship develops small delivery robots that operate mainly on sidewalks, Chinese firms have made progress with larger autonomous vehicles designed for roads, he noted.

"I think these are complementary solutions," he said, adding that different designs can serve different markets.

China's advances in transportation technology were also on display at the summit's opening ceremony, where Zhao Deli, founder of flying-car developer XPENG ARIDGE, introduced the company's Land Aircraft Carrier.

The system consists of a six-wheeled ground vehicle and a detachable electric aircraft. Displayed on either side of the main stage, the two components showed a design intended to make aircraft easier to transport, store and recharge.

Zhao expects the global flying-car industry to enter a period of rapid development over the next decade. In an interview with Xinhua, he said the technology could initially serve recreational flying and emergency rescue before gradually expanding to point-to-point transportation.

He highlighted China's electric vehicle supply chain as an advantage, saying it could help reduce production costs and make flying cars more affordable.

The company is also pursuing international cooperation to explore applications for flying cars and support the development of low-altitude aviation.

Beyond physical machines, Chinese companies are participating in discussions about how AI itself is developed and deployed.

At a panel titled "The Open Source Advantage" on Tuesday, representatives from Chinese AI companies ModelBest and MiniMax joined a partner from venture capital firm True Ventures to discuss the role of open-source technologies in AI development and deployment.

As companies seek to balance performance, costs and data management, open models offer alternatives that can be adapted to specific needs. They can also make advanced AI more accessible to smaller businesses and independent developers.

Together, the exhibits and discussions highlight Chinese companies' growing role in the global AI ecosystem. While expanding manufacturing capabilities to bring new machines to market, Chinese business innovation is also contributing models and tools to help develop AI applications.

The four-day Lisbon Web Summit ends today.

– Xinhua, MPD

China's solar-powered drone completes maiden flight, filling commercial gap

BEIJING – A Chinese-developed small and medium-sized solar-powered drone completed its maiden flight yesterday, according to the China Academy of Aerospace Aerodynamics under the China Aerospace Science and Technology Corporation (CASC).

The drone is a commercial-grade, all-electric aircraft powered solely by solar energy. It is 3.2 meters long and has an 8-meter wingspan, with a maximum designed endurance of 30 hours.

The development team said the drone was designed to be green, energy-saving, low-cost and suitable for rapid mass production. Its main advantages include long flight time, rapid deployment and easy maintenance and support.

The drone fills a gap in China's commercial market for small and medium-sized all-electric low-altitude aircraft capable of long endurance, lower cost and large-area operations, the developers added.

It is expected to be used for long-distance pipeline inspection, inspection of major water conservancy facilities, land surveying and natural resource surveys, rapid disaster-area inspection, and large-area monitoring. *– Xinhua*

BRI empowers modernization, mutual learning among civilizations

Commentary by Shohin Samadi

Xi'an – More than 2,000 years ago, it was right here (in Xi'an) that melodious camel bells set out across deserts and snow-capped mountains, forging a close link between Chang'an, which is now the city of Xi'an, and renowned cities of the Silk Road such as Samarkand and Bukhara, and inscribing a moving chapter of civilizational exchanges and mutual learning into the annals of human history.

Today, think-tank scholars and media friends from across the world convene at the very starting point of the Silk Road to exchange ideas and build consensus under the theme "High-Quality Belt and Road Cooperation: Empowering Modernization and Mutual Learning Among Civilizations."

Thirteen years ago, Chinese President Xi Jinping put forward the initiative of jointly building the Silk Road Economic Belt and the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road, collectively known as the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). From its initial blueprint to its steady and substantive implementation, cooperation documents have been signed by over 150 countries and more than 30 international organizations. The BRI has thus become an open and inclusive platform for international cooperation and a widely welcomed global public good.

Central Asia used to suffer from inconvenient transportation due to being deeply landlocked and far from the ocean. Today, however, the China-Europe Railway Express and Central Asia Railway Express trains shuttle back and forth, and the transport network extending in all directions is turning this landlocked hinterland into a hub connecting the East and the West.

What runs on the tracks is not just minerals and commodities, but also opportunities and confidence leading to modernization. What is transported in the pipelines is not just natural gas but also trust and warmth of win-win cooperation. The Belt and Road has never been a solo endeavor of one party, but a symphony of common development for the Eurasian continent and the entire world.

Modernization is not just about roads and bridges, but also the development of people. Industrial parks and livelihood projects are allowing ordinary people to tangibly share the dividends of development. At the depth of modernization lies the question of civilization. Modernization is not a copy of a certain model, but the growth of various civilizations rooted in their own soil.

The Belt and Road takes connectivity of facilities as the warp and people-to-people connectivity as the weft, allowing diverse civilizations to achieve and shine on each other in exchanges and dialogues.

Think tanks are an important force in jointly building the Belt and Road. They are advisers on policies, suppliers of ideas, and more importantly, bridge builders for people-to-people connectivity: a joint research may find a better path for a regional cooperation project; an objective report may change the perceptions that millions of readers have of each other; a candid dialogue may resolve estrangement and doubts accumulated over years.

In the process of moving the joint construction of the Belt and Road from "sketching the outline" to "painting the fine details," the role of think tanks and media is irreplaceable.

Although the China-Central Asia Format is young, it has already yielded substantial outcomes across various fields. Within the framework of the mechanism, China and Central Asian countries have established 14 ministerial-level cooperation platforms covering such areas as economy and trade, transportation, agriculture, energy and education.

The Secretariat, which is located in Xi'an, officially began full operations in April 2025, and a series of centers and platforms have since been set up and become operational – including centers for poverty reduction, educational exchange, and desertification control, as well as a trade facilitation cooperation platform.

With the continuous improvement of the institutional framework, trade volume between China and the five Central Asian countries exceeded US$100 billion for the first time in 2025; the trade structure continued to optimize, the proportion of mechanical and electrical products and high-tech products kept rising, and the construction of the Kyrgyzstan section of the China-Kyrgyzstan-Uzbekistan railway is being accelerated.

In addition to the format building and facility connectivity, people-to-people exchanges are also making solid progress: China-Kazakhstan and China-Uzbekistan mutual visa exemption has been realized, the Xi'an-Almaty people-to-people passenger train operates regularly, and youth training, language teaching, and sister city exchanges continue to deepen.

Why has a format established for only six years yielded such fruitful results? The answer lies in the revelation left to us by the high-quality joint construction of the "Belt and Road" – peace and cooperation, openness and inclusiveness, mutual learning and mutual appreciation, mutual benefit and win-win results, equality and transparency, and mutual respect.

As the permanent organ of the China-Central Asia Mechanism, the Secretariat is deeply aware of its responsibilities and is willing to continue to play its role as a bridge and bond to promote stronger cooperation among think tanks, media, and universities in China and Central Asian countries.

We are willing to support think tanks of the six countries to conduct joint research on common topics of regional development and share research results; Encourage friends from the media to conduct joint interviews, joint production, and joint communication, so that true and vivid stories can cross national borders; Promote universities to enable each other's success in joint scientific research and youth exchanges.

Editor's note: Shohin Samadi is deputy secretary-general of the Secretariat of the China-Central Asia Format.

China aims to build world-leading accounting system in next 5 years

BEIJING – China will strive to build an accounting system with Chinese characteristics that is internationally leading during the 15th Five-Year Plan period (2026-2030), according to a plan released by the Ministry of Finance (MOF) yesterday.

The plan sets out seven major tasks covering the rule of law, talent, professional services, supervision, digital and intelligent transformation, international governance, and accounting theory, the ministry said.

On combating financial fraud, China will strengthen the oversight system, step up monitoring of key areas and rectification of prominent problems, and keep sharpening the precision and effectiveness of these efforts, so as to accelerate the clearing of existing cases and effectively curb new ones, according to the plan.

China will raise the accounting sector's digital-intelligent level, basically build a system with unified standards, secure and controllable operations, and intelligent and efficient services, and significantly strengthen such work in accounting, auditing and industry management, according to the plan.

Lin Qiyun, director of the ministry's accounting department, told a press conference that the plan focuses on strengthening the rule of law and supervision, building up talent and expertise, advancing digital and intelligent transformation, and opening the sector wider while improving efficiency.

"We have unique institutional strengths, abundant accounting talent, a super-large market and rich corporate practices," Lin said. "We have the confidence and a solid foundation to build an accounting system with Chinese characteristics that is internationally leading, and to better serve high-quality economic and social development."

The plan comes after solid progress of China's accounting industry during the past five years. By the end of 2025, China had more than 10,000 accounting firms, including branch offices, and over 100,000 practicing certified public accountants, providing professional services to 4.2 million enterprises and public institutions each year.

The country has also strengthened the rule of law in accounting. The accounting law and the law on certified public accountants were amended in 2024 and 2026 respectively, marking a new chapter in the country's accounting legislation.

In recent years, the MOF has stepped up supervision and increased administrative penalties, with special campaigns from 2023 to 2025 leading to inspections of the accounting information quality of 18,000 enterprises and 7,010 practice-quality inspections of accounting firms.

Looking forward, Lin also stressed greater emphasis on opening up and efficiency. China will actively build an open and cooperative international accounting governance system and steadily advance mutual recognition of the equivalence of accounting and auditing standards, he said, adding that the country will push accounting services toward greater specialization and the high end of the value chain, helping enterprises better expand into new markets and enhance value. *– Xinhua*

Wang Yi holds positive, constructive phone talks with Rubio on China-US ties

BEIJING – Foreign Minister Wang Yi yesterday held positive and constructive phone talks with US Secretary of State Marco Rubio.

The two sides had an in-depth exchange of views on China-US relations and the interaction between the two heads of state.

During the talks, Wang, also a member of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Committee, said that President Xi Jinping's visit to the United States in September was smooth and successful.

The two heads of state agreed to enrich the connotation of a new vision of China-US relations, providing clearer strategic guidance for exploring a right approach for the two countries to get along with each other, Wang said.

The stable momentum of China-US relations has not come easily and is the two major countries' rational choice based on their respective and common interests, Wang said.

