



Govt to consult public next month on amending urban master plan

Tony Wong

The government announced yesterday that it will launch a public consultation late next month on proposed amendments to Macau's urban master plan, in alignment with its ongoing planning of several future large-scale projects.

It will be the first time that the government amends the urban master plan since it came into force in February 2022.

The Lands and Urban Construction Bureau (DSSCU) announced the public consultation in a statement yesterday. The bureau also made the announcement in the Official Gazette (BO) yesterday.

The bureau is the public entity tasked with the city's urban planning.

The 60-day public consultation will run between June 29 and August 27.

The statement noted that the draft will be uploaded onto the bureau's website on the first day of the public consultation.

Yesterday's announcements came after the government decided earlier this year to amend Macau's urban master plan.

The government last year launched its first review of Macau's urban master plan for possible amendments, in the wake of its planning of several future large-scale projects aiming to inject new impetus into Macau's long-term development, which were first announced by Chief Executive Sam Hou



This photo taken from Guia Hill earlier this year shows part of Macau's cityscape. – Photo: Tony Wong

Fai in his 2025 Policy Address, which he delivered in April last year.

The Macau Special Administrative Region's (MSAR) urban master plan for 2020 to 2040 is the city's first-ever official urban master plan, which took effect on February 15, 2022 after its promulgation in the Official Gazette on the previous day.

Macau's urban master plan is promulgated by an administrative regulation drawn up by the government because of which it does not require the legislature's approval.

Yesterday's DSSCU statement said that the proposed amendments to Macau's urban master plan aim to advance the implementation of three future large-scale government projects, comprising the Macau International Integrated Tourism and Cultural Zone, the Macau Science and Technology Research and Development Industrial Park, and the Macau International Aviation Hub for the Pearl River West Bank, three of the four announced in Sam's 2025 Policy Address.

The other large-scale project announced

in Sam's 2025 Policy Address is the Macau-Hengqin International Education (University) Town. As it will be located in the Guangdong-Macao In-Depth Cooperation Zone in Hengqin, it will not be covered by the MSAR's urban master plan.

According to the Urban Planning Law, the government is required to launch its review of the urban master plan for possible amendments five years after it came into force, i.e., in 2027.

According to the law, the government is also required to launch its review of the urban master plan if the government decides to launch large-scale public projects which are expected to cause significant impacts on land uses and urban planning listed by the urban master plan, regardless of the length of time the urban master plan has been implemented.

According to an executive order published in the gazette in February this year, Sam decided that Macau's urban master plan will be amended for the first time.

Sam decided to amend the urban master plan after assessing a report prepared by DSSCU officials, as well as opinions gathered from the Urban Planning Council (CPU), according to the executive order.

The government-appointed council is a consultative body tasked with advising the government on its urban planning policies.

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UN rights chief hails Pope's 'timely' AI appeal

GENEVA – The United Nations rights chief yesterday welcomed as “timely” Pope Leo XIV's manifesto warning of the risks of artificial intelligence, urging the world to remain focused on “shared humanity”.

In an encyclical called “Magnifica Humanitas” (“Magnificent Humanity”), the first US pope on Monday set out a list of warnings about how the technology could impact humanity.

He warned among other things against “a race for ever more powerful algorithms and larger datasets, driven by the desire to secure geopolitical or commercial dominance”.

UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Volker Türk hailed the pope's manifesto, describing it on X as a “timely appeal for dignity and justice in the age of AI”.

“Our compass must remain our shared humanity,” he insisted.

AI could be worth up to US\$4.8 trillion by 2033, a 25-fold increase in a decade, while concentrating its profits in the hands of a limited few, according to the UN.

In his encyclical, Leo sounded the alarm over AI-directed weaponry, saying it was “not permissible to entrust lethal” decisions to tech.

He called for “disarming AI”, which he stressed “means freeing it from the mentality of ‘armed’ competition”.

“To disarm does not mean rejecting technology, but preventing it from dominating humanity,” Leo wrote.

Türk agreed. “Technology should serve people - not replace or control them,” he wrote. – AFP



This aerial drone photo taken on Tuesday shows the construction site of the Shituo Yangtze River Bridge along the Chongqing-Wanzhou High-Speed Railway in Chongqing. The deck of the railway line of the Shituo Yangtze River Bridge successfully completed its closure yesterday. The bridge has a total length of 1,416.9 meters, with the main bridge spanning 1,056 meters. The deck of the highway lanes is scheduled to be closed by the end of this year. – Xinhua

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The Macau Post Daily

Li Qiang stresses efforts to build distribution hubs for bulk commodities

Premier Li Qiang has called for efforts to accelerate the building of hubs for the distribution of bulk commodities and important materials to ensure both development and security.

– Story on p. 7

WHO warns of 'catastrophic collision' of Ebola, war in DR Congo

Conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo is complicating efforts to rein in a deadly Ebola outbreak, the WHO chief warned yesterday, while Uganda announced it was shutting its border.

– Story on p. 11

Sánchez keeps backing ex-PM targeted in graft probe

Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez maintained his support yesterday for his predecessor José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero, following the release of new details of the investigation into the ex-leader for influence peddling.

– Story on p. 12

Police arrest HK driver for raping 'female friend'

Armindo Neves

The Judiciary Police (PJ) arrested a man from Hong Kong on Tuesday for raping his female friend earlier that day, PJ spokesman Cheong Siu Keong announced during a special press conference yesterday.

Cheong identified the suspect as a 64-year-old driver surnamed Chong. He added that the victim is a young woman from Hong Kong, noting that she and Chong were ordinary friends who had known each other for about a year.

According to Cheong, Chong invited the victim to travel to Macau with him to gamble on Monday, claiming before departure that he would book two separate hotel guestrooms. However, upon arrival in Macau, the victim discovered that he

had only booked a single twin room.

After checking in, the pair gambled separately at the casino. At around 3 a.m. on Tuesday, they returned to the room and went to sleep in separate beds.

Later that night, the victim woke up to find Chong touching her. Despite resisting strongly, she was overpowered and subsequently raped, according to her statement to police.

The victim managed to escape by rushing out of the room to call for help. A guest staying on the same floor assisted her and alerted the police.

Upon realising his crime had been discovered, Chong attempted to flee the scene but was apprehended by hotel security staff. He was handed over to the Public

Security Police (PSP), who later notified the Judiciary Police to take over the investigation.

Cheong said that initial investigations confirmed the indication of any prior intimate relationship. A medical assessment revealed superficial defensive wounds and minor bruising on the victim's forearms and knees, confirming she had been subjected to violence.

Cheong also said that the suspect did not wear a condom when raping the victim.

Chong was transferred to the Public Prosecutions Office (MP) yesterday, facing a rape charge.

According to Article 157 of the Macau Penal Code, rape is punishable by three to 12 years behind bars. ■



Judiciary Police (PJ) officers escort the hooded suspect to a PJ van outside the PJ headquarters in Zape yesterday. — Photo: Armindo Neves

Police nab Filipino for sexual harassment

Armindo Neves

The Public Security Police (PSP) caught a Filipino for sexual harassment on Monday, PSP spokeswoman Kong Chi Ian said during a regular press conference yesterday.

The male, surnamed Belando, who is in his twenties, claimed to be unemployed.

Kong said that the suspect is a Philippine passport holder.

According to Kong, in the early hours of Sunday, the Public Security Police received a complaint from a woman, stating that on Saturday, while walking along Avenida de Almeida Ribeiro (San Ma Lou), she was struck once on the buttocks by a man passing her.

The victim immediately looked behind, Kong said, add-

ing that after the two made eye contact, the man promptly left the scene.

PSP officers identified Belando through the city's CCTV footage and apprehended him on Monday. Under questioning, Belando claimed that he had been drinking that evening and, as he passed the woman, had mistaken her for a friend from his hometown. Belando claimed that he had patted her buttocks as a way of greeting her, according to Kong.

Belando was transferred to the Public Prosecutions Office (MP) recently, facing a charge of sexual harassment.

According to Article 164-A of the Macau Penal Code, sexual harassment is punishable by imprisonment of up to one year. ■



This undated handout photo provided by the Public Security Police (PSP) yesterday shows a PSP officer escorting the sexual harassment suspect from the Philippines into a police station.

Police bust Filipina quintet for fraud, money laundering

Armindo Neves

The Judiciary Police (PJ) have busted a gang of five Filipinas for fraud and money laundering, PJ spokesman Cheong Siu Keong announced during a special press conference yesterday.

Cheong identified the quintet, aged between 38 and 49, as cleaners, domestic helpers, and part-time workers. Their surnames are Inocencio, Gutierrez, Calimoso, Gabato, and Bacalso. Cheong added that there are two victims in the case, an elderly man and a middle-aged woman.

According to Cheong, the male victim told the Judiciary Police on March 23 that he met a female netizen, and the two developed an online romance. She claimed she would be sending him expensive gifts, but subsequently demanded that he make payments for various reasons, including fuel tax, customs fines, and money laundering clearance. Cheong said the victim made three transfers, totalling 32,700 patacas, to a designated bank account. After the gifts failed to arrive and the netizen cut contact, the victim realised he had been scammed.

An investigation revealed that Inocencio's bank account had

received the fraudulent funds, as well as 18,567 patacas from the female victim. Cheong noted that the female victim had also fallen prey to an online romance scam, transferring money to the same account at the request of a male netizen.

After receiving the funds, Inocencio split the money and transferred it out, Cheong said. Of this amount, 40,633 patacas were moved to accounts belonging to Gutierrez, Calimoso, and Gabato, before being withdrawn from ATMs by Gutierrez and Bacalso. Inocencio received a 5.0 percent

cut of the fraudulent proceeds, with the remainder distributed proportionally among the others.

Cheong said PJ officers arrested the quintet on Tuesday for suspected fraud and money laundering.

The quintet were transferred to the Public Prosecutions Office (MP) yesterday to face charges of fraud and money laundering.