China, having maintained a stable and consistent policy towards the United States, is willing to strengthen communication and cooperation with the US side, properly handle differences and sensitive issues, support each other in hosting the 2026 APEC Economic Leaders' Meeting and the G20 Summit, and work to bring a constructive China-US relationship of strategic stability into effect and deliver results, Wang said. *– Xinhua*



This photo taken yesterday shows a coffee service area at the media center for the 2026 APEC Economic Leaders' Week in Shenzhen. The media center opened yesterday at the Shenzhen Convention and Exhibition Center. The 33rd APEC Economic Leaders' Meeting will be held in Shenzhen next Wednesday and Thursday. – Xinhua

Central bank vows to step up counter-cyclical adjustment, boost domestic demand

BEIJING – China's central bank pledged to step up counter-cyclical adjustment, boost domestic demand and improve supply, as part of efforts to promote sustained and higher-quality economic growth, according to its third-quarter monetary policy report released yesterday.

The People's Bank of China (PBOC) pledged to make monetary policy more forward-looking, flexible and targeted, adjusting the intensity, pace and timing of policy measures in response to domestic and global economic and financial conditions.

It will keep liquidity ample and financing conditions relatively accommodative, while guiding growth in aggregate financing to the real economy and money supply to be in line with economic growth and the expected target for the overall price level, the report said.

The central bank also pledged to promote a shift in loan interest rate pricing from a predominant reliance on the loan prime rate to a more diversified set of pricing benchmarks.

The PBOC will make better use of structural monetary policy tools to support key areas including domestic demand, technological innovation, micro, small and medium-sized enterprises, and the development of key infrastructure networks, the report said.

On the yuan, the central bank reiterated its commitment to a managed floating exchange rate regime based on market supply and demand, with reference to a basket of currencies.

It pledged to enhance foreign exchange market resilience, stabilize market expectations and guard against the risk of exchange-rate overshooting, while keeping the yuan basically stable at a reasonable and balanced level.

The report showed that China's foreign exchange market supply and demand remained broadly balanced. At the end of September, the yuan closed at 6.7053 per US dollar, appreciating 4.1 percent from the end of 2025. *– Xinhua*

NEVs gain further ground in China's auto market, nearing two-thirds of new vehicle sales

BEIJING – China's shift toward new energy vehicles (NEVs) gathered pace in October, with NEVs making up nearly two out of every three new vehicles sold, industry data showed yesterday.

NEVs accounted for 64.3 percent of new car sales last month, up from 61.6 percent in September, while the cumulative share for the first 10 months climbed to 54.8 percent, according to the China Association of Automobile Manufacturers (CAAM).

Exports of NEVs surged about 140 percent year on year to 606,000 units in October, accounting for more than half of China's auto exports for a fifth consecutive month.

NEVs, which include battery electric, plug-in hybrid and fuel-cell vehicles, recorded output and sales of about 2.02 million and 1.94 million units, respectively, in October, both up more than 13 percent year on year.

Among NEV passenger cars, models priced between 100,000 yuan and 150,000 yuan formed the largest sales bracket in the January-October period. Sales in this price range increased 14.5 percent year on year to almost 3.14 million units, CAAM data showed.

The shift toward new energy also extended to commercial vehicles, including trucks and buses. NEVs accounted for 51.9 percent of domestic commercial vehicle sales in October, with domestic sales of such vehicles rising 36 percent year on year to 112,000 units.

On the export side, China's total vehicle exports rose 60.2 percent year on year to nearly 1.07 million units in October, remaining above the 1-million mark for a fifth consecutive month.

In the first 10 months, NEV exports increased 130 percent to 4.61 million units, already exceeding the 2.615 million shipped overseas in the whole of 2025.

Cui Dongshu, secretary-general of the China Passenger Car Association, told *China Securities Journal* on Tuesday that global electrification, high oil prices, expanding markets in developing economies and the growing competitiveness of Chinese vehicles were supporting export growth. He also highlighted China's comprehensive NEV supply chain, rapid product development and plug-in hybrid models suited to different driving needs.

The export surge comes as China prepares to lower tax rebates for NEVs. The Ministry of Finance and the State Taxation Administration announced in October that the value-added tax export rebate rate for these vehicles will fall from 13 percent to 9 percent on April 1, 2027.

While the lower rebate would raise export costs in the short term, particularly for models with thin profit margins, Cui said in a separate article that the industry's export growth was underpinned by its supply chains and technological capabilities rather than tax incentives.

He said the adjustment would encourage automakers to move away from disorderly low-price competition, develop higher-value products and deepen local operations overseas, helping shift their global expansion from volume growth toward higher-quality development. *– Xinhua*

India to build mega-museum with world's 'largest display area'

NEW DELHI – India's cabinet approved yesterday a mega-museum showcasing the country's history and civilisation, which the government said will cost around US$340 million and have the largest display area in the world.

First announced in 2023, the project received approval as Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Hindu nationalist government renewed its emphasis on the country's pre-colonial cultural identity.

The museum's name, Yuge Yugeen Bharat, translates roughly as "India through the ages" and invokes the country's ancient Sanskrit name, Bharat.

It will occupy former civil service offices in New Delhi, known as North and South Blocks, which were designed by British architects Edwin Lutyens and Herbert Baker in the 1920s.

In a statement, the cabinet said the museum will be "spread over a proposed built-up area of approximately 178,509 square metres".

"Benchmarked against major international museums, Yuge Yugeen Bharat Museum is going to be the museum (with) the largest display area in the world," it added.

India's cabinet said the Yuge Yugeen Bharat is "envisaged as a landmark civilisational museum showcasing the continuity, diversity and richness of Bharat's (India's) civilisational heritage".

The first gallery is expected to open to the public by the end of 2027, with project completion scheduled for financial year 2030-31.

Modi came to national power in May 2014, and has since taken multiple steps to glorify the country's heritage and culture.

His government built the world's tallest statue, a 182-metre monument to Vallabhbhai Patel, for his role in bringing princely states into India.

Modi also backed the revamp of New Delhi's historic administrative district in his second term and moved lawmakers to a new parliament building in 2023.

"The Museum is envisaged as a national public cultural institution... it will provide opportunities for learning, research, cultural engagement and appreciation of India's civilisational heritage," the government statement said yesterday.

Around 1.8 million objects have been identified from national and state museums, archaeological collections and private holdings for potential display.

The museum is designed to accommodate up to 10 million visitors a year. *– AFP*



This photograph taken on October 11 shows the Statue of Unity, the world's tallest statue dedicated to Indian independence leader Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel along the Narmada river at Kevadiya on the outskirts of Vadodara, Gujarat. In a sprawling palace in western India, the "queen" or Maharani of Baroda welcomes guests with fragrant rose petals, presenting torchlit dances of Hindu myths. After independence in 1947, the maharajas joined democratic India and became ordinary citizens, but their enduring cultural influence is something politicians of all parties seek to harness. – AFP

Scientists find some of world's last untouched ocean ecosystems

SYDNEY – Two remote coral atolls in the Marshall Islands, northeast of Australia in the Pacific Ocean, have been found to be some of the ocean's "very last wild and healthy ecosystems," untouched by humans, according to researchers.

Bikar and Bokak, the northernmost atolls in the Marshall Islands, lie about 116 and 385 kilometers from the nearest inhabited atoll, respectively, according to a study summary on the Australian Science Media Center website yesterday.

A scientific expedition in 2023 found extensive seabird colonies, mature native vegetation, active turtle nesting, high reef-fish biomass and large predators, coral-dominated reefs at Bokak, structurally complex mesophotic habitats, and diverse and poorly known deep-sea communities.

Researchers from the United States, the Marshall Islands and Australia found 15 seabird colonies that were confirmed or likely to be breeding, and recorded at least 266 groups of reef fish, 138 groups of fish living at greater depths, and 79 groups of deep-sea fish, including two potentially new species.

The findings, published in *Frontiers in Marine Science*, provide an ecological baseline for the atolls from the sky and land to the deep sea, and highlight some of the most intact ecosystems remaining in the region, the researchers said.

Following the assessment, the Marshall Islands declared a marine sanctuary covering about 48,000 square kilometers around the two atolls, the country's first national marine sanctuary. *– Xinhua*

Indonesia detains dozens after night of protest violence

INDONESIA – Indonesian police detained more than 150 people after protesters clashed with security forces in Yogyakarta city southeast of the capital overnight, a spokeswoman said yesterday.

The violence followed demonstrations across several Indonesian cities on Tuesday over the government's management of the economy, its handling of devastating wildfires and stagnant wages.

Around 100 people gathered near Yogyakarta's parliament around 8:00 p.m. [local time', aiming firecrackers and hurling rocks and Molotov cocktails toward the building, police said in a statement yesterday.

Authorities responded by deploying tactical vehicles to disperse the crowd. Police said they seized evidence including six Molotov cocktails and 12 firecrackers.

An AFP reporter saw police fire tear gas and water cannon as officers moved to disperse the protesters late Tuesday.

Yogyakarta police spokeswoman Novita Eka Sari said 154 people had been detained in connection with the unrest.

National Police Chief Suyudi Ario Seto, who inspected the scene early yesterday, pledged a thorough investigation into the incident.

"We will investigate whether... there were efforts to deliberately cause damage whether there were other objectives," Suyudi said.

Earlier on Tuesday, hundreds of people gathered near the governor's office in Yogyakarta, calling for higher minimum wages. That crowed cleared out before the violence later in the day.

In Surabaya, Indonesia's second-largest city, protesters also took to the streets, citing issues including wildfires and rising food prices. *– AFP*

Singapore sets aside US$23 million to support disability employment

SINGAPORE – Singapore will allocate an initial budget of about 30 million Singapore dollars (US$23 million) under a new grant scheme to support employers hiring persons with disabilities, particularly those with moderate support needs.

The Stronger Support Enabling Employment Grant will provide higher funding for eligible employers on top of existing support schemes, Health Minister Ong Ye Kung said at an event on Tuesday.

"The employment rate of persons with disabilities has been rising steadily in Singapore. Today, just over a third of working-age persons with disabilities are employed here. We have set ourselves a target of 40 percent by 2030," Ong said.

The first call for proposals will be launched by the end of this year. *– Xinhua*

Indonesia's fires burned through nearly 2.9 million hectares: monitor

JAKARTA – Fires in Indonesia driven partly by a strong El Niño have burned through 2.88 million hectares so far in 2026, a monitor analysing satellite imagery told AFP yesterday.

The burned area figure – 18 times the size of London – has increased nearly a million hectares since deforestation monitoring site Nusantara Atlas's last update in September.

Indonesia's government has not provided official figures for areas burned since announcing 202,000 hectares had been razed by the end of July.

The burning detected in analysis through the end of October is a conservative estimate, warned Nusantara Atlas founder David Gaveau, in part because smoke has obscured satellite images.

But it already exceeds the full-year figure for 2019, previously the worst year on record in Nusantara Atlas data.

Indonesia also experienced devastating fires in 2015, but the satellite imagery used then was different, making a direct comparison difficult.

Still, the scale of destruction is clear, said Gaveau.

"Basically, it's a really bad year," he said.

The arrival of rain has brought some of the worst blazes under control, and monitoring shows the number of so-called hotspots starting to flatten or decline.

But the figure for total burned area is likely to rise further given some fires are still burning, and as burn scars previously hidden by smoke become visible to satellites in coming months.

Forestry ministry spokesman Ristianto Pribadi told AFP the government was still working on its updated estimates of fire-affected land.

"Updating the data on the size of land and forest fires-affected areas requires in-depth confirmation and verification," said Ristianto.

"At the moment, we cannot yet confirm a schedule for the announcement."

Indonesia experiences fires every dry season, but this year's blazes have been particularly severe in part due to an intense drought caused by the El Niño weather pattern.

Experts say the fires are also the result of decades of deforestation and the drying out of peatlands for plantations, making large swathes of land more vulnerable to flames.

The fires have caused devastating local pollution that has sickened hundreds of thousands of people and sent haze into neighbouring countries, including Malaysia and Singapore. *– AFP*



A member of a police bomb and disposal unit pacifies a K9 dog during the send-off ceremony for troops ahead of the 49th Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN)summit in Manila yesterday. – AFP

Jailed ex-PM Khan undergoes eye treatment at hospital

ISLAMABAD – Pakistani former prime minister Imran Khan briefly left prison for an overnight eye examination and treatment, the Islamabad hospital that conducted the procedure said yesterday.

Khan, who served as premier from 2018 to 2022, has been behind bars since August 2023 and faces scores of charges ranging from corruption to treason following anti-establishment riots.

The former cricket star, 74, and his legal team reject the allegations, branding them as politically motivated cases aimed at neutralising his popularity.

Khan "was brought from Central Jail Adiyala, Rawalpindi, to the Pakistan Institute of Medical Sciences (PIMS), Islamabad, during the intervening night of 10 to 11 November 2026 for a medical check-up and follow-up eye treatment", the hospital said in a statement.

"During his stay at PIMS, he remained vitally stable before, during and after the procedure," it said, adding he had been discharged at 2:30 a.m. [local time].

Khan's Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party said the hospitalisation "raises deeply troubling questions about his health... and the transparency surrounding his condition".

"A human being's health is not a political bargaining chip. Nor can the medical treatment of a former Prime Minister be reduced to a procedural formality," the PTI said, adding the "state bears full responsibility for his safety and well-being".

Pakistan's interior ministry and information ministry did not immediately respond to requests for comment by AFP.

In October, discontent over Khan's incarceration mounted with thousands protesting in the PTI's Khyber Pakhtunkhwa stronghold, particularly over his medical treatment and access to him by doctors and family.

The Supreme Court ruled in August that Khan should be moved to a civilian hospital for treatment, but authorities instead returned him to prison after a short stay at a government-run hospital.

Once backed by the country's powerful military establishment during his rise to power, Khan fell out over key appointments and foreign policy issues before being ousted in a parliamentary vote of no confidence in 2022.

He has publicly accused the military leadership, including Army Chief General Asim Munir, of orchestrating his removal. The military denies meddling in politics.

– AFP

India pollution monitors overwhelmed by toxic smog

NEW DELHI – India's air pollution monitors were overwhelmed this week by toxic smog so severe that concentrations exceeded their upper measurement limit, equivalent to 66 times the World Health Organisation's (WHO) recommended daily maximum, regulators said.

The admission comes after opposition politicians accused authorities of deliberately allowing gaps in official readings for several hours overnight Sunday into Monday, just as pollution surged with a barrage of fireworks for Diwali, the Hindu festival of lights.

New Delhi is one of the world's most polluted capitals, where winter smog from vehicle emissions, farm fires and industry already chokes millions.

But the missing readings meant official data failed to capture the full extent of the pollution at its worst.

"The government which shuts down air quality monitoring stations on the night of Diwali, the government that does data fraud, how will you trust such a government?" Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) Delhi president Saurabh Bharadwaj said in a video posted on X.

"If Diwali night's PM2.5 (toxic particulates) is not in the record, who will answer for that air?" senior Congress party lawmaker Ajay Maken said in a social media post.

The Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) rejected accusations of deliberate under-reporting, saying the gaps reflected "differences in measurement of pollutant concentration" rather than an attempt to conceal pollution.

'Extreme episodes'

Particulate matter analysers, installed when the National Air Quality Index (NAQI) was introduced in 2015, were calibrated to measure concentrations of up to 1,000 micrograms per cubic metre.

The WHO recommends a daily maximum of 15 micrograms per cubic metre for PM2.5, fine particles small enough to penetrate deep into the lungs and linked to cancer.

"The designed system of automated data validation treats hourly readings beyond the calibrated range as outside range, and such readings are not used in the computation," the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) said in a statement late Tuesday.

"During extreme episodes, which are occasional like Diwali firecracker bursting, this may appear as a data gap at the particular station concerned", it added.

Although choking clouds filled the streets early Monday, the scale of the pollution was only captured when monitors resumed reporting, around eight hours after the fireworks peaked.

Readings then hit 879 micrograms per cubic metre in the Mandir Marg locality, according to monitoring organisation IQAir, which cited data from a city government station. That is more than 58 times the WHO daily limits.

"There is one thing the people of Delhi can be certain of: the fact that the data has gone missing doesn't mean the pollution has disappeared too," Congress party lawmaker Pawan Khera added.

"The poisonous smoke we have been inhaling... will continue to choke our lungs, threaten our lives and shorten our life expectancy."

– AFP



People exercise outdoors amid smoggy conditions in Lahore, Pakistan yesterday. *– AFP*

Gunmen kill 8 police officers in Pakistan's northwest

PESHAWAR, Pakistan –Gunmen attacked a police convoy on its way to an illegal gold mining operation in Pakistan's northwestern region yesterday, killing eight officers, officials said.

A senior administrative official in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province's Kohat district told AFP eight police personnel were killed and 13 others were injured.

Militants set two police vehicles on fire during the assault, while two other police vehicles and one private vehicle were missing, the official said.

He said the officers were travelling to an illegal gold mining operation near Gumbat.

A security official in Peshawar confirmed the toll of eight officers killed.

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

A spokesman for a local emergency service earlier yesterday said there had been a "firing incident involving police personnel" in Kohat district, adding that rescue workers were treating a dozen wounded officers.

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

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

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

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

Earlier this month, militants in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa killed two police officers assigned to protect a polio vaccination team travelling near the Afghan border.

The province was placed under emergency rule last month in a move authorities said came in reaction to the failure by the provincial government to act against militancy.

The imposition of emergency measures sidelined the last remaining bastion of power for jailed former prime minister Imran Khan's Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party.

The special constitutional measures also set off a province-wide crackdown on Khan's supporters, with hundreds of detentions.

– AFP

Air India flight issues hijack alert moments before take-off at Kolkata airport

NEW DELHI – An Air India flight from Kolkata to Mumbai was moved to isolation yesterday after a note threatening to hijack the aircraft was found on the mirror of one of its lavatories moments before its scheduled take-off, and all passengers were deplaned, an official at the airport said.

The incident triggered panic at the airport in Kolkata city, the capital of the eastern Indian state of West Bengal.

According to the official, police and security agencies have initiated an investigation to identify who scribbled the threatening message.

"Security protocols are being followed, and security teams are currently reviewing the footage from closed-circuit television cameras installed inside the aircraft and within the airport premises," the official added.

The security agencies are also thoroughly examining the aircraft to detect the presence of any suspicious objects.

– Xinhua

Many AI companies will adopt advertising: Criteo CEO

LISBON – Many AI platforms will end up eventually adopting advertising, the chief executive of the online advertising agency Criteo told AFP on Tuesday, as investors are focused on whether the technology will ever be profitable.

"I believe that a lot of AI platforms will find their way to advertising models over time," said the group's chief executive Michael Komasinski on the sidelines of the Web Summit in Lisbon.

"Advertising is the most scalable business model in the world. It has paid for most of the large platforms that we all use and enjoy today, whether it's Google, Meta, Snapchat.

"The ad formats will continue to become more interesting, more innovative, and certainly more native to that conversational experience," he added.

Pressure to boost revenue to cover its colossal spending pushed OpenAI to begin testing advertising in ChatGPT in February in the United States for free and low-cost tier subscriptions.

It has subsequently begun to progressively roll out ads worldwide, in cooperation with Criteo.

OpenAI's rival Anthropic, which is set to imminently go public with a stock listing, has said it doesn't plan to integrate advertising in its AI tools due to data protection concerns as well as to protect the interests of its users.



Criteo CEO Michael Komasinski poses at the Web Summit at Parque das Nacões in Lisbon on Tuesday. The four-day 10th edition of the Web Summit ends today. – AFP

Microsoft has used ads in its public version of Copilot AI since 2023.

Perplexity has experimented with ads in the United States since 2024.

Google is considering integrating ads in Gemini.

Developing AI models and rolling them out requires massive investments.

The rally in AI-related stocks that has buoyed markets this year was testament to investor confidence, but both equity and bond investors have recently grown more wary as inflation and high interest rates are making the endeavour even more expensive.

Criteo works with OpenAI in 89 countries to develop advertising campaigns on AI chatbots.

Komasinski said some 3,600 brands have trialled AI advertising campaigns and they have noted a modest increase in their spending on ChatGPT.

He remains sceptical about AI agents being able to autonomously make purchases.

"It's actually really easy to order unimportant things, and things that are very important you would tend to not delegate to a bot," he said. *– AFP*

Tech bounce puts spring in stock markets

LONDON – Stock markets rose yesterday as renewed optimism over the AI trade overshadowed forecast-topping US inflation data and the prospect of a bumper interest rate hike next month.