According to Article 211 of the Macau Penal Code, fraud is punishable by two to 10 years behind bars. According to Law No.2/2006, money laundering is punishable by imprisonment up to eight years. ■



Judiciary Police (PJ) officers escort the five hooded fraud and money laundering suspects, all of them local Filipinas, to a PJ van outside the PJ headquarters in Zape yesterday. — Photo: Armindo Neves

Govt to consult public next month on amending urban master plan

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According to Sam's executive order, the Lands and Urban Construction Bureau concluded that the urban master plan will need to be amended, after completing its first review of the plan, with the aim of creating the necessary conditions for the government to push ahead with its large-scale public projects.

According to the Urban Planning Law, a public consultation process is statutorily required for the government's drafting of Macau's urban master plan, and amendments to the urban master plan.

The government's planned Macau

International Integrated Tourism and Cultural Zone will include three major cultural facilities, namely the Macau National Museum of Culture, the Macau International Centre for Performing Arts, and the International Museum of Contemporary Art.

According to previous government announcements, the government proposes to construct the Macau National Museum of Culture on the waterfront area east of Macau Tower, while it proposes to build the Macau International Centre for Performing Arts on the west side of the Zone C land reclamation area off Taipa's Ocean

Gardens residential estate and to construct the International Museum of Contemporary Art on the east side of Zone C.

According to previous government announcements, the government proposes to set up two industrial parks, located separately from each other, for its planned Macau Science and Technology Research and Development Industrial Park project, namely the plot at the bottom of Big Taipa Hill, near the airport, previously earmarked for a sandwich-class housing project, and a plot on the Zone E1 land reclamation area off Taipa's Pac On district. ■

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Macau Weather

VERY HOT. FINE APART FROM CLOUDY PERIODS. FORCE 3 TO 4 SOUTH TO SOUTHWESTERLY WINDS. TEMPERATURE WILL RANGE BETWEEN 27 °C AND 33 °C, AND ONE OR TWO DEGREES HIGHER IN THE URBAN AREAS. RELATIVE HUMIDITY WILL RANGE BETWEEN 65% AND 95%.



27°C~33°C

Source: SMG

UFC FIGHT NIGHT headliners Song, Figueiredo fight ready for Saturday

Rui Pastorin

The bouts leading up to UFC FIGHT NIGHT kick off tonight at Macau's largest indoor arena, the Galaxy Arena, in Cotai.

Headlined by No.5 UFC (Ultimate Fighting Championship) Bantamweight Song Yadong from Heilongjiang and No.7 UFC Bantamweight Deiveson Figueiredo of Soure, northern Brazil, the first two days is for the opening rounds of ROAD TO UFC Season 5, culminating in the sold-out main event on Saturday.

An opening ceremony was held last night at Galaxy Macau's East Square, gathering six fighters for open workouts including shadowboxing and pad work, with some also delivering messages for their opponents.

Headliners Song and Figueiredo specifically promised their fans a knockout during their fight on Saturday.

Figueiredo, aka "Deus da Guerra" ("God of War"), makes his return to Macau following the sold-out UFC FIGHT NIGHT in 2024 that was also held at Galaxy Arena, where he lost against Russia's Petr Yan via unanimous decision*.

Figueiredo's record stands at 25 wins, six losses and one draw. Nine of his wins were by knockout and nine via submission,



Heilongjiang's Song Yadong hits pads during yesterday's Open Workout at Galaxy Macau. – Photos: Rui Pastorin

according to official data from UFC. Addressing attendees in Portuguese at yesterday's opening event, Figueiredo said through an interpreter: "On Saturday, you guys are going to see a brawl, a fight. Song and I are going to be in the Octagon, you guys are going to see a good show". For his opponent Song, he had this to say: "I'm sorry Song, I'm here to beat you. I'm going to knock you out", promising a submission.

Title contender Song (aka The Kung Fu Kid), meanwhile, boasts nine wins by knockout, with three via submission. His fight record is

at 22 wins, nine losses, one draw, and one no contest. Song said he was grateful to his fans, which include those who travelled from afar to see the fight. "Figueiredo is a stepping stone", Song, whose remarks were translated from Putonghua, said, setting his sights for another bout with Petr Yan, who he also lost to via unanimous decision earlier this year at UFC 299. He pointed out that he will finish the fight "as soon as possible" and celebrate with his fans.

Other fighters who also participated in yesterday's open



Brazil's Deiveson Figueiredo demonstrates grappling techniques at the Open Workout session at Galaxy Macau.

workout were co-mains Zhang Mingyang (19-7) from Anhui and Alonzo Menifield (17-6-1) from Dallas; as well as fighters Kai Asakura (21-6) from Tokyo and newcomer Xiong Jingnan (19-2) from Bali.

A number of fighters are set to have their bouts in the coming days, with the Road to UFC Season 5 to be headlined by the Chinese mainland's Rong Zhu and Victor Martinez from the US, along with the Chinese mainland's Shi Ming and India's Pujar Tomar in the Women's Strawweight fight on day 2.

Meanwhile, the "UFC FAN

EXPERIENCE" is set up at Galaxy Macau's Pearl Lobby, featuring photo spots and themed activities including those testing reaction time, punching power and athleticism.

The three-night fight event is jointly presented by integrated resort operator Galaxy Macau and UFC. A four-year deal between the two entities was announced in September 2025 to bring three UFC FIGHT NIGHT events to the Galaxy Arena from 2026 through 2029. ■

* <https://macaupostdaily.com/news/23347>

CURB launches 2nd edition of Placeable City placemaking competition

Khalel Vallo

CURB (Centre for Architecture and Urbanism) announced in a statement on Tuesday the return of its "Placeable City | Placemaking Competition in Hengqin", inviting participants to propose community-driven public space interventions for three locations in Hengqin aimed at strengthening urban identity and social interaction.

First launched in 2024, the competition focuses on placemaking* concepts that encourage public participation and more people-orientated urban environments, the statement said.

According to the statement, this year's edition centres on three designated sites in the Guangdong-Macao In-Depth Cooperation Zone in Hengqin: the Macau New Neighbourhood (MNN), Hengqin Checkpoint Square, and Hengqin Pier Waterfront.

The statement noted that the initiative aims to encourage urban exchanges between Hengqin and Macau amid ongoing integration between the two places through policy support and shared resources, adding that the competition also seeks to promote greater public engagement with architecture, urbanism and the built environment.

The statement underlined that participants are free to define the

scope and scale of their proposals within the selected sites. The statement also said that project submissions should reflect the core principles of placemaking by observing, engaging, designing, narrating and activating public spaces in ways that revitalise neighbourhood streetscapes.

The competition is open for registration (<https://competition.curb-center.com/placemaking-2026-edition/>) and awards cash prizes and certificates to winning entries, the statement said, adding that the submitted works will be reviewed by a panel of judges, with selected projects to be featured in a winners' exhibition.

According to the statement, the submission deadline for the "Placeable City | Placemaking Competition in Hengqin" is July 26. ■

*Placemaking is a collaborative, community-driven philosophy of urban design and planning that transforms ordinary public spaces into vibrant, meaningful places where people want to gather, interact, and spend time. Instead of treating a space purely as physical infrastructure (like a simple concrete plaza or a transit corridor), placemaking looks at how human beings will socially and culturally connect with it. It shifts the focus from form to function and feeling. – Gemini



This poster provided by CURB (Centre for Architecture and Urbanism) on Tuesday promotes its upcoming "Placeable City | Placemaking Competition in Hengqin", now open for registration online through July 26.

MasterChef Asia returns with Macau as host



This photo provided by the Macau Government Tourism Office (MGTO) shows filming for MasterChef Asia taking place in Macau.

Rui Pastorin

The Macau Government Tourism Office (MGTO) said in a statement yesterday that Macau and its celebrated culinary scene will be host to competitive cooking series MasterChef Asia, with culinary challenges for 10 contestants to be filmed around the city.

According to the statement, the series marks its return after a 10-year hiatus.

The 10-episode series started production in Macau this month, being set to be broadcast on TLC, Discovery, and the Asian Food Network in India, Southeast Asia, China (including Hong Kong, Macau and Taiwan) and South Korea. It will also air on Lala TV in Japan and the Fatafeat channel in the Middle East, the statement said.

Produced by Warner Bros.

Discovery and CreAsia Studio (part of Endemol Shine India), the statement said that series is in partnership with MGTO and is from Banijay Rights, the global distribution arm of Banijay Entertainment.

"Macau's celebrated culinary scene and its development as a Creative City of Gastronomy provides a fitting location for the series that will showcase the destination's unique profile and diverse 'tourism+' offerings to a wide international audience", the statement noted.

The statement said that MasterChef launched in 1990, having been commissioned in 72 markets, as well as having over 700 seasons and more than 16,000 episodes aired. It is recognised as the "Most Successful Cookery Television Format" on the Guinness World Records. ■

FRC gallery hosts 'The Tea in Macau' exhibition by Cássia Schutt & Lily Lee

Khalel Vallo

A joint photography and painting exhibition titled "The Tea in Macau: Revealing Details and Leaving Space for Imagination" opened last week at the Rui Cunha Foundation (FRC) gallery, bringing together works by Brazilian photographer Cássia Schutt and Chinese painter Lily Lee, aka Li Chunlian, inspired by Macau's tea culture and traditional tea houses.

Both are based in Macau.

The exhibition features 34 works, comprising 16 photographs and 18 paintings, exploring Macau's tea traditions through the contrasting yet complementary artistic approaches of the two artists.

According to a statement by the gallery, the works "appear whispering back and forth in a subtle conversation", with Schutt focusing on intimate gestures and textures while Lee portrays wider and more atmospheric scenes.

The artists began collaborating in 2024 through repeated visits to tea houses across Macau, the statement said, underlining that through conversations and observation, they developed what they described as an "ongoing artistic dialogue" centred on tea culture and its enduring presence in the city.

Meanwhile, according to an information board at the gallery's entrance, the exhibition describes the project as "an encounter between two artists, a Brazilian photographer and a Chinese painter, united by the same curious gaze". The message adds that although their cultures "speak in different tongues", their art connects through "a shared way of expressing Macau's tea traditions".