Wall Street's main indices opened higher with the tech-heavy Nasdaq Composite climbing 1.6 percent.

"The primary catalyst for the upside action is, ironically, one of the primary catalysts for the downside action that had been seen in the AI trade," said Briefing.com analyst Patrick O'Hare.

"That would be CoreWeave, which posted better-than-feared third quarter results and issued a reassuring outlook that has quieted some of the debt financing concerns surrounding its AI buildout plans," he added.

The data centre operator said sales would come in at US$13-US$13.3 billion this year, beating estimates.

The outlook soothed worries about its ability to finance its heavy debt burden, which had fuelled a sharp sell-off last month.

Shares in CoreWeave rose more than seven percent at the start of trading in New York.

"This relief trade is carrying across the AI trade complex to include hardware, software, and semiconductor stocks," said O'Hare.

The Philadelphia Semiconductor Index, which tracks the main players in the AI chipmaking sector, rose more than four percent.

Also lifting confidence was Anthropic's filing showing it planned to raise up to US$64 billion in its upcoming initial public offering, valuing it at as much as US$1.4 trillion.

Its stock market debut is being seen as a gauge of how long the AI spending boom can last.

After last week's rout fuelled by fears that Democrats would ramp up regulation of AI, tech stocks have bounced this week on bargain-buying and hopes that fears may have been overdone.

Chip giant Nvidia, however, also remained in focus following the bombshell revelation of an affair between CEO Jensen Huang and a woman reportedly suspected of being a Chinese spy. The firm is now the subject of an FBI investigation.

Nvidia shares gained three percent at the start of trading but as of Tuesday had lost more than 30 percent from the record high set last month.

London, Paris and Frankfurt stock markets all advanced after a largely positive day in Asia.

Tokyo, Seoul and Taipei – where most of Asia's leading AI-linked firms are listed – enjoyed big gains, with Shanghai also up.

Hong Kong, however, fell.

The US dollar rose as traders weigh the possibility of a bigger-than expected rate hike by the Federal Reserve when it next meets in December.

Oil prices rose after sinking Tuesday on hopes for a US-Iran agreement to end their war and reopen the crucial Strait of Hormuz.

In company news, Japanese tech investment giant SoftBank tumbled as much as eight percent in Tokyo after reporting a more than US$7 billion loss in the fiscal second quarter.

Shares in Siemens Energy jumped more than eight percent in Frankfurt after raising its long-term revenue targets, as demand for gas turbines and power-grid equipment surges. *– AFP*

Nasdaq rises as Nvidia, AI player CoreWeave gain

NEW YORK – The tech-focused Nasdaq rallied early yesterday (local time) following solid results from artificial intelligence company CoreWeave as Nvidia bounced after two sessions of heavy losses.

CoreWeave, seen as a bellwether for AI stocks, jumped 13.5 percent after reporting that revenues more than doubled to US$3.7 billion. Chief Executive Michael Intrator told CNBC that demand for AI "remains overwhelming."

The results helped reassure investors worried about a slowdown in AI investments following midterm US elections that showed heavy public opposition to data centres.

About 25 minutes into trading, the Dow Jones Industrial Average was down 0.1 percent at 52,205.56.

The broad-based S&P 500 climbed 0.9 percent to 7,588.88, while the tech-rich Nasdaq Composite Index rose 1.3 percent to 25,391.40.

Among individual companies, Nvidia rose 2.5 percent, in a partial reversal from a two-day slide after the company announced it would investigate an affair involving CEO Jensen Huang and a woman who US intelligence officials claim was working for Chinese intelligence. *– AFP*

Threatening hoax messages sent to schools in UK, Ireland: police

LONDON – Police in Britain and Ireland were yesterday investigating threatening emails sent to hundreds of schools, but urged teachers not to evacuate their premises as they dismissed the messages as hoaxes.

The emails come after similar threats last week targeted media in Britain and Ireland and flights from the UK and Europe.

Schools in Scotland, Northern Ireland and Ireland were all targeted, with Police Scotland saying in a statement that while "distressing" there was "nothing to suggest that they represent a credible threat".

The police force said "our advice is that there is no requirement to evacuate schools", but *The Herald* newspaper reported several Scottish schools had been evacuated, with pupils sent home.

The Police Service of Northern Ireland also said they were "treating the matter as a hoax" after the emails "which contained a threat" were sent to over 300 schools in the region.

The Northern Irish police said the email "originated from outside the UK".

Assistant Chief Constable Anthony McNally said the Northern Irish police "take incidents of this nature very seriously" but "we consider the risk to the public as low".

Police in Ireland said a "generic communication" was sent to schools, saying it was "not credible" and police were "not advising any educational establishment to evacuate".

Ireland is mounting the largest security operation in its history as it hosts a meeting of European leaders this week.

News outlets in both Scotland and Northern Ireland reported the emails resembled hoax bomb claims sent to British and Irish media including Sky News and RTE on Friday.

Last week dozens of flights in Europe were also targeted by false bomb threats, some in emails signed by "fighters of the Male State", which matches the name of a radical misogynist group in Russia – though AFP has not confirmed any link to the messages. *– AFP*

Iran security chief threatens to strike US bases in Europe if used for attacks

TEHRAN – Iranian security chief Mohsen Rezaei has threatened to strike US bases beyond the Middle East, including in Europe, if they are used for attacks against the Islamic republic.

"If American aircraft take off from an American military base, even one located in a European country or some other distant region, to bomb Iran, we will strike those bases as well," Rezaei told Lebanon-based Al Mayadeen TV in an interview broadcast yesterday.

He also said that Iran's response to renewed US attacks would "target America's more distant military installations – including the ones we have not yet attacked", without specifying.

"We may even strike certain islands that they assume are beyond the reach of our missiles," he added during the interview, which was conducted in Tehran.

The Middle East war broke out on February 28 with US-Israeli strikes that killed Iran's supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei.

Iran responded by launching missiles and drones at countries across the region, while the militant groups it backs in Lebanon, Yemen and Iraq also entered the fray.

Diplomatic efforts led by Qatar and Pakistan have been underway to negotiate an end to the war.

Tehran insists that Washington accept a raft of demands including unfreezing assets and lifting sanctions in return for reopening the Strait of Hormuz, the vital energy conduit it has blockaded since the start of the conflict.

On Tuesday, US Secretary of State Marco Rubio said there was no need to attack Iran again, citing what he described as successful efforts to undermine its economy.

Washington has appeared to taper down recent threats of renewed strikes after the defeat of President Donald Trump's Republican party in recent midterm elections, in part due to the unpopularity of the war on Iran. *– AFP*

Colombian media outlet attacked with explosives

BOGOTÁ – An attack on a Colombian media network yesterday caused property damage but no injuries, President Abelardo de la Espriella reported, with two suspects later arrested.

The explosive hurled at RCN's headquarters in the city of Cali came days after a bomb threat at the country's largest network Caracol, which was attributed to the ELN guerrilla group.

That scare prompted the government to reinforce security at media outlets, while Caracol staff evacuated its Bogotá offices.

Large cracks ran through the pavement next to the RCN building yesterday, where police had gathered after the incident.

Broken glass and chunks of loose asphalt littered the area, an AFP journalist observed.

De la Espriella wrote on X that he had ordered security forces and intelligence agencies to "identify, locate and capture those responsible for this criminal act as soon as possible."

"The authorities managed to capture two alleged perpetrators," the presidency later said.

Colombia, the world's largest cocaine producer, is dealing with its highest levels of violence in a decade.

US-backed De la Espriella took office in August after campaigning on a promise to wage war on the country's myriad armed groups.

These groups frequently harass, intimidate and kidnap Colombian journalists who report on their activities.

At least 171 media workers have been killed in the South American country since 1977, according to the Foundation for Press Freedom.

– AFP

Germany must rein in debt-fuelled defence spending: experts

Sam Reeves

BERLIN – Germany must rein in a massive borrowing binge that is financing an overhaul of the military, otherwise it risks a surge in its debt levels, a group of economists warned yesterday.

The top EU economy is pouring huge sums into bolstering its long-neglected armed forces to face Russia and with concerns about waning US security commitments to Europe.

Most defence spending has been exempted from the so-called "debt brake" in the German constitution, which limits how much the government can borrow, meaning the majority of debt taken on to finance rearmament falls outside the regular budget.

But the council of economic experts, an independent body that advises the government, warned this military spending spree would burden the budget in coming years.

"Above all, it is defence spending that is rising sharply and is financed by borrowing," council member Achim Truger said.

"From an economic point of view, it's simply not rational to finance defence spending of this scale permanently through debt."

While other factors, such as expansion of welfare spending, were weighing on the public finances, defence was playing a major role, the experts warned in their annual report.

Defence spending in Germany is set to rise sharply, to around 110 billion euros (US$122 billion) in 2027, with a big chunk of it financed through borrowing.

Without action to rein in spending, the economists warned that Germany's debt-to-GDP ratio could rise to as much as 98 percent by 2040, from around 64 percent currently.

Such a surge would put traditionally frugal Germany above the current eurozone average.

'Slow debt binge'

The economists urged Germany to partially reverse the reform that allows most defence spending to be exempted from the "debt brake", the constitutional rule that limits most federal borrowing to 0.35 percent of GDP.

From 2031, the government should begin raising the amount of defence spending that has to be financed through the regular budget, they argued.

Supporters argue this is necessary to put public finances on a more sustainable footing, although some worry it could make painful tax rises or spending cuts necessary.

Truger insisted that the economists were calling for a "gradual" roll-back of the exemption: "If you spread it out in the way we propose, I believe it is manageable."

The council also raised its growth forecast for this year to 1.3 percent, in line with the government's own projection, saying the economy was being supported by strong exports and government spending.

It also predicted growth of one percent for next year.

Chancellor Friedrich Merz, who has been under pressure to boost the economy after several years of stagnation, welcomed the "good news" but also stressed the government was focused on reining in spending.

"You are calling on the government to pursue a sound budgetary policy and to focus on stable public finances – we share this assessment," he said. *– AFP*

Pope draws huge crowds at Argentina shrine before Peru homecoming

Agustin Bagnasco

LUJÁN – Pope Leo XIV drew vast crowds to Argentina's holiest shrine yesterday, the final day of his visit before he departs for Peru, where he spent nearly two decades as a missionary.

Authorities said two million people packed the streets around the Basilica of Luján, with some climbing fences, barriers, trees and lampposts for a glimpse of the pontiff.

Crowds chanted "thank you Leo!" to the 71-year-old pope, who is on a 12-day tour of Uruguay, Argentina and Peru less than a month after undergoing surgery for lung cancer.

The stop at Luján is the emotional centrepiece of Leo's first visit to Argentina, where his predecessor Francis never managed to return home as pope.

"This is a very important moment for us," said 76-year-old pilgrim Estela Adorno. "We had an Argentine pope, and he wasn't able to come, that hurt me."

Throughout his stay in Argentina, Leo has pointedly demanded a more inclusive economy and better protections for the vulnerable, comments widely interpreted as criticism of aid-slashing President Javier Milei.

Yesterday, the pontiff again praised the late "beloved" Francis and insisted "there is room for everyone, especially the neediest: the poor and hungry, migrants, the sick and prisoners."

He wore a white-and-sky-blue chasuble associated with the Virgin of Luján, echoing the colours of the Argentine flag.

The country's social and political tensions were on display in the crowd, with one group unfurling a banner reading "Land, housing and work for the people."

Adorno said the pope's message had resonated in a country marked by political and economic divisions.

"Everything that helps society is welcome. People were deeply moved, I was deeply moved. With everything that is happening in the country, it will always be welcome," she added.



Pope Leo XIV celebrates Mass at the square in front of the Basilica of Our Lady of Luján in Luján, Buenos Aires province, Argentina, yesterday. – AFP

Flourishing

Volunteers handed out water in the crowd as pilgrims continued streaming into Luján under the spring sun.

Inside the basilica, choir members prepared for a Mass they described as a once-in-a-lifetime occasion.

"It is a unique opportunity, full of emotion. From the moment we were told we would participate, through preparing the repertoire and these final days of rehearsals, there has been so much shared excitement," said choir member Nora Jauregui, a 61-year-old retired music teacher.

Earlier yesterday, Leo visited inmates at Buenos Aires' Devoto prison, where he urged prisoners to use their time behind bars as an opportunity to rebuild their lives.

"Human beings often flourish through limits rather than despite them," the pope told around 75 inmates and family members gathered in the prison gymnasium.

He acknowledged the hardship of prison life, saying he could imagine their sleepless nights and thoughts of loved ones or those they may have harmed.

The US-born pope had refused to reschedule the trip to South America despite having the lower part of his right lung removed to extract a cancerous tumor.

In Peru, he will visit the Amazon, the Andean city of Cuzco at 3,400 metres above sea level, and the northern city of Chiclayo, where he spent a decade as bishop.

– AFP

Sweden amends constitution to allow revoking citizenship of dual nationals

STOCKHOLM – Sweden's parliament yesterday approved a constitutional change to allow the citizenship of dual nationals to be revoked if they obtained it fraudulently or were convicted of crimes threatening national interests.

The amendment was passed with 292 votes in favour and 51 against. However, following inconclusive elections, it will be up to the next government to present a bill to put it into practice.

With the amendment, it will be possible to introduce laws where Swedish nationality of dual nationals can be revoked if they had received it on a "false basis" or if they had been convicted of crimes that seriously hurt Sweden's "vital interests".

The outgoing centre-right government, led by Prime Minister Ulf Kristersson and propped up in parliament by the anti-immigration Sweden Democrats, said last year it was mulling ways to revoke the citizenships of dual nationals convicted in organised crime and gang cases.

It needed a change to the constitution, which requires two votes in parliament separated by an election, and yesterday's vote was the second.

Kristersson currently leads a caretaker government as parties are struggling to form a new government following the September 13 election.

The outgoing government had been working on a bill but which is not yet completed.

It will therefore be up to the next government to decide on how to proceed – for instance on defining which crimes could result in a revoked citizenship.

Civil rights groups have voiced criticism against the move.

"In practice, the proposal would create two types of Swedish citizenship: one that is robust and one that is weak and conditional. This raises serious questions about equality before the law," Aida Samani, senior legal adviser at Civil Rights Defenders, said in a statement ahead of yesterday's vote. *– AFP*

Jorge Rangel: a tribute in his lifetime

Commentary by Manuel Silvério

Independent Public Policy and Regional Development Analyst

(Former senior public official with international experience and a long-standing commitment to public policy and sports development)

Some words of thanks should be said while there is still time to say them. These are for Jorge Alberto da Conceição Hagedorn Rangel, with whom I had the privilege of working and from whom I learned so much.

On October 30, Jorge Rangel handed over the presidency of the governing board of the International Institute of Macau (IIM), which he had led since December 1999.

At the IIM's most recent General Assembly, he was named President Emeritus unanimously and by acclamation. The recognition came from the institution to which he devoted nearly 27 years.



Undated file photo of Jorge Rangel – Photo courtesy of The Bay

The trust that made me stay

Almost without my realising it, our paths kept crossing over the decades. I was never among his childhood friends, his schoolmates at the *Liceu* [high school] or his fellow students in Portugal. Nor did our paths cross in the military. He served in the Azores and Guinea as an infantry captain in the Portuguese Army and remains close to military associations. As a boy, I was a *quina* [five-member squad] leader in *Mocidade Portuguesa*, the Portuguese youth organisation; he was a falange [top-tear grouping] commander.

When I joined the civil service in 1979, he was my first director, in the Tourism and Information Department. He did not know me personally, but he knew I came from karate, that "school of violence" I recall here with a smile.

Eleven months later, I moved to the Education and Culture Department. I would work under his supervision again in that field and, later, in sport. I say this with affection: "I could never get away from him after that."

It was he who appointed me president of the then Macau Sports Institute (*Instituto dos Desportos de Macau* — IDM; 澳門體育總署) following a restructuring. The disputes of the time did not make the choice easy. To this day, I try to honour that trust through my work and commitment.

During the transition, civil servants had different paths, depending on their individual circumstances: transfer to the Portuguese Republic's civil service, early retirement, departure with compensation, or staying to serve the future Macao Special Administrative Region (MSAR).

I had applied to leave and was ready to pursue business interests in Macau and Portugal. Jorge Rangel knew my plans and persuaded me to stay. And I stayed. That decision shaped my professional life.

Building institutions and preparing people

Jorge Rangel was an elected member of the Legislative Assembly from 1976 to 1980 and served on the Basic Law Drafting Committee. In government, he oversaw education, culture and tourism and, later, public administration, education and youth affairs, including sport.

Much of this work was done in lean times. Building institutions and training people with limited resources took hard choices and persistence.

Among the facilities he helped bring about were the Macau Stadium in Taipa, which opened in 1997; the Macau Forum; the sports complex at Don Bosco College, with its artificial turf pitch, indoor pool and gymnasia; the Carmo and Canidrome swimming pools; the Coloane Karting Track; and the sports halls on the University of Macau's campus at that time, also in Taipa. Preparations for the Olympic Swimming Pool began before 1999; it opened in 2003.

I also recall the first walking trails, including the Coloane trail, opened in 1984, and the neighbourhood exercise areas known as *quintais desportivos* [sport yards], which brought physical activity closer to people's everyday lives.

He chaired the board of the former Macau Foundation and the committee that oversaw the transformation of the privately owned University of East Asia into a public institution. Acquired by the government in 1988, it was renamed the University of Macau (UM) in 1991.

He also chaired the committee responsible for establishing the Macau Polytechnic Institute, now Macao Polytechnic University. At the institute, he promoted the creation of the School of Physical Education and Sport in 1993.

JoséTavares and Pun Weng Kun, both graduates in that field from the polytechnic, went on to lead Macau's Sports Bureau (Instituto do Desporto – ID; 體育局). Tavares later headed the Civic and Municipal Affairs Bureau and the Municipal Affairs Bureau (IAM). Pun coordinated the Macau preparatory office for the 2025 National Games and is now an executive director of Macau International Airport Company (CAM).

Jorge Rangel also promoted tourism training at the School of Tourism and Hotel Industry, which later became part of the Institute for Tourism Studies, established in 1995, and now the Macao University of Tourism (UTM).

The Cultural Institute of Macau was established in 1982 on his initiative.

Under the same roof again

Culture and sport shared an administrative home in the former Education and Culture Department, where I worked. They developed their own structures and, on November 1, came together again in the Culture and Sports Bureau (Direcção dos Serviços de Cultura e Desporto – DSCD; 文化體育局).

They started in the same home. Now they are under the same roof again.

Two days earlier, Jorge Rangel had handed over the presidency of the International Institute of Macau's governing board. The closeness of these dates has particular meaning for me: I worked in both culture and sport under his supervision.

Preparing Macau for the transition

Entrusted by the Governor, General Vasco Rocha Vieira, with transition matters, Jorge Rangel worked with the Preparatory Committee and alongside Edmundo Ho Hau Wah until the first Macao Special Administrative Region (MSAR) government took office. He also oversaw the office coordinating the handover ceremonies, which prepared the events on the night of December 19–20,1999.

His direct and indirect support reached judges, legal professionals, presidents and heads of administrative and political institutions; public administration, audit and civic affairs officials; and professionals in teaching, physical education, culture, sport and community associations.

I too tried to support colleagues' career progression on the strength of their merit and work, extending to others the opportunities I had received.

When announcing his candidacy for Chief Executive in 2024, Sam Hou Fai recalled being among the young people Jorge Rangel had sent to study in Portugal. He studied at the University of Coimbra. In 1999, Edmundo Ho appointed Sam president of the Court of Final Appeal. An opportunity to study can have effects that last for decades.

Memories that can still serve Macau

In his commentaries collected in *Falar de Nós ["Talking About Us"]*, Jorge Rangel recorded events, wrote about people and institutions, and documented Macau's ties with its diaspora. The series now runs to 22 volumes, each about 200 to 250 pages long, and he has published another 10 titles. His work preserves memories of Macau that might otherwise have been lost.

At the International Institute of Macau, he continued to promote the Portuguese language and culture through publications, academic cooperation and ties with the Portuguese-speaking world.