Schutt, who has lived in Macau for nearly two decades, is a photographer, producer and creative director, according to the statement. She has published books, participated in multiple exhibitions and is a member of the Halfone Macao Photographic Association, the statement noted.

Meanwhile, Lee holds a master's degree in oil painting from the Huaqiao University's Faculty of Fine Arts, the statement said, highlighting that she is the founder of Lily Handmade Art Co. Ltd. in Macau and also a member of the Macau Artists Association.

The exhibition highlights not only the tea ritual itself but also the old tea shops that are gradually disappearing from the cityscape. Through photography and painting, both artists aim to preserve these visual memories for future generations, the statement said

"The Tea in Macau: Revealing Details and Leaving Space for Imagination" will remain on display at the Rui Cunha Foundation through Saturday. With free admission, exhibitiongoers can visit the gallery at 749 Avenida da Praia Grande, Luen Pong Building, open Monday to Friday from 10 a.m. to 7 p.m., and from 3 p.m. to 7 p.m. on Saturdays.



Photos: Khalel Vallo

First HK astronaut on board Tiangong space station outcome of 'One Country, Two Systems': FM spokesperson

BEIJING – The first ever Hong Kong astronaut on board the Tiangong space station as Shenzhou-23 crewed spaceship was successfully launched came as a tangible outcome of the practice of “One Country, Two Systems,” foreign ministry spokesperson Mao Ning said yesterday.

Li Jiaying, known as Lai Ka-ying in Cantonese, a Hong Kong local, has made history as the first member of China's fourth batch of astronauts to take on an in-orbit mission, as well as the first female payload specialist from the Hong Kong and Macao special administrative regions to join a

national manned space program.

At a regular news briefing, Mao said this is not only a new milestone in China's manned space program, but also the glory for all Hong Kong compatriots. It is a result of “One Country, Two Systems” and testament to its extraordinary strength and vitality, she added.

Hong Kong is on track to become an international innovation and tech hub, said Mao, adding that the space mission will inspire more young people there to be part of China's scientific and technological advancement.

– Xinhua

Boy, 10, dies after hit by car on zebra crossing: police

Staff Reporter

A 10-year-old local boy died last night after being hit by a car on a zebra crossing in the Toi San district, authorities announced.

The police said that they have preliminarily concluded that the accident was caused by the car driver's failure to give way to the boy on the zebra crossing.

The accident occurred on the easternmost section of Avenida do Conselheiro Borja (青洲大馬路), when the boy was walking across the zebra crossing outside a Public Security Police (PSP) station situated next to the site where the now defunct greyhound racetrack (Yat Yuen Canidrome) is located.

The seven-seater struck the boy, knocking him down and running him over.

The eastern section of the avenue serves as a dividing line between Toi San and Fai Chi Kei districts, with the Toi San residential neighbourhood in the north side and the former Yat Yuen Canidrome in Fai Chi Kei in the south.

According to a PSP statement last night, the police received a report at 8:18 p.m. yesterday about



A traffic police officer and two firefighters work next to the seven-seater which struck a boy on a zebra crossing on Avenida do Conselheiro Borja last night.

– Photo courtesy of TDM

the accident. The boy was rushed to the private Kiang Wu Hospital where he was pronounced dead at 8:42 p.m. after emergency treatment to save his life had failed.

The Fire Services Bureau (CB) said last night that upon arrival at the scene, paramedics were unable to detect the boy's heartbeat while he was not breathing.

The PSP statement said that the car driver, a local man surnamed Chao who is in his forties, passed a

breathalyser test.

The statement said that after gathering evidence while assessing the citywide CCTV camera system and the footage of the car's dashboard camera, the police have preliminarily concluded that the fatal accident was caused by the car driver's failure to give way to the boy on the zebra crossing.

The police are asking witnesses to the accident to call its Traffic Department on 2837 4214. ■

HK overtakes Switzerland as world's largest cross-border wealth hub: BCG

HONG KONG – Hong Kong overtook Switzerland as the world's largest cross-border booking center for the first time, with its cross-border wealth growing 10.7 percent year on year in 2025, according to a report released by the Boston Consulting Group (BCG) yesterday. Hong Kong's cross-border

wealth assets totaled US\$2.95 trillion last year, driven by Chinese mainland flows and a vigorous stock market that delivered significant IPO activity and strong gains in benchmark-heavy internet platforms, the report said.

Flows from the Chinese mainland represented over 60

percent of assets under management, further cementing Hong Kong's role as China's gateway to global markets, the BCG said in the report.

The consulting firm projected the city's cross-border wealth to grow about 9 percent annually through 2030.

– Xinhua



Passengers pose with a mascot at the departures hall of Terminal 2 of Hong Kong International Airport yesterday. The airport's expanded Terminal 2 departures hall was officially put into operation on yesterday following a HK\$12.9 billion upgrade.

– Xinhua

British, Chinese partners can find successful way forward through candid dialogues: UK ex-official

Interview

NANJING – “The British government and parties have the determination to see a good, consistent relationship with China going forward,” said David Lidington, honorary president of the Great Britain-China Centre (GBCC) and former British minister for the Cabinet Office.

“Over the past 19 years, I have witnessed the development of the GBCC and the forum,” Lidington said on the sidelines of the 14th China-UK Senior Leadership Forum held in Yangzhou, Jiangsu Province, on Tuesday.

“We have established a way of conducting our affairs based on plain speaking, courtesy, and a search for mutual understanding,” Lidington noted. “In my experience, difficult subjects are easier to raise now than when the forum started. Everybody was a bit nervous and cautious in those earlier years compared with how we are now. This is a sign that the relationship has developed and

matured in a way that is thoroughly well.”

Lidington hopes this meeting in Jiangsu will become part of a wider program. “In future years, the forum can take place in other parts of China that we have not yet visited,” he said.

“One thing that strikes visitors is the sheer size of China; it is easy to underestimate geographically. There is also insufficient understanding in Britain of the cultural diversity within China. It is important to experience this firsthand,” he said.

He would also like to move the forum around different parts of the UK to show Chinese visitors other areas of the country. “I think that would be of great value.”

On the broader relationship, Lidington said Britain and China are in a good place at the moment.

“Looking ahead, we share many common interests and face shared challenges. We both want to see accelerated economic growth in our countries, as we believe this

is the only way to bring prosperity to our people through trade and investment.”

A China-UK business roundtable was held on Tuesday afternoon.

Lidington described the business roundtable as an important innovation that brings together British businesses from different sectors with interests or investments in China, as well as Chinese businesses interested in the UK.

“There are opportunities for us to work more closely together across many sectors, including manufacturing, energy, and services,” he said.

The economic relationship between Britain and China is already strong, he stressed, with China ranking among the UK's top trading partners. “There are opportunities in China for established British brands, niche manufacturers, and high-tech producers.”

He also pointed to recent plans by the Chinese government to further open up the services

sector, particularly in regard to international legal services, where the UK has a significant advantage.

“I believe professional services, such as law and finance sectors, will greatly benefit Chinese industry as it continues to develop, grow and function in global marketplaces. So I think there are great opportunities for partnership going forward,” said Lidington.

Lidington added that people-to-people, cultural, and educational ties also help strengthen mutual understanding.

“I believe that through honest conversations between partners, we can find a successful way forward in a turbulent and fast-changing world,” Lidington said.

Tom Simpson, managing director of China operations and chief China representative at the China-Britain Business Council, highlighted the significance of China's visa-free policies for getting more business people back to China.

“A big part of what we are trying

to do is get more British companies visiting China, learning about the market, and speaking to partners,” Simpson said.

For UK businesses, the Chinese market is massive, and there are a lot of high-quality customers to work with, Simpson noted.

“If you are a professional services company working with a major Chinese private sector business, that business might be growing at a rapid rate and expanding internationally. That offers an opportunity for the UK company to partner with it globally, not just in China.”

Another common factor, Simpson added, is the local talent in China, whom British companies regard as world-class, particularly in R&D in science, technology, and healthcare.

Simpson also said that strong local government support allows companies to rapidly realize their investment ambitions. “That speed and efficiency is a big factor too,” he said.

– Xinhua

The Tokyo Trials at 80: A warning bell that still rings

Commentary by Xin Ping*

The International Military Tribunal for the Far East (IMTFE) – widely referred to as the Tokyo Trials – opened in Tokyo on May 3, 1946. Judges from 11 countries gathered to try, under international law, the war crimes committed by Japanese militarists. This is the largest international trial in human history that nailed, with irrefutable evidence, the Japanese militarists to the pillar of shame forever.

It has been 80 years. It is imperative that we revisit that part of history – to keep good people aware of the historical lessons and sound the alarm against any attempt in Japan to resurrect militarism.

TRIALS OF JUSTICE

The Tokyo Trials were never the “victors’ justice” alleged by the Japanese right-wing elements. They delivered just verdicts that brought some solace to the countless lives that perished under the barbaric Japanese militarist aggression.

The Tribunal’s jurisdiction rests on a solid international law foundation.

The Japanese Instrument of Surrender explicitly requires “the Emperor, the Japanese Government, and their successors to carry out the provisions of the Potsdam Declaration in good faith, and to issue whatever orders and take whatever actions may be required by the Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers or by any other designated representative of the Allied Powers for the purpose of giving effect to that Declaration.”

The IMTFE was established by the Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers in the Far East, acting under the authority of the Allied Powers. Thus, Japan accepted and submitted to the Tribunal’s jurisdiction.

The Tribunal recognized three core categories of crimes: crimes against peace, conventional war crimes, and crimes against humanity. In fact, under the Hague Conventions of 1899 and 1907, the Kellogg-Briand Pact of 1928, and the two Geneva Conventions of 1929, the launching of aggressive war, atrocities against civilians, and the mistreatment of prisoners of war were already unequivocal violations of international law, subject to legal sanctions.

It is particularly worth noting that Japan was a contracting party to the Kellogg-Briand Pact, which explicitly renounced war as an instrument of national policy.

Moreover, the Tribunal did not rush to judgment. It spent 31 months holding 818 court sessions, hearing 419 witnesses in person and admitting written testimony from another 779, receiving 4,336 exhibits, and ultimately producing 48,412 pages of trial transcripts.

At the same time, the Tribunal guaranteed the defendants’ full right to defense, providing each with both Japanese and American defense counsel. The Trials can withstand any scrutiny on procedural fairness.

SPECTER OF MILITARISM DESPERATE TO OBLITERATE ITS CRIMES

Today, the outcomes of the Tokyo Trials are being eroded. Japanese right-wing elements are repudiating the verdicts and seeking to re-militarize the country.

Right-wing forces in Japan have been persistently trying to distort and reconstruct the nation’s historical memory. Through the continuous revision of history textbooks and the reshaping of cultural narratives, the authorities have glorified – and even rewritten – the history of Japanese

aggression, misleading the Japanese public, especially younger generations, about the past. They have even systematically sought to erase the memory of Japan’s war crimes from society.

The site of the IMTFE has been rearranged: At the entrance to the exhibition area, racks are stocked with pamphlets for Japan’s Self-Defense Forces, and in the very center of what was originally the judges’ bench, an imperial throne has been placed.

Meanwhile, the memorial tablets of Hideki Tojo and 13 other Class-A war criminals are enshrined at Yasukuni Shrine in central Tokyo. Japanese Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi recently sent ritual offerings in the name of the prime minister, while a cabinet minister and a cross-party group of 126 Japanese lawmakers paid personal visits to the shrine.

Yasukuni is a spiritual tool and symbol of the wars of aggression launched by Japanese militarism. This “ghost worship” by Japanese politicians exposes their persistent refusal to acknowledge the history of aggression and their ambition to overturn the verdicts on their war crimes.

It is hard to imagine a church being built in central Berlin to worship Adolf Hitler, Heinrich Himmler, and the convicted criminals of the Nuremberg Trials. Would the Western public ever allow such a thing to happen?

Most alarming is Japan’s accelerating re-militarization. Under the banner of becoming a “normal country,” Japan has in recent years consistently breached its exclusively defense-oriented policy: swelling military spending dramatically, deploying medium- and long-range offensive missiles, easing restrictions on arms exports, pushing for revision of the pacifist Constitution, and floating the idea of abandoning the Three Non-Nuclear Principles.

Neo-militarism in Japan, masquerading under the rhetoric of “national security” and “responding to threats,” is baring its fangs in an ever more deceptive guise.

REMEMBERING HISTORY

History is the best textbook, and the trends in Japan’s right warrant the vigilance of all peoples around the world.

In November 2025, Takaichi characterized a so-called “Taiwan contingency” as a “survival-threatening situation” for Japan that could justify invoking the so-called “right of collective self-defense” – a flagrant intervention in China’s internal affairs. The world has not forgotten that Japanese militarists had used that very pretext to invade China and other Asian nations.

Eighty years have passed since the Tokyo Trials, but the historical legacy they left behind deserves to be cherished all the more. Remembering history is not about teaching hatred; it is about warning people today not to overreach themselves, not to repeat past mistakes, and to safeguard the hard-won peace we now enjoy.

To retrace the old evil path is to court self-destruction. Such a course would once again bring Japan before the courts of justice.

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The views expressed in this article are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the positions of Xinhua News Agency.

UN Day of Vesak promotes Buddhist wisdom to address global challenges

Analysis

NANJING – Delegates participating in the 21st Conference of the United Nations Day of Vesak*, held from May 25 to 28 in the eastern city Wuxi, called for Buddhist wisdom and compassion to help confront mounting global challenges.

Observed by Buddhists worldwide, Vesak commemorates the birth, enlightenment and passing of the Buddha. The World Fellowship of Buddhists formally endorsed the celebration in 1950, while the United Nations General Assembly granted it international recognition in 1999.

Organized by the International Council for the Day of Vesak, this year’s conference marked the first time China has hosted this global Buddhist gathering.

The event has gathered around 1,000 Buddhist leaders, scholars and delegates from 67 countries and regions under the theme of “Buddhist Wisdom in Promoting Global Sustainable Development and Building a Shared Future for Humanity.”

During thematic sessions held as part of the conference, participants explored how Buddhist teachings and philosophy can contribute to global sustainability, shared development and the building of a community with a shared future for humanity.

Discussions centered on a range of topics, including the role of Buddhist wisdom in promoting human well-being, Buddhism’s contribution to common prosperity, Buddhist perspectives on ecological protection and green development, and how Buddhist thought could help foster lasting global peace and cooperation.

Panchen Erdeni Chos-kyi rGyal-po, vice president of the Buddhist Association of China, said the world is undergoing profound and accelerating transformations with global challenges such as regional conflicts, extreme divergences and climate change, adding that Buddhists should respond to the challenges with compassion, wisdom and the spirit of the Middle Way.

“From interdependent coexistence to compassion and altruism, from inner purification to global cooperation, Buddhism is not only a guiding light for

addressing global challenges, but also a vital bridge linking Buddhist communities across cultures as well as advancing sustainable development and world peace,” said T. Dhammaratana, vice president of the International Council for the Day of Vesak.

Venerable monks and scholars attending the conference said Buddhism’s contribution to shared prosperity extends beyond economic growth, highlighting a broader transformation from personal awakening to global coexistence.

They also argued that lasting peace requires not only institutional frameworks, but inner spiritual transformation, a dimension they described as Buddhism’s distinctive contribution to contemporary global peace-building.

Phra Brahmaphundit, president of the International Council for the Day of Vesak, described the conference as a “milestone” event for China and expressed hope that the Vesak platform would continue fostering dialogue, mutual learning among civilizations and collective efforts toward a more peaceful, just and sustainable future.

The conference adopted the Wuxi Declaration of the 21st United Nations Day of Vesak, which called for strengthening the foundations of lasting peace, practicing selflessness and altruism, promoting harmony between humanity and nature, and advancing the vision of a shared future for humanity.

**Vesak is the most sacred festival in Buddhism. Linguistically, the word itself is the Sinhalese form of the Pali term Vesākha (or the Sanskrit Vaiśākha), which is simply the name of the lunar month that typically falls in April or May. Beyond its literal calendar meaning, Vesak carries immense spiritual significance. In the Theravada tradition, it commemorates a rare “triple anniversary”—three pivotal events in the life of Siddhartha Gautama (the Buddha) that are traditionally believed to have occurred on the exact same full Moon day: His Birth in Lumbini (modern-day Nepal). His Enlightenment (Nirvana) under the Bodhi tree in Bodh Gaya. His Passing (Parinirvana) in Kushinagar at the age of 80. – Gemini*



Zhang Rong, a young entrepreneur, prepares coffee for customers in a cat-themed souvenir store in Huanlou Village, Huzhou City, Zhejiang Province, yesterday. Taking the youth entrepreneurship platform as a core link, Huanlou has developed a variety of cultural and tourism scenarios including tea culture experience spaces, outdoor camps, local specialty catering outlets, and parent-child interaction programs in recent years. Local authorities have rolled out targeted support packages for young entrepreneurs settling in the village, such as providing free design solutions for their business premises, and offering preferential policies and funding support such as rent reduction and exemption, to build a distinctive cultural and tourism consumption destination. – Xinhua

Vice Premier He calls on China, Germany to tap cooperation potential in emerging fields

BEIJING – Vice Premier He Lifeng has called on China and Germany to further consolidate the foundation of traditional cooperation and tap the potential for cooperation in emerging fields.

He, also a member of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of China Central Committee, made the remarks while meeting with Germany's economy and energy minister Katherina Reiche and German business representatives in Beijing yesterday.

The two sides exchanged views on deepening China-Germany economic and trade cooperation.

He said China and Germany are important economic and trade

partners to each other, and bilateral economic and trade cooperation has a solid foundation with enormous potential and strong complementarity. The vice premier expressed the hope that both sides will promote the sustained and healthy development of bilateral economic and trade relations through high-level cooperation.

Noting that Germany is a reliable economic and trade partner for China, Reiche said the German economic community is confident about China's economic prospects and innovation capabilities, and will continue to deepen cooperation with the country.

– AFP



Vice Premier He Lifeng (right), also a member of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Committee, shakes hands with Germany's economy and energy minister Katherina Reiche in Beijing yesterday. He met with Reiche and German business representatives in Beijing yesterday. – Xinhua

Military spokesperson condemns Dutch warship's provocative acts in S China Sea

BEIJING – A Chinese military spokesperson yesterday condemned the provocative acts by a Dutch Navy vessel, urging the Dutch side to immediately stop its violations and provocations.

Zhai Shichen, spokesperson for the Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA) Southern Theater Command, said that the vessel, Dutch Navy frigate De Ruyter, illegally trespassed into China's Xisha Qundao in the South China Sea and conducted multiple shipborne helicopter operations violating China's territorial airspace.

In response, the PLA Southern Theater Command organized maritime and air forces to take necessary measures in accordance with laws and regulations to expel and drive away the trespassing vessel, according to Zhai.

The actions by the Dutch side have seriously violated China's territorial sovereignty and maritime and air security, gravely breached international law and basic norms of international relations, severely undermined peace and stability in the South China Sea, and could easily lead to miscalculations and misjudgments, Zhai said in a statement.

"China firmly opposes such acts," the spokesperson said, urging the Dutch side to immediately stop its infringements and provocations.

Troops of the PLA Southern Theater Command remain on high alert and are resolute in their duty to safeguard national sovereignty, security and regional peace and stability, Zhai added.

– Xinhua

Li Qiang stresses efforts to build distribution hubs for bulk commodities



Premier Li Qiang (front, left), also a member of the Standing Committee of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Committee, inspects the Jintang undersea tunnel of Ningbo-Zhoushan high-speed railway in Ningbo, Zhejiang Province, on Tuesday, made inspection trips to Zhoushan and Ningbo in Zhejiang between Monday and yesterday. – Xinhua

NINGBO – Premier Li Qiang has called for efforts to accelerate the building of hubs for the distribution of bulk commodities and important materials to ensure both development and security.