He also chaired the governing board and the supreme council of the Historical Society for the Independence of Portugal, of which he is now President Emeritus. He was elected president of *Elos Internacional da Comunidade Lusíada* [International Links of the Lusophone Community] in São Paulo and re-elected in Coimbra. He maintained close ties with UNESCO. In tourism, he served on the Executive Council of the World Tourism Organisation, chaired the East Asia Travel Association (EATA) and was a director of the Pacific Asia Travel Association (PATA).

I hope he keeps writing and telling younger people what he saw and learned. There are things about those years that only someone who was there can help us understand.

An invitation to share experiences

Jorge Rangel has written extensively about others. I invite those who worked with him or benefited from his support to leave an account of their own: an episode in an article, a brief recollection or a recorded conversation, while he can still read or hear it and add to it.

He helped people grow, take on responsibilities and find professional and personal fulfilment. Those who make choices can also encounter misunderstanding and animosity. A fair account makes room for different experiences, with respect.

In our time together, I came to know a man of integrity who lived by his work and kept simple habits. Luxuries and the latest technological gadgets were never necessities for him. His code of conduct, however, still works perfectly well without updates.

I remember Jorge Rangel's name coming up from time to time when people spoke of who might be Macau's last Governor [appointed by Portugal] and, later, who might become the MSAR's first Chief Executive. He told me he did not have the political support needed to become Governor and was keen to make clear that he had never wanted the post. He knew his duties in Macau's administration would end in 1999. Once those duties were done, he wanted to return to civil society and resume ordinary life with his family.

As for becoming Chief Executive, he explained that he did not meet the Basic Law's requirement for Chinese citizenship. On several occasions, he took charge of the government in the Governor's absence. To me, he was always Chefe ("boss").

At the IIM's General Assembly on October, 30, 2026, Jorge Rangel proposed me as vice-president of the assembly, which he chairs. So we are still working together, now at the same table. It seems I still haven't managed to get away from the Chefe.

At this stage of our lives, we have both chosen to carry on contributing without pay. We have been offered paid positions and have chosen to decline them. We value the independence that allows us to share what experience has taught us.

For everything you have done for Macau, for China, for Portugal and for us, thank you, Chefe.

End

Editor's Note: Words within square brackets added by the Post.

Kane says England appearance record a 'testament to dedication'

LONDON – England captain Harry Kane said breaking the Three Lions' appearance record in today's Nations League clash with Croatia will represent a "testament to all the dedication" that has gone into his career.

When Kane leads England out at Wembley to earn his 126th cap, he will surpass the previous record held by former goalkeeper Peter Shilton since 1990.

It will be the latest landmark in an incredible 12 months for the Bayern Munich striker, who in October became the first English player in 25 years to win the Ballon d'Or.

The 33-year-old Kane is also England's record scorer with 91 goals, as well as holding Tottenham Hotspur's all-time mark with 280.

Since leaving Spurs to join Bayern in 2023, Kane has taken his game to another level.

He has amassed 156 goals for the German club, finally winning the first silverware of his career with Bundesliga titles in 2025 and 2026.

But breaking Shilton's long-standing record also matters to Kane, who told a pre-match press conference yesterday: "It's definitely up there as the biggest (achievement).

"I think it showcases consistency at the highest level. Testament to all the dedication, the time people don't see that keeps me fit and healthy. This is one of the biggest milestones in my career."

For all Kane's brilliance, England have not won a major men's international trophy since lifting the 1966 World Cup on home soil.

And Kane suffered fresh frustration in July as England were beaten by Argentina in the semi-finals of the World Cup.

'Beautiful occasion'

England were leading 1-0 until late in the game but could not score again, with manager Thomas Tuchel criticised for packing the team's defence only for Argentina to score twice late on as Kane was denied a first appearance in a World Cup final.

"In terms of what's next, I don't like to put limits - 100 goals (for England) is a milestone to reach as soon as possible," added Kane.

"We've done extremely well in tournaments, going into latter stages. I'm feeling really good and hopefully there will be many more years to see what I can achieve."

Tuchel, speaking earlier yesterday, was coy when asked if Kane was England's greatest footballer.

"I don't know. He's up there of course. It's now proven. It's always nice if things are proven in sports - he has his prizes and records, he will build on these records, score more goals and get more games.

"Tomorrow he will start for us and as captain. It's a big occasion to present the Ballon d'Or trophy to our fans and have it embedded in the same day he gets his all-time record for 126 matches, it's a beautiful occasion."

England are all but guaranteed a place in March's Nations League quarter-finals, regardless of today's result, having thrashed Croatia 7-0 in Rijeka last month in what Tuchel labelled a "freak result".



England's striker Harry Kane attends a team training session at Tottenham Hotspur's training ground in Enfield, north London, yesterday, on the eve of England's UEFA Nations League, league stage football match against the Croatia. – AFP

"We expect a reaction from Croatia and we expect to overcome this mental challenge for us," Tuchel said yesterday.

England face World Cup winners Spain in Sunday's Group A3 finale, with Tuchel hoping defenders Ezri Konsa and Djed Spence will be fit for the game in Madrid after ruling them out of the Croatia fixture.

"It's my understanding at the moment that they will be both available, but we will not take the risk for tomorrow," said Tuchel.

The game will be played at 3:45 a.m. tomorrow morning Macau time. *– AFP/MPD*

The secrets driving unstoppable Spain's football dominance

Football

Gabriel Rubio Giron

MADRID – Spain aim to extend their 43-match unbeaten run this week in the Nations League, with the playing philosophy that propelled them to World Cup glory this summer the product of years of work at every level of the game.

Their approach combines a clearly defined playing style, early talent identification and a coaching structure designed to ensure players learn the same principles as they progress through the youth ranks.

"For us there is clearly a turning point in 2008, when (then Spain national team coach) Luis Aragones won the European Championship," David Gutierrez, director of the Spanish football federation's (RFEF) national school of coaches, told AFP on a visit to their Las Rozas base.

Aragones's Spain played in a new way. The coach believed that Spanish players could not compete with their rivals physically, but were better suited for a system based on "ball control, collective play, positional play and combinations".

"He gave us a line to follow," said Gutierrez, with Spain going on to win the 2010 World Cup and Euro 2012, inspired by technically gifted players like Xavi Hernandez and Andres Iniesta.

This playing philosophy has endured, but in an open way to adapt to the evolution of football and the characteristics of new generations of players.

"In the end it's about evolving, in possession with high pressing, with transitions... evolving within modern football," said Aitor Karanka, the RFEF's technical director of development and the national team.

The result is a system in which the playing model takes precedence over individual names, with young players taught its principles from an early age.

"Both boys and girls, from a very young age, have that ability to start understanding the game," said Gutierrez.

Karanka, Jose Mourinho's assistant at Real Madrid between 2010-2013, who also coached English sides including Middlesbrough and Nottingham Forest, believes this gives Spain an advantage.

"There are countries or nationalities where you really do have to explain much more to the player what you actually want, and the Spanish player, with three or four brushstrokes, already understands," he explained.

Finding talent

Identifying promising players early is a key part of the process, increasingly so as more youngsters are eligible to represent multiple countries.

A network of scouts and regional tournaments involving players as young as 12 helps the RFEF identify prospects, who are then monitored and tested in Spain's youth teams.

"The aim is to get it right as early as possible so we can start building cohesion in the group we believe is the strongest," said Manuel Fernandez, coordinator of Spain's youth national teams.

Communication with clubs is also important, with many of the fundamental principles shared even if individual teams have their own styles.

The RFEF has also established specific profiles for each position on the pitch.

"We've drawn up the characteristics of players in every position," said Javier Minano, director of the federation's talent and performance development department.

However, Fernandez stressed that those profiles are not rigid requirements.

"If there is a player who really stands out, who has a lot of abilities and is not exactly the profile we're looking for, then we bring him in to see him and see if he's capable of adapting to what we want from him," he clarifies.

By learning the same concepts throughout their development, players can rise more comfortably through the ranks.

Coaching continuity

This progression is made easier by the way coaches are managed within the RFEF, where the head coach of one age group acts as an assistant in another.

Under-21 coach, David Gordo, recently became a world champion with the under-16 side, while at the same time the under-15 coach, Hernan Perez, is Gordo's assistant with the under-21s.

"It's necessary for all the coaches to know as much as possible about every age group," explains Fernandez.

The senior national team is perhaps the clearest example of the benefits of that continuity.

Of the 26 players who won the World Cup under Luis de la Fuente this summer, 18 had previously been coached by him in Spain's youth teams.

The aim is to produce teams whose collective strength outweighs individual talent, with strong relationships between players cultivated throughout their development.

"More than the idea of a national team, what we are trying to create here is the idea of a team (in general)," said Karanka.

– AFP

Football shorts

Real Sociedad's Barrenetxea needs surgery on hamstring injury

BARCELONA – Real Sociedad's Spanish winger Ander Barrenetxea was diagnosed with a "severe" hamstring injury yesterday which requires surgery and could keep him out for several months.

The 24-year-old was replaced in Spain's squad for Nations League matches against the Czech Republic and England this week by Jorge de Frutos after suffering the injury last weekend in La Liga.

"Barrenetxea suffered a severe injury, involving tendon damage... in the hamstring of his right thigh," said La Real in a statement, confirming he will undergo surgery.

Real Sociedad are fifth in La Liga and also competing in the Europa League, where they sit 20th in the league phase table. *– AFP*

Liverpool should have had penalty for shirt-pull on Isak – panel

Liverpool should have been awarded a penalty for the shirt-pull on Alexander Isak in their Premier League match against Arsenal, an expert panel ruled yesterday.

The Sweden striker's shirt was tugged by Gunners defender Jurrien Timber in the match at Anfield on November 1, which Premier League champions Arsenal won 1-0.

Referee Andy Madley let the incident pass without sanction, and video assistant referee Stuart Attwell decided against recommending a review.

The decision was criticised at the time by pundits such as Jamie Carragher and Ian Wright, and now the five-person Key Match Incidents panel has said a penalty should have been awarded.

Madley's decision was criticised by four of the panellists, who felt Timber's challenge met the threshold for a holding offence, while three felt Attwell should have intervened because it was a clear and obvious error by Madley.