Li, also a member of the Standing Committee of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of China Central Committee, made the remarks during trips to Zhoushan and Ningbo in Zhejiang Province between Monday and yesterday. He emphasized the importance of doing a good job in regulating the reserves of bulk commodities and important materials, strengthening the functions of strategic guarantee, macro-control and responding to urgent needs, and improving the resilience of industrial and supply chains.

In Zhoushan, Li heard officials' reports on work related to petroleum

and grain reserves, inspected reserve facilities, and inquired about the construction and operation of related projects.

Li said that building good reserves of bulk commodities and important materials is of great significance for the stability of the economy and society, as he urged efforts to push forward the construction of multiple types of reserve facilities and expand the reserve capacity.

He also called for technological innovation in reserve work and management to enhance the level of intelligence, and deepening the reform of systems and mechanisms to promote the coordinated operation of strategic reserves and commercial reserves.

In Ningbo, Li inspected the construction and planning of the transportation and logistics system

in Zhejiang Province and inquired about the transportation and processing of bulk commodities.

He also called for efforts to strengthen the construction of port infrastructure, develop multimodal transport, promote the linkage of seaports, land ports, airports and digital trade ports, accelerate digital and intelligent transformation and upgrading, and explore unmanned and intelligent transportation of goods on specific routes during specific periods.

He said it is also necessary to optimize maritime services, improve the throughput capacity and operational efficiency, develop port-related industries, and foster and strengthen industrial chains, so as to build the Ningbo-Zhoushan Port into a globally leading port.

– Xinhua

State Council sets up team to investigate Shanxi coal mine explosion

BEIJING – The State Council has established an investigation team to probe a deadly coal mine blast in the northern Shanxi Province, authorities said yesterday.

The gas explosion hit the Liushenyu coal mine in Shanxi at 7:29 p.m. on May 22, resulting in heavy casualties.

The investigation team, which is led by the Ministry of Emergency Management, includes participants

from the Ministry of Public Security, the Ministry of Natural Resources, the All-China Federation of Trade Unions, the National Energy Administration, the National Mine Safety Administration, and the People's Government of Shanxi Province.

The meeting emphasized that the investigation team must conduct a rigorous and thorough investigation to identify the causes of the accident, as well as the responsibilities of local

authorities, industry regulators, and the enterprise.

It called for strict punishment in accordance with the relevant laws and regulations.

Meanwhile, the meeting required drawing profound lessons, implementing comprehensive measures to inspect and overhaul safety risks and hidden dangers, and resolutely preventing and mitigating major and serious accidents.

– Xinhua

NPC vice chairman meets EP delegation

BEIJING – Li Hongzhong, vice chairman of the National People's Congress (NPC) Standing Committee, met with the European Parliament's (EP) delegation for relations with China led by chair Engin Eroglu in Beijing yesterday.

Li, also a member of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of

China Central Committee, said that China is willing to work with the European Union (EU) to strengthen communication, enhance mutual trust, deepen cooperation, and pursue mutual benefit and win-win outcomes.

He said China stands ready to join hands with the EU to address global challenges, promote

exchanges and cooperation among legislative bodies, effectively utilize communication mechanisms, and advance the sound and stable development of China-EU relations.

Eroglu said the EU stands ready to work with China to contribute to the development of EU-China relations.

– Xinhua

Thai cop says viral image of policemen in dresses is fake



This handout photo taken on May 21 and released by the Tha Luang provincial police station on Tuesday, shows police officers posing for a group photo with a suspect at a police station in Lopburi province, before the image was altered by AI and shared on their Facebook page. — AFP

BANGKOK — A viral image of Thai policemen wearing colourful, sparkly dresses for a drug-smuggling raid was generated with AI, the police officer responsible said.

The picture of six officers flanking a suspect became a viral sensation from Southeast Asia to the Americas.

Major media outlets reported it as a genuine police sting operation in Thailand — but the officer who originally posted it told AFP the picture was AI-generated.

AFP's fact check department sourced the image to the Facebook page of Tha Luang Provincial Police Station in Lopburi province after

finding a “very high” likelihood that it was made using AI.

Police sergeant Rachata Mitsuripong, the Facebook page's administrator, said he was responsible for it.

“I wanted to create a friendlier image of the police — showing a cute and humorous side — so that people would feel more comfortable approaching officers,” he told AFP on Tuesday.

“Sometimes the public feels intimidated by the police,” he said.

Rachata said the arrest details in the post were genuine, and provided AFP with the original image, which had only five male officers in ordinary clothes around the suspect.

Another officer at the police

station confirmed to AFP that Rachata manages its Facebook page, but added he was unaware the AI-generated image had spread internationally.

The image went viral after it was reposted by a local media outlet.

It is not the first time police purportedly carrying out sting operations in extravagant outfits have taken the internet by storm.

During Lunar New Year celebrations in February, Thai police donned a red-and-gold lion costume to arrest a burglary suspect.

A Peruvian police officer last year dressed as a capybara and pretended to take Valentine's Day gifts to a drug dealer before rushing into his house and arresting him. — AFP

Cambodia jails 6 Chinese for S Korean student's murder

PHNOM PENH — A Cambodian court sentenced six Chinese men, reportedly from a scam-linked crime ring, to life in prison yesterday for the murder of a South Korean student last year.

The torture and killing of the college student in Cambodia sparked a public outcry in South Korea, which dispatched a task force to the Southeast Asian nation in an effort to jointly tackle transnational cyberscam networks.

The multibillion-dollar scam industry ballooned in Cambodia in recent years, with thousands of foreign nationals involved in romance and cryptocurrency investment cons — some willingly and others coerced by organised criminal

groups, according to experts.

The court in Kampot province sentenced the six Chinese men, who ranged in age from 30 to 54, to life imprisonment on charges of murder, cruel acts and fraud via an organised group, according to a court statement.

The six were in Cambodian custody, Information Minister Neth Pheaktra said.

The South Korean student, reportedly kidnapped and tortured by a criminal gang, was found dead in a pickup truck on August 8.

An autopsy revealed he “died as a result of severe torture, with multiple bruises and injuries across his body”, a court statement said.

Many South Korean victims of such crimes in Cambodia have

been lured by fraudulent job offers promising high pay, Seoul has said.

In October, South Korea banned its nationals from travelling to parts of Cambodia, including the Bokor Mountain area of Kampot, after South Korea was shaken by the student's killing in Bokor city.

About 1,000 South Koreans were estimated to be working in Cambodian scam operations, targeting potential victims in South Korea, Seoul said that month.

Dozens of South Koreans who had been detained in Cambodia for their alleged links to “pig butchering” scams — so called for the method of building trust with victims over time before stealing funds — were repatriated at the time. — AFP

Church launches truth commission for Philippine drug war killings

MANILA — The Philippine Catholic Church and civil society groups launched yesterday a fact-finding truth commission to create what they said would be a “credible public record” of ex-president Rodrigo Duterte's deadly drug war.

The initiative was launched hours before the International Criminal Court (ICC) announced a November 30 trial start for Duterte, who was arrested last year and turned over to the tribunal over alleged crimes against humanity.

Headed by a former ICC judge and backed by the influential Catholic church, the Philippine Truth and Reconciliation Commission seeks “to establish a credible public record of extrajudicial killings and related abuses tied to the government's drug war”, it said in a statement.

The five-member body is expected to start public hearings in late July, with a focus on “documenting survivor testimonies, recommending accountability measures, and identifying institutional reforms to prevent future violence”, it added.

“Our goal is to hear the victims tell their story. Our goal is to establish the truth,” chairman Raul Pangalangan told a news conference.

For their experiences to be recorded by history, “the victims should have an active part” in the search for justice, added the former ICC judge.

Rights group say up to 30,000 people were killed in the crackdown during Duterte's 2016-2022 presidency, many of them low-level drug peddlers as well as users.

Philippine police have acknowledged shooting dead more than 6,000 suspects in self-defence.

Few officers have been prosecuted in Philippine courts over the killings, who included children and minors.

Duterte faces three counts of crimes against humanity, with ICC prosecutors alleging his involvement in at least 76 murders between 2013 and 2018.

While the Philippine government did not take part in the truth commission's formation, Manila will have the option to use potential evidence turned up by the commission to prosecute suspects, the commission's adviser Cardinal Pablo David said.

The launch coincided with a nationwide manhunt for the drug war's chief enforcer, Duterte's ex-police chief Ronald Dela Rosa.

Dela Rosa, a sitting senator, narrowly escaped arrest by government agents on May 11 when he sought sanctuary at the Senate building and later escaped to an unknown location.

The truth commission's other members are forensic pathologist Raquel Fortun, Catholic priest and university president Danny Pilario, trauma expert Al Fuentes, and former Human Rights Watch researcher Carlos Conde. — AFP

Duterte's ICC trial to start Nov 30: judge

Richard Carter

THE HAGUE — Former Philippines president Rodrigo Duterte will face a crimes against humanity trial at the International Criminal Court from November 30, the presiding judge said yesterday.

Duterte faces three counts of crimes against humanity, with prosecutors alleging his involvement in at least 76 murders between 2013 and 2018 during his so-called “war on drugs”.

The 81-year-old will be the first Asian former head of state to face trial at the ICC, which prosecutes individuals for the world's worst crimes such as war crimes and crimes against humanity.

Prosecutors had sought the November 30 start and they expect to call between 60 and 70 witnesses during the trial.

“I am prepared to accede to the prosecution's request” said presiding judge Joanna Korner. She did however order a further assessment of Duterte's fitness to stand trial before proceedings begin.

The defence, led by British barrister Peter Haynes after a reshuffle, had urged judges not to set a date for trial, arguing that Duterte's health needed to be assessed.

“It would be inappropriate to attempt to set a date... the defence position is that a commencement is contingent upon a determination...

of Duterte's fitness to stand trial,” the defence said.

Duterte was cleared fit for an earlier hearing that confirmed the charges against him, but he did not appear in person, his defence team saying he was not mentally sharp enough to follow proceedings.

“His condition continues to deteriorate and will need more fully to be reviewed before any trial may commence,” argued the defence.

It is unlikely Duterte will ever appear at the court based in The Hague. Judges have granted him leave of absence at every hearing so far.

The only time he has been seen since his arrest was an initial appearance via video, where he seemed confused and tired, his speech barely audible.

‘Death squad’

During February “confirmation of charges” hearings, the prosecution alleged Duterte killed thousands of suspected drug pushers and users, first as mayor of Davao City, then as president.

“Decades of murdering his own people, murdering the children of the Philippines, and he claims that he did it all for his country. He doesn't deny it,” said Julian Nicholls, summing up for the prosecution after the hearings.

“He ran a death squad in Davao

(City) that he created. He ran it for over 20 years before he became president. His promise was to kill thousands and he did.”

The true number of killings during his campaign in the Philippines is thought to be in the thousands, and lawyers for the victims have argued that a full trial could encourage more families to come forward.

The case comes with the ICC facing intense political pressure, including two rounds of US sanctions imposed since June 2025.

The Philippines left the ICC in 2019, on Duterte's instructions, but the court has ruled that it still has jurisdiction over alleged crimes committed there between 2011 and 2019.

Duterte “absolutely” maintains his innocence, his former defence lawyer Nicolas Kaufman told the court in February.

Kaufman told ICC judges the evidence against Duterte was “wholly insufficient” and the charges “grievously misplaced and politically motivated”.

He argued that while Duterte used “bluster and hyperbole” in his speeches, he also frequently ordered authorities only to shoot in self-defence.

Duterte remains popular in the Philippines, where many favoured his tough approach to crime. — AFP



Philippines' President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. (left) and first lady Liza Araneta Marcos (second left) are greeted by Japanese Emperor Naruhito (right) and Empress Masako at the entrance of the Imperial Palace in Tokyo before their state banquet yesterday. — AFP

'Trump' buffalo spared sacrifice, sent to Bangladesh zoo

Sheikh Sabiha Alam

DHAKA – A buffalo in Bangladesh nicknamed “Donald Trump” for its flowing blond hair has been spared from sacrifice after shooting to fame, and will instead be cared for at the national zoo.

Muslim-majority Bangladesh, a South Asian nation of 170 million people, celebrates Eid al-Adha, the “feast of the sacrifice”, today.

The 700-kilogramme bull, a rare albino buffalo with a flowing helmet of light hair resembling the signature look of the US president, was due to be slaughtered to mark the day.

But hours before it faced the knife, the government stepped in to save the animal, which has become an online sensation.

Curator of the National Zoo, Atiqur Rahman, said the animal would be well looked after.

“We have designated a shed for the albino buffalo and assigned a caregiver,” Rahman told AFP yesterday. “He will be quarantined for two weeks.”

Crowds in Bangladesh had flocked to snap photographs with

the unlikely social media star.

Zia Uddin Mridha, 38, the buffalo’s former owner, said his brother had named it “Trump” because of its “extraordinary hair”.

Mridha said a constant stream of curious visitors – social media fans, onlookers and children – came eager to see the animal.

However, he sold the bull ahead of Eid al-Adha.

But police swooped after the government ordered that the buffalo be spared.

“The livestock department requested us to take the buffalo from the owner as it is a rare animal,” Mohammad Ruhul Quddus, officer-in-charge of Dhaka’s Keraniganj Police Station, where the buffalo was taken, told AFP.

“They said that the albino buffalo is still very young, and can be raised for a few years.”

More than 12 million livestock including goats, sheep, cows and buffaloes are expected to be sacrificed during the holiday, when many poorer families get a rare chance to feast on meat. – AFP



This photograph taken on May 17 shows a caretaker attending an albino buffalo nicknamed “Donald Trump” for sale ahead of Eid al-Adha at a livestock farm in Narayanganj.

– AFP

Bangladesh probes hospital deaths of 6 newborns

DHAKA – At least six newborn babies died in the same hospital ward in Bangladesh within hours of each other yesterday, said health officials, who launched an investigation.

The newborns, aged between one and three days, were in the post-delivery ward of Ad-Din Hospital, a private facility in the capital Dhaka.

“An investigation is underway, and we need some time to determine the cause of the deaths of the newborns,” Nahida Yasmin, a director at the hospital, told reporters.

Prabhat Chandra Biswas, head of the government’s health department, noted that air conditioning in the ward was not working in the early hours of yesterday, as temperatures in Dhaka were around 32C.

“There is no alternative ventilation once the air conditioner is turned off,” he told reporters, saying the atmosphere inside was suffocating.

One baby fell sick and was taken to an intensive care unit, but was returned to the ward an hour later.

Around dawn, five other babies were feeling unwell. “All were

put on ventilators but could not be saved,” Yasmin said.

Health department spokesman Zahid Raihan said initial information did not suggest any mistreatment as the cause of the deaths.

“The Criminal Investigation Department is... testing whether there were any technical faults in the air conditioner or any electrical equipment,” he said.

Janu, a 55-year-old woman whose granddaughter was among the six dead, sat at the entrance of the hospital holding a tiny body wrapped in a shroud.

“My granddaughter was perfectly okay until last night,” she told AFP.

The babies “turned blue one after another... We took her to the ICU and later received her body,” Janu said.

Others families at the hospital appeared nervous, with some saying they were considering transferring their children elsewhere.

“My grandson has been in the ICU for 19 days in a critical condition – I can’t understand what I should do,” Mohammed Harun told AFP. – AFP

Rescue divers find 5 of 7 people trapped in Laos cave alive

Beatrice Siviero

VIENTIANE – Specialist divers found five of seven people trapped for a week in a flooded cave in Laos alive yesterday, with one rescuer saying their extraction from its terminal chamber was the next challenge.

The seven Laotians entered the cave in central Xaysomboun province, northeast of the capital Vientiane, on May 20, according to state media.

They were searching for gold but got trapped inside the cave after heavy rain triggered flash flooding, blocking their exit, it said.

Five men with their clothes, hands and faces covered in mud huddled in a tight passage of the cave, while two rescuers in dive gear and standing in stomach-deep water filmed them, a video posted by Thai rescuer Chakkit Taengtan showed.

“We found five Laotians. Everybody is safe. We’ll continue to provide help,” Thai rescue diver Norrased Palasing said in the video.

Finnish diver Mikko Paasi, also seen in the cave footage, said he and Norrased needed to “dive straight back” and bring the men more supplies to gain strength and prepare to exit the cave.

“This is only a brief relief as the five survivors are still in the terminal chamber, all healthy and in good spirits, but the extraction is still ahead and it ain’t going to be easy,” said Paasi in a social media post.

State-run Lao Security News said rescuers would now take food and medicine to the five survivors and continue searching for the two others who are missing.

Other Laotian and Thai rescue groups also posted saying five



This handout image released by Metta Tham Rescue Kalasin on Tuesday shows rescue workers inside a cave in Xaisomboun province.

Five of seven people trapped in a flooded cave for a week in Laos were found alive yesterday, Laotian and Thai rescuers said.

– AFP

people were found alive.

‘Racing against time’

Paasi said earlier yesterday that rescuers were “racing against time” to extract the seven from the cave, which he called an “abandoned gold mine”.

Rescuers needed to “navigate hundreds of metres of constant restrictions, flood waters, collapse hazards and high risk of contaminated air quality” inside the cave, he said in a Facebook post.

The terminal chamber, where the five were found, was around 300 metres from the exit, he said.

The seven had entered the cave “with resources to stay sub-terrain for several days”, the diver added.

Norrased and Paasi, who arrived at the Laos cave on Monday, were among the rescuers who aided the dramatic 2018 retrieval of a youth football team from a flooded cave in neighbouring Thailand.

Hundreds flee India migrant crackdown towards Bangladesh

NEW DELHI – Hundreds of people in India’s border region with Bangladesh have fled to the frontier, police said yesterday, after the government ordered the construction of detention centres for undocumented Bangladeshi migrants and Rohingya refugees.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s Hindu-nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) swept to power in West Bengal state in early May with a hardline policy to “detect, delete and deport” illegal migrants.

India’s right-wing have long argued that illegal migration is a national security threat, and warned of changing demography in India’s border states.

West Bengal government’s last week ordered the setting up of “holding centres” for “apprehended foreigners”, singling out both Bangladeshis and Rohingya.

The decision has fuelled anxiety among West Bengal’s roughly 35 million Muslims, many of whom share linguistic and cultural ties with neighbouring Bangladesh.

Indian police officer Shirshendu Pati, from the Swarupnagar Police Station about 10 kilometres from

the Bangladesh border, said streams of people had arrived since Tuesday.

“People who say they are from Bangladesh and want to return home have been coming here since yesterday (Tuesday),” Pati told AFP.

‘Holding centre’

Pati said that the process had “been peaceful and smooth so far”, and they received about 200 people on Tuesday and 40 people early yesterday.

“While we verify their identities and complete the necessary paperwork, all of them are in a holding centre,” he said, noting they will be handed to India’s border security force and sent to Bangladesh.

“The local administration is catering to all their needs including food, water and lodging,” Pati added.

On Tuesday, Home Minister Amit Shah announced the formation of a special committee on demographic change.

“Illegal migration and other reasons for unnatural demography change are a big challenge for any country’s present and future,” Shah said in a speech.

“Demographic change is a

serious issue linked not only to our sovereignty but also to national security, law and order (and) profound changes in social structure,” Shah added.

Top BJP members have previously referred to Bangladeshi migrants as “termites” and “infiltrators”.

Critics say BJP’s rhetoric and policies have added to the unease and marginalisation of India’s estimated 200 million Muslims, accusing the party of conflating religious identity with illegal migration.

The West Bengal centres have drawn particular concern because of the state’s porous border with Bangladesh and its long history of migration.

Relations between India and Muslim-majority Bangladesh soured after a 2024 revolution in Dhaka ended the autocratic rule of then-prime minister Sheikh Hasina, an ally of New Delhi who subsequently fled to India.