Isak did not make any protest about Timber's shirt-pull to the on-field officials, in a match which was settled by Kai Havertz's goal for the Gunners.

Liverpool manager Andoni Iraola, asked after the match whether Isak should have gone down following the challenge, replied: "It's a shame you ask me this question, but honestly, yes, we have to tell them (the players), go down, because they (the officials) are not going to call it otherwise.

"And then referees complain why they go down. Because if you don't go down, you don't call it. Then it's like, no, you are all the time going down.

"But I think Alex is honest. He tries to go for the ball, everyone can see live straight away there is a clear, clear pull." *– AFP*

Mbappe misses France training ahead of Italy clash

MILAN – France captain Kylian Mbappe did not take part in team training yesterday and remained "under treatment" ahead of his country's Nations League match against Italy, Les Bleus' coaching staff said.

The French coaching staff did not provide any further details regarding the 27-year-old's physical condition.

The Real Madrid forward is back in the France squad for this camp after missing their last three matches through injury.

Mbappe scored the winning goal in Zinedine Zidane's first match as coach against Turkey in September in the Nations League, but had to leave the pitch shortly afterwards due to pain in his left knee.

After three wins and a draw in four matches, France top Group A1 of the Nations League and are well on course to qualify for the quarter-finals ahead of their final two pool-stage fixtures against Italy today in Milan, and Turkey on Sunday in Bordeaux.

The game will be played at 3:45 a.m. tomorrow morning Macau time. *– AFP/MPD*

China wins 2 athletics golds, Russia dominates gymnastics at YOG

DAKAR – China claimed two golds, one silver and one bronze on the final day of the athletics competition at the Dakar 2026 Youth Olympic Games (YOG) on Tuesday, while Russia swept the men's and women's individual all-around titles in artistic gymnastics.

Sheng Xuefeng won the men's triple jump with a personal-best leap of 16.18 meters.

Delighted to win gold and stand on the podium for China, Sheng said the competition had provided valuable experience at a major event.

"I still need to work on my physical conditioning and technique and keep improving," he said.

Wang Yaru took gold in the women's 5,000-meter race walk, also setting a personal best in 22 minutes and 58.33 seconds.

She said she kept telling herself to persevere and give everything she had for the win in the closing stages of the race.

"To be able to win this for my country, to see my country's flag be raised, it means a lot," she said, adding that she hoped to win more gold medals on bigger stages in the future.

In the women's hammer throw, Ukraine's Milaniia Kokhan won gold with a throw of 71.27 meters, while Yang Xingyue took silver with 65.96 meters.

In the women's 200 meters, Dominican Republic's Patricia Sine edged Antigua and Barbuda's Tyra Fenton by 0.01 seconds to win gold in 23.35 seconds, while China's Chen Xinxuan took bronze.

Chen said she was not satisfied with her performance and hoped to make the most of the winter training period to improve and perform better next season.

In the men's 400-meter hurdles, Jamaica's Jaeden Campbell took gold, while China's Wang Tengfei finished fifth.

For other athletics events, Ethiopia's Yomif Abebe and Elsabet Amare won the men's 800 meters and women's 1,500 meters, respectively. Zimbabwe's Ropafadzo Mzondo claimed the men's 200 meters, while South Africa's Megan Nieman won the women's 400-meter hurdles.

Spain's Gabriel Gonzalez took gold in the men's 5,000-meter race walk, France's Axel Faye won the men's pole vault, and Paraguay's Marko Kaethler claimed the men's javelin throw title. Hungary's Zsofi Marton won the women's shot put, while Kuwait's Yasmeen Roy took gold in the women's high jump.

In gymnastics, Russia dominated the individual all-around finals, sweeping the men's and women's titles through Daniil Smirnov and Polina Dmitrieva.

Speaking about winning the first gold for Russia at the Youth Olympic Games in men's artistic gymnastics, Smirnov said: "I am super proud and it is an honour to win a gold for my country."

China's Yang Lanbin and Li Lezheng finished fourth and sixth, respectively, in the men's event. Yang fell off the parallel bars, while Li struggled in the floor exercise and pommel horse. In the women's competition, Zhong Qi took bronze and Xie Guying finished seventh. Zhong failed twice on the floor exercise, while Xie fell from the balance beam.

Zhang Xia, coach of China's women's team, said the competition was intense, with the athletes closely matched in overall ability, making performance on the day decisive.

"I hope the young athletes can gain experience from high-level competitions and identify areas for improvement, so they will be better prepared for future events at a higher level," Zhang added.

In boxing, China's Zhang Zhengkun defeated Seychelles' Franco Zialor in the men's 60kg quarterfinals to advance to the semifinals, where he faced Puerto Rico's Jesfred Joel Torres Santiago yesterday. Wang Jia'en, meanwhile, lost to Egypt's Menatalla Ibrahim in the women's 60kg quarterfinals.

China's women's beach handball team beat Mexico 2-1 in its final group-stage match and faced France in the quarterfinals yesterday in Saly.

In the women's windsurfing, Wu Ziyan stood second overall after nine races, with races 10 to 12 scheduled for yesterday.

Among other events, the United States won the mixed team archery title. Kazakhstan's Anel Tashbay and Slovakia's Timotej Michalik claimed gold in the women's and men's individual road cycling time trials, respectively.

Hungary's Lotti Horvath took the women's individual epee title, while host Senegal's Marie Sarr, Jordan's Abdallah Alzawahra and Germany's Luna Fellinger won gold in the women's 55kg, men's 63kg and women's 63kg taekwondo events, respectively. *– Xinhua*

Games photos on page 16



British Formula 1 driver Lewis Hamilton (centre) listens to North Sinai Governor Khaled Megawer (right) during his visit to the Rafah border crossing between Egypt and the Gaza Strip on Tuesday.
Formula One world champion Hamilton visited Egypt's Rafah border crossing on Tuesday and met aid workers delivering assistance to the war-battered Gaza Strip, according to an Egyptian government statement. – AFP

Medal Tally

Rank	National				
1	CHN	15	8	6	29
2	JPN	9	7	7	23
3	RUS	8	4	2	14
4	EGY	6	1	4	11
5	ETH	5	3		8
6	SEN	5		5	10
7	FRA	4	5	4	13
8	KEN	4	2		6
9	RSA	3	5	3	11
10	CRO	3	4		7
11	AZE	3	1		4
12	NGR	3			3
13	TPE	2	3	3	8
14	HUN	2	3	2	7
15	NZL	2	3		5
16	ESP	2	2	3	7
16	GER	2	2	3	7
16	UKR	2	2	3	7
19	USA	2	2	2	6
20	BRA	2	2	1	5
20	JAM	2	2	1	5
22	ROU	2	2		4
23	HKG	2	1	3	6
24	POR	2	1	2	5
24	SUI	2	1	2	5
24	UAE	2	1	2	5
27	TUR	2		5	7
28	KAZ	2		2	4

Gauff upset at WTA Finals, Pegula back on track

Tennis

LOS ANGELES – Wimbledon champion Linda Noskova upset Coco Gauff to storm into the last four of the WTA Finals at Indian Wells on Tuesday as Jessica Pegula reignited her challenge with victory over Ukraine's Marta Kostyuk.

Czech eighth seed Noskova took advantage of a shaky serving performance by Gauff to complete a 6-3, 6-3 victory in group one to book her place in the semi-finals.

Noskova broke Gauff's serve four times on her way to claiming the first set, and then grabbed the decisive break early in the second before sealing victory with her ninth ace of the match.

"I'm very happy, obviously every win counts in this competition," Noskova said afterwards. "Coco is a big competitor so I had to be ready for everything that would come my way today.

"You have to play to the very last point with Coco because she can always help herself out with her serve and fighting spirit. I felt like I played great to put some pressure on her," added Noskova, who defeated Ukraine's Kostyuk in her opening group match on Sunday.

The defeat leaves Gauff and Pegula vying for the last remaining semi-final berth from group one.

Pegula, beaten by Gauff in her opener Sunday, overcame a topsy-turvy second set to defeat Kostyuk 6-2, 7-5. Kostyuk is eliminated following Tuesday's defeat.

"I feel like I'm playing well," Pegula said. "I felt my match against Coco was a super high-level match and that was a great match today.

"It's so tricky with her because you just don't know what's gonna come - she will just step in and inject pace, she'll come and kamikaze the net, she goes for returns or her serve can get hot. That's what makes it difficult to play her."

The 32-year-old American had looked in complete control in the first set, breaking Kostyuk in the first and seventh games to take the opener 6-2.

A chaotic second set began with four consecutive service breaks before Kostyuk held for a 3-2 lead.

The Ukrainian then had a break point in the next game but was unable to take advantage as Pegula held for 3-3.

The next four games went with serve but Pegula finally grabbed the decisive break in the 11th game. She converted her fourth break point to take a 6-5 lead before holding for the match, sealing victory when Kostyuk smacked a forehand long. *– AFP*

France's top literary prize winner defends 'playful' use of AI

PARIS – The winner of France's top literary award Prix Goncourt has defended his "playful," "ironic," and very limited use of AI in his acclaimed book.

"It is ridiculously absurd to think for half a second that I used generative AI to write anything at all in this book," Philippe Jaenada said in a statement sent to AFP on Friday by his publisher, Flammarion, in which the author details how he used the technology.

"The playful or ironic use of AI – above all fully acknowledged – was actually part of my plan even before I started writing," he said.

Jaenada, who was announced last Tuesday as the winner of the 2026 prize for his novel "L'Inconnue du quai de Javel" ("The Unknown Woman of the Quai de Javel"), had admitted to using AI three times in the writing process.

His comments came amid a worldwide backlash against academics and authors, including exclusion from literary competitions, over allegations of using the technology in their writing.

On Friday, Jaenada reiterated he used AI only three times for his sprawling novel about the unsolved murder of a young Breton woman in the late 1940s.

First, the author asked a question to AI chatbots and said he received "comically precise, and therefore stupid, and contradictory answers."

He then used AI in a more conventional way, to conduct research.

Finally, he said he amused himself by "hiding in the text a sentence generated by AI."

It amounted to just 10 words and since the book's publication he had received dozens of guesses from readers.

The writer said he had decided he would reveal the sentence in response to "stupidity, treachery, and bad faith."

Once considered a frontrunner for the Prix Goncourt, Haitian-Canadian author Thélyson Orélien had his novel withdrawn from the shortlist amid speculation he used AI to write it.

Orelien's Canadian publisher last month confirmed he had used AI to help write the book and was severing professional ties with the author. *– AFP*



Prix Goncourt literary prize laureate Philippe Jaenada, for his novel "L'Inconnue du quai de Javel", poses at the window of the Drouant restaurant with the book after the award ceremony in Paris last Tuesday. – AFP

Booker winner Harrison says world becoming a 'weirder place'

Akshata Kapoor and Marie Heuclin

LONDON – British author M. John Harrison, who has amassed a cult following for his genre-bending novels, told AFP on Tuesday, after winning the Booker Prize, that the Western world is "becoming a weirder place".

Harrison won the literary award on Monday for his post-apocalyptic novel "The End of Everything", opening the doors for mainstream critical and commercial success for the author who has until now been mainly popular within science fiction circles.

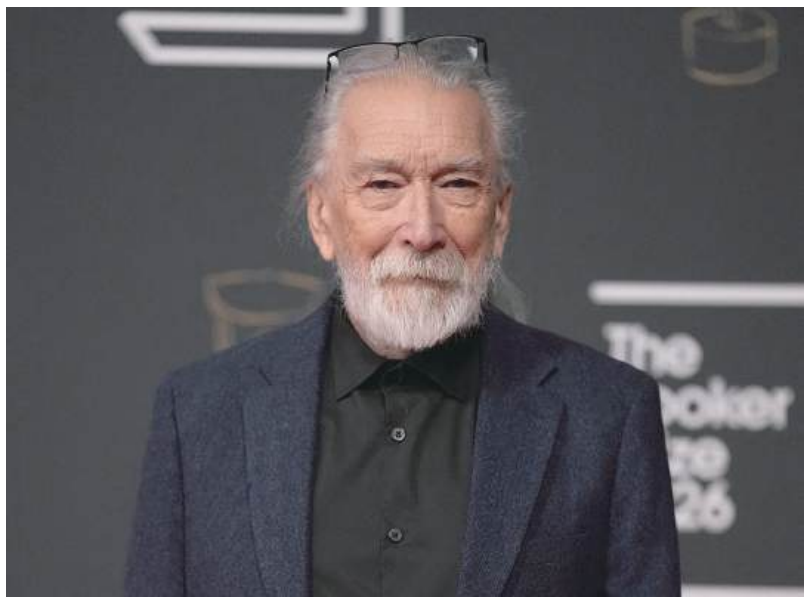
"Publishing common sense tells you that you're so unlikely to win the Booker. And then when I heard my name, I was really startled," Harrison said.

At 81, he is the oldest winner of the prize. He is also, according to some critics, the first winning author from the world of science fiction, although he rejects the genre boundary and transgresses it in his works.

Part of the reason for his win, Harrison admitted, could be that readers are ready for "weirder" fiction that speaks to the present.

"The world is becoming a weirder place. Certainly... the remains of the West is becoming a weirder place," said Harrison, pausing to reflect.

"We have to deal with a collapse of reliable information, which in a way this book is about."



British author M. John Harrison poses on the red carpet upon arrival for the Booker Prize Award announcement ceremony at the Old Billingsgate in London on Monday. – AFP

'One disaster after another'

The book plunges the reader into the same disorienting, murky world its characters find themselves in after an unnamed catastrophe hits Britain.

The tight, 198-page novel gives away little information about the nature of the disaster or alien-like creatures known as iGhetti that arrive in this near-future world.

"I have no idea where they came from, along with the reader, no idea whatsoever, or what they are," said Harrison, finding his own creations similarly inscrutable.

He wanted to deliberately keep the origin and purpose of the creatures unknown, insisting that if the Earth is overcome by disaster, we may not be able to make sense of it.

Those threats could be posed by climate change, artificial intelligence, or, as Harrison quips the economics imposed by "late-stage capitalism".

He was moved to write the book after the 2008 financial crisis, which exploded the global economy and devastated millions of ordinary households, and links the iGhetti to the City of London, the British capital's financial heart.

"I placed them in the City of London precisely to get that linkage," said Harrison.

Nearly two decades on, as countries still deal with the ripple effects of the financial crisis combined with other conflicts, Harrison says he wanted to write a book where catastrophe isn't "bound" or neatly packaged like other disaster novels.

"I thought to myself, well, you know, what if this wasn't the case? What if disasters are unbounded? And what if there's no solution?"

"History has possibly always been like that... it's just one ongoing disaster after another," said Harrison.

'Possibility'

But the book is also about how humans carry on living amid, or after, disaster, with the characters still having parties and socialising.

The book is "definitely based on the idea of people trying to carry on as if nothing has happened," said Harrison. "The title is highly ironic, because it obviously isn't 'the end of everything'."

Despite his bleak diagnosis of the world, Harrison said while he was writing the book over nearly a decade, he felt a "sense of possibility".

"I intended it to be a very much more depressing ending, but when I got there I realised that the text itself had sort of changed my mind ... I felt, as I wrote, a growing sense of positiveness."

The octogenarian had another unexpected encounter with possibility when he was announced the winner of the Booker, and its £50,000 (US$66,400) award, at a London ceremony on Monday, after mainstream success evaded him for decades.

On three hours of sleep and still buzzing with excitement, Harrison has started to accept his new reality.

"I'm fascinated because I've been writing like this for 50 years, solely out of a desire to break down boundaries between genres," he said the day after his win. "I think, yeah, the world was ready for it." *– AFP*

French writer Houellebecq probed over comments on Muslims

PARIS – Controversial French writer Michel Houellebecq was placed under formal investigation on Tuesday on suspicion of complicity in incitement to discrimination, hatred or violence, a source close to the case told AFP.

Houellebecq, 70, is arguably France's most famous writer internationally, but has grown increasingly controversial as his pessimistic views on the decline of Western civilisation are seen as aligning with the ascendant far-right.

The investigation concerns comments about Muslims published in 2022 in *Front Populaire* magazine.

In the interview with philosopher Michel Onfray, the author of "Submission" described Muslims as a threat to the security of French people.

"What the native French population, as they say, wants is not for Muslims to assimilate but for them to stop stealing from and attacking them," Houellebecq said. "Or, alternatively, that they leave."

He also warned of future "Bataclans in reverse" targeting Muslims, a reference to the jihadist attacks in Paris on November 13, 2015.

In 2023, the Union of Mosques of France (UMF) filed a complaint against Houellebecq, Onfray and *Front Populaire* director Stephane Simon.

In a statement to AFP, the writer's lawyers said Houellebecq's statements contained no element of incitement.

"A prophet of doom does not wish for misfortune to occur, quite the contrary. His place is not in a court-room," Thibault de Montbrial and Louis Cailliez said.

"Michel Houellebecq can only regret the growing tendency to litigate intellectual debate."

In his memoir "A Few Months in My Life: October 2022-March 2023", Houellebecq described his remarks as clumsy, saying he had been the victim of his own stupidity or naivety, as well as of the greed of those who sought to exploit his notoriety.

"Freedom of expression is fundamental, but it cannot justify everything," Najwa El Haite, a lawyer for the Union of Mosques of France, told AFP.

"When it is established, incitement to hatred does not fall within the realm of intellectual debate. It is now for the courts to assess the matter, while respecting the presumption of innocence."

The Grand Mosque of Paris had also considered legal action against Houellebecq, but later decided not to pursue it after meeting him.

Houellebecq made his name dissecting touchy subjects – including sex, race and religion – with dark irony and clinical detachment. *– AFP*

World Weather

CHINA	ASIA-PACIFIC	WORLD	LUSOPHONE
Beijing 0°C~15°C	Manila 23°C~32°C	New York 9°C~17°C	Lisbon 15°C~21°C
Shanghai 14°C~20°C	Bangkok 23°C~33°C	London 0°C~8C	Rio de Janeiro 21°C~29°C
Hong Kong 20°C~26°C	Tokyo 8°C~17°C	Frankfurt 0°C~10°C	Luanda 23°C~28°C
Taipei 19°C~28°C	Singapore 25°C~32°C	Vancouver 11°C~14°C	Maputo 20°C~30°C
Guangzhou 17°C~27°C	Kuala Lumpur 23°C~31°C	Paris 2°C~10°C	Dili 23°C~34°C
Nanjing 11°C~17°C	Jakarta 24°C~35°C	Moscow 1°C~3°C	São Tomé 24°C~31°C
Guilin 13°C~19°C	Seoul 8°C~17°C	Las Vegas 12°C~24°C	Praia 23°C~32°C
Xi'an 5°C~14°C	Sydney 17°C~24°C	Monte Carlo 14°C~17°C	Bissau 23°C~36°C



Tanatswa Mugwidi of Zimbabwe competes during the Men's Triple Jump Final at Dakar 2026 Summer Youth Olympic Games at Complexe Iba Mar Diop in Dakar, Senegal, on Tuesday. – Xinhua



Wang Yaru of China competes during the Women's 5000m Race Walk Final at Dakar 2026 Summer Youth Olympic Games at Complexe Iba Mar Diop in Dakar, Senegal, on Tuesday. – Xinhua



Athletes compete during the Women's Windsurfing Opening Series Race at the Dakar 2026 Youth Olympic Games in Saly, Senegal, on Tuesday. – Xinhua



Senegal's Marie Sarr (left) and Tunisia's Yasmine Haouani compete at the Taekwondo Women -55kg Final Gold Medal Contest during the Dakar 2026 Youth Olympic Games at Complexe Iba Mar Diop (CID Arena) in Dakar, Senegal on Tuesday. – AFP



Gold medal winner Russia's Polina Dmitrieva reacts after the Artistic Gymnastics Women's All-Around Final at Dakar 2026 Summer Youth Olympic Games at Dakar Expo Center in Diamniadio, Senegal, on Tuesday. – Xinhua



Gold medalist Sheng Xuefeng of China bows to spectators during the victory ceremony for the Men's Triple Jump event of Athletics at Dakar 2026 Summer Youth Olympic Games at Complexe Iba Mar Diop in Dakar, Senegal, on Tuesday. – Xinhua