The detention order’s apparent inclusion of Rohingya refugees – a mainly Muslim group who fled Myanmar during a brutal military crackdown in 2017 – has also drawn criticism. – AFP

Possible Iran-US deal: What we know

TEHRAN – Iran and the United States appeared to be cautiously edging toward a deal to end the war that erupted in late February, despite deep mistrust and a brief military flare-up this week.

Diplomatic exchanges continued even after Tehran accused Washington of violating the ceasefire in place since April, after the US said it launched strikes in southern Iran targeting missile sites and mine-laying boats.

Yesterday, Iranian state television published what it described as a draft outline of a potential memorandum of understanding between the two sides, while stressing that the text was “still not finalised”.

Washington swiftly rejected the report as a “complete fabrication”.

Here are the latest reported details surrounding a possible agreement.



US President Donald Trump (sixth from left) speaks during a Cabinet meeting in the Cabinet Room of the White House yesterday in Washington, DC. Trump meets with his Cabinet days after saying a peace deal with Iran was “largely negotiated” amid expectations about the re-opening the Strait of Hormuz. – AFP

Frozen assets

Iran has said it is finalising a 14-point framework agreement with the United States prioritising an end to the war “on all fronts”, including Lebanon, where Israel has stepped up its attacks on Iran-backed Hezbollah.

Iranian officials have publicly disclosed only broad outlines of the proposal, with further details emerging through Iranian media reports.

On Monday, senior Iranian negotiators travelled to Qatar for talks that state media described as part of the diplomatic process.

The Tasnim news agency reported that Tehran was seeking the release of around US\$24 billion in frozen Iranian assets abroad as part of the agreement.

Around US\$12 billion “should be made available at the start of the announcement of the memorandum”, Tasnim said.

There is no official figure for Iran’s frozen overseas assets, though Iranian media outlets have recently estimated the total at between US\$100 billion and US\$123 billion.

Hormuz and the US naval blockade

Iran has maintained tight control over the Strait of Hormuz, a vital global energy shipping route, since the outbreak of the war, while the United States has imposed a naval blockade on

Iranian ports since April 13.

Iranian foreign ministry spokesman Esmail Baqaei confirmed that the draft framework included provisions related to ending the US blockade and arrangements governing the Strait of Hormuz.

Iranian state television reported yesterday, citing the draft text, that Washington had “committed itself to lifting” the blockade.

In return, Iran would allow commercial shipping through Hormuz to resume “within one month” under conditions similar to those before the war.

The report added that Iran would continue to manage shipping lanes,

inspect vessels and impose service fees, but its commitments would not apply to military ships.

Tehran had not agreed “to unconditionally reopen the strait”, according to the report.

The White House denied the Iranian reports, adding, “nobody should believe what Iranian state media is putting out,” without specifying which details it objected to.

Nuclear programme

Baqaei said details related to Iran’s nuclear programme – a major sticking point for Washington – would be deferred to a later stage after agreement on the framework.

Iranian media reported that nuclear-related issues, including enrichment levels and the fate of Iran’s highly enriched uranium stockpile, would be negotiated during a 60-day period following the signing of the memorandum.

US President Donald Trump said in a social media post that he expected Iran to surrender its enriched uranium to the United States for destruction, or destroy it inside Iran under international supervision.

“The nuclear fuel will either be immediately turned over to the United States to be brought home and destroyed or, preferably, in conjunction and coordination with the Islamic Republic of Iran, destroyed in place or at another acceptable location,” Trump wrote.

Guarantees

One of Tehran’s key demands has been guarantees that Washington would honour any agreement, particularly after the United States withdrew from the 2015 nuclear deal during Trump’s first term in office.

Under the reported draft framework, Tehran and Washington would enter a 60-day negotiation period after agreeing on the memorandum, though the exact topics for discussion were not specified.

“If negotiations reach a final agreement during the 60-day period, this agreement is expected to be approved by a binding resolution of the United Nations Security Council,” the draft said.

“This is the highest level of guarantee recognised in international law,” the report added. – AFP

Israel strikes Lebanon as Hezbollah says fighters clashed with Israeli troops

BEIRUT – Israel launched broad strikes on Lebanon including near the city of Tyre yesterday, as Hezbollah said its fighters clashed with Israeli forces beyond an Israeli-declared “yellow line” in the south despite a ceasefire.

Israel this week vowed to intensify operations in Lebanon and said it was expanding ground operations there, a move that comes ahead of talks tomorrow between Lebanese and Israeli military delegations at the Pentagon and a new round of direct negotiations next week aimed at ending the hostilities.

As many Lebanese tried to celebrate the Muslim holiday of Eid al-Adha, the state-run National News Agency (NNA) reported Israeli strikes in the country’s south and in the eastern Bekaa valley, with Israel’s military saying it was hitting “Hezbollah infrastructure sites” in both regions.

Israel’s military issued an evacuation warning for the southern city of Nabatieh for a second consecutive day, and another for swathes of the coastal city of Tyre and surrounding areas.

The NNA and an AFP correspondent in Tyre later said strikes hit the city’s outskirts, as Israel’s army said it was attacking

“Hezbollah command centres” in the area.

Earlier, the correspondent reported residents from threatened areas had converged on parts of the city not covered by the evacuation warning.

Authorities, however, warned that shelters were full and urged people to head to Beirut instead.

‘Yellow line’

Iran-backed Hezbollah said its fighters “clashed with the enemy forces at point-blank range” in the town of Zawtar al-Sharqiyah, just beyond the Israeli-declared “yellow line” in south Lebanon where its troops have been operating.

Since early Tuesday, the group had said its fighters had confronted Israeli troops seeking to enter the town, strategically located just six kilometres from Nabatieh.

The Israeli troop movement comes after a military official said Tuesday that soldiers had begun operating beyond the “yellow line”, which runs around 10 kilometres deep inside Lebanese territory.

Also on Tuesday, Israel stepped up strikes on south and east Lebanon, issuing evacuation warnings for at least 50 towns and villages and killing at least 31 people.



A clown performs for children displaced by war in southern Lebanon, at a school used as a shelter in Sidon yesterday, on the first day of Eid al-Adha, the Feast of Sacrifice, which marks the end of the annual Hajj pilgrimage to Mecca and commemorates the Prophet Abraham’s willingness to sacrifice his son in obedience to God. – AFP

Lebanon’s army said that one of its soldiers was among the dead in the east.

At the site of one of the strikes in south Lebanon’s Burj al-Shemali, an AFP correspondent saw rescuers removing debris and carrying a white body bag from the rubble, which was littered with items including rugs and cushions.

The NNA, citing the mayor, said 15 people were killed there.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said on Tuesday that the army was “reinforcing the security

buffer zone in order to protect the communities of northern Israel”.

West Bekaa

After Hezbollah drew Lebanon into the Middle East war with rocket fire at Israel in retaliation for strikes that killed Iran’s supreme leader, Israel has repeatedly struck Lebanon’s eastern Bekaa valley and warned residents to evacuate.

But strikes have intensified in recent days, focusing on the West Bekaa town of Mashghara, where hundreds of displaced people had

been sheltering and which has now largely emptied.

Mayor Iskandar Barakeh told AFP that he was worried that “the West Bekaa region is becoming the scene of rear confrontations” between Israel and Hezbollah.

The area links south Lebanon with Hezbollah strongholds in the northern Bekaa and is a key supply route for the group.

Lebanese military expert Hassan Jouni told AFP that the West Bekaa “is a necessary corridor for Hezbollah members if they want to move between the Bekaa and the south” and could become the focus of further Israeli strikes.

He said Israeli operations might soon expand to “target the north Bekaa intensively or even Beirut’s southern suburbs”, both areas that have been relatively spared since the ceasefire.

A military delegation comprising six Lebanese officers, headed by the army’s director of operations Georges Rizkallah, will participate in the talks at the Pentagon tomorrow.

A military source told AFP the delegation will “emphasise the need for a ceasefire, and will present the army’s plan for a state weapons monopoly and the extension of state authority across the country”. – AFP

US missionary with Ebola 'stable' in Berlin hospital

BERLIN – An American doctor who contracted Ebola in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) has responded well to treatment and stabilised, the Berlin hospital treating him said yesterday.

Medical missionary Dr Peter Stafford was flown to Germany for treatment last week after being infected with the Bundibugyo strain of the Ebola virus during the current deadly outbreak there.

"The patient was initially very weakened and displayed typical symptoms of an Ebola infection," Dr Leif Erik Sander, the medical director of the Charité hospital's Department of Infectious Diseases, told reporters.

Stafford was treated with antibodies and an antiviral called remdesivir.

"The clinical development has been very positive," Sander said, adding that Stafford was "relatively stable".

Sander said although there are many unknowns with the Bundibugyo strain, for which there are no approved vaccines or treatments, the team treating Stafford was encouraged by the "almost normal" lab test results and how his viral load fell quickly.

"We are optimistic that the patient can make a full recovery and that

the viral infection will be beaten," Sander said.

In terms of how long Stafford will be kept in isolation, he said: "We would rather keep the isolation measures in place one day longer than one day too soon."

Stafford's wife and four children, in quarantine at the same medical facility, have no symptoms and have not tested positive, Sander said.

Germany agreed to take in Stafford for treatment following a request from the United States.

The Christian missionary organisation Serge has said that Stafford lived in the DRC with his wife Rebekah, also a doctor, and their children.

Stafford was exposed to Ebola while treating patients before the deadly outbreak was identified at a hospital in Bunia in the DRC, where he had worked since 2023, Serge said.

Speaking at the same press conference, Health Minister Nina Warken said Germany had received no other requests to take in Ebola patients.

The World Health Organisation (WHO) has recorded 10 confirmed and 223 suspected Ebola deaths in the DRC since the outbreak was declared in mid-May, with more than 1,000 additional suspected cases. – AFP

Live snakes, dead bears and brain worms: RFK Jr's wild animal antics

Malcolm Foster

WASHINGTON, DC – A viral video of US Health Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr. picking up two writhing black snakes with his bare hands has put his often bizarre adventures with animals back in the spotlight.

Kennedy is an unusual government minister, surrounded by controversy over his fringe views that edge into conspiracy theories.

He's expressed skepticism about vaccines, linking childhood immunisations to autism, and insisted that fluoride in public drinking water is unsafe.

And numerous stories have emerged about Kennedy's offbeat antics involving animals, accentuating his eccentric image.

In 2024, Kennedy acknowledged in a video that a decade earlier, he had put a dead bear cub in New York City's Central Park with a bicycle to make it look like a biking accident.

He said he had found the bear upstate after it had been hit by a car, and had put it in his vehicle to skin it, but then abandoned the plan. The case mystified authorities for years.

According to a story recounted by his daughter, Kennedy also used a chainsaw to cut off the head of a dead whale that had washed ashore in Massachusetts.

He then strapped it to the roof of the family minivan to take it home to study its skull, she said.

Similarly, in a 2026 biography, Kennedy said he cut off the penis of a road-killed raccoon to study it later.

In another case, *The New York Times* reported that a doctor found a dead parasitic worm in Kennedy's

brain after he had complained of memory loss. He said he has recovered with no lasting impact.

None of these stories seem to embarrass Kennedy, the son of Robert F. Kennedy, who was assassinated in 1968 while running for president.

"He has a relationship with animals that most of us only dream of. Nightmares are also dreams," wrote *The Washington Post* columnist Monica Hesse.

Snake-handling

In the latest animal adventure, Kennedy on Tuesday posted a video of himself on X picking up two thin black snakes by their tails from the corner of an outdoor patio.

Wearing a tie and dress shirt, he holds up the writhing snakes and smiles.

At one point, he appears to be bitten by one of the snakes, while off camera a woman's voice says, "Bobby, Bobby, please."

"Cheryl cheerleads the removal of a pair of Black Racers from Dr Oz's patio," Kennedy's caption reads, an apparent reference to his wife, actress Cheryl Hines.

Mehmet Oz is the administrator of the Centres for Medicare and Medicaid Services, a division of the health department Kennedy heads.

Black racers, common across Florida, "are non-venomous and harmless to humans as long as they are left alone," according to the National Park Service's website.

The Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission urged people to give wild animals "space," adding "snakes usually try to avoid encounters." – AFP

WHO warns of 'catastrophic collision' of Ebola, war in DR Congo

Kampala, Uganda

KAMPALA, Uganda – Conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo is complicating efforts to rein in a deadly Ebola outbreak, the World Health Organisation (WHO) chief warned yesterday, while Uganda announced it was shutting its border.

The WHO has recorded 10 confirmed and 223 suspected Ebola deaths in the DRC since the outbreak was declared in mid-May, out of more than 1,000 confirmed and suspected cases.

Its chief fears insecurity in the eastern DRC, which has been plagued for three decades by conflict involving a litany of armed groups, is making it extremely difficult to contain the outbreak.

"Eastern DRC now faces a catastrophic collision of disease and conflict with the Ebola outbreak in Ituri province outpacing the response," the UN agency's head Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said on X.

No vaccine or treatment exists for the Bundibugyo strain of Ebola, which is behind the DRC's 17th recorded outbreak of the disease.

State services in rural Ituri province, where it was first detected, have been largely absent for decades.

In Rwampara, one of the epicentres of the outbreak, AFP saw a symptomatic woman being brought to hospital on a motorbike, squeezed between her sister and the driver.

A health worker recorded a high fever and bleeding from her nose, a common symptom of Ebola, which causes a haemorrhagic fever.

He rushed to spray chlorine on the bike and driver, who wore a surgical mask but little else to protect him against a virus that



In response to the ebola virus threat, a worshipper has his temperature taken outside a mosque in Bunia, in the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, yesterday, the first day of Eid al-Adha, the Feast of Sacrifice. – AFP

spreads through bodily fluids.

With no ambulances available, "people make do with motorbikes", the health worker, Dieudonne Sezabo, told AFP.

The hospital has set up a temporary isolation centre but is still awaiting crucial equipment deliveries.

Uganda shuts border

Neighbouring Uganda, which has recorded one death confirmed to be from Ebola and six additional cases, announced it was shutting its border with the DRC with immediate effect.

It also said it was imposing a 21-day quarantine on anyone arriving from the DRC, under the supervision of the Ministry of Health and district surveillance teams.

The WHO said the case fatality rate was under 25 percent – much lower than in other recent outbreaks.

But experts suspect the virus was circulating under the radar for some time and the true extent

of the health crisis has yet to be seen.

The WHO chief lamented that clashes were "driving mass displacement, pushing exposed contacts into overcrowded camps and severing critical containment corridors".

"Frontline workers are risking everything, while attacks on health facilities make tracking cases and their contacts nearly impossible," Tedros warned.

"We cannot build community trust or isolate the sick while bombs are falling," Tedros said, urging "all warring parties to agree to an immediate ceasefire to contain this outbreak".

The United States plans to open a quarantine centre in Kenya, *The Wall Street Journal* reported on Tuesday, primarily intended for Americans who need to leave the DRC quickly and quarantine.

Kenya said it had screened some 55,000 people crossing the border from Uganda and had yet to confirm an Ebola case. – AFP

Sweden rejects proposals for fossil fuel phase-out

STOCKHOLM – Sweden's government rejected yesterday a government-appointed commission's recommendations on ways to phase out fossil fuels, which included tax hikes on petrol and diesel to meet the country's 2030 climate targets.

Prime Minister Ulf Kristersson's right-wing coalition, backed by the far-right Sweden Democrats, commissioned the expert report in 2024 to find solutions to reduce the use of fossil fuels, in particular in the road transport sector.

Sweden has set a goal of reducing CO2 emissions from transport by 70 percent by 2030 from 2010 levels, and to achieve net zero emissions by 2045.

The commission yesterday proposed an increase in the required share of biofuels or low-carbon alternatives that petrol suppliers must blend into their products.

The current levels "are too

low for Sweden to be able to meet its 2030 commitment without the ESR* trading system" of purchasing quotas abroad, the report said.

It also proposed an increase in petrol and diesel taxes to encourage consumers to shift to electric vehicles.

The proposals run counter to the policies the government has pushed since coming to power in 2022, namely cutting petrol taxes and reducing the biofuels obligation.

The report comes as Sweden is just months away from a general election on September 13.

"This commission was set up two years ago, before [US President Donald] Trump [began his second term] and before the war in Iran," Finance Minister Elisabeth Svantesson told public broadcaster SVT.

"In this situation, petrol prices are so high that it makes people's lives more difficult. It would be

a bad idea" to raise them further, she said.

The government recently lowered petrol taxes temporarily in response to the energy crisis.

The commission also proposed raising subsidies for electric cars and cutting household electricity taxes.

Several expert reports have concluded in recent years that Sweden is unlikely to be able to meet its climate targets for 2030 and 2040 because of the government's policies.

"The gradual phase-out of fossil fuels must be carried out in a safe and acceptable way, so as to maintain and strengthen the competitiveness of Sweden and its companies," the climate ministry said in a statement yesterday.

– AFP
*The term ESR trading system refers to the flexibility and trading mechanisms within the European Union's Effort Sharing Regulation (ESR). – Gemini

Sánchez keeps backing ex-PM targeted in graft probe

Alexandria Sage

ROME – Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez maintained his support yesterday for his predecessor José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero, following the release of new details of the investigation into the ex-leader for influence peddling.

The affair is part of a growing list of graft cases that have raised questions about the viability of Sánchez's minority Socialist government and contributed to a string of heavy regional election defeats.

"I think there is no sufficient reason, there is no reason to change that position," Sánchez told a news conference in Rome after a meeting with Pope Leo XIV at the Vatican.

Sánchez, who came to power in 2018 after using a vote of no-confidence to topple the corruption-mired conservative government, reiterated his respect for the presumption of innocence.

Zapatero, who governed from 2004 to 2011, was placed under official investigation last week for influence peddling and other crimes allegedly committed during the bailout of small airline Plus Ultra in 2021.

He has been summoned to testify in court next month.

The case centres on whether Zapatero used his political influence to help airline Plus Ultra secure a 53-million-euro (US\$58-billion) bailout in 2021 and whether he and his family financially benefited from it.

The investigating judge suspects Zapatero may have been part of an elaborate network involving shell companies and behind-the-scenes lobbying designed to push favourable decisions through the Socialist government's channels.

Authorities are also looking into possible commissions and financial flows connected to the case.

Zapatero, a totem of the Spanish left and ally of Sánchez, has consistently denied wrongdoing



Pope Leo XIV (left) shakes hands with Spain's Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez during a meeting at The Vatican. – AFP

or having ever received payments from Plus Ultra.

Authorities recently released new details of the investigation, including the discovery of luxury watches and jewellery of undetermined value in a safe belonging to Zapatero.

Associates of the former Socialist premier said the items were linked to family inheritances.

While other Spanish prime ministers have been called to testify in corruption cases, this is the first time in Spain's modern history that a former premier has been placed under formal investigation.

'Smear campaign'

Sánchez, a canny politician famous for coming out on top in dire situations, again rejected opposition calls to step down and call early elections over the mounting corruption scandals.

He argued Spain required "stability", and pointed to what he described as social and economic progress under his administration.

The next general election is due in 2027.

The head of the opposition conservative People's Party (PP), Alberto Núñez Feijóo, yesterday repeated his call for snap polls, saying Sánchez's government "stinks" of corruption.

Sánchez's brother, David, is scheduled to stand trial for

influence peddling.

His wife, Begoña Gómez, is under investigation in a separate corruption case.

Sánchez has dismissed the cases against his family members as baseless and part of a right-wing "smear campaign".

'Act with firmness'

His former right-hand man, ex-transport minister José Luis Ábalos, is awaiting a verdict in his own corruption trial which ended earlier this month.

Earlier yesterday police entered the Madrid headquarters of Sánchez's Spanish Workers' Socialist Party to demand documents as part of a probe into former party member Leire Díez.

She is accused by Spain's top criminal court, the National Audience, of participating in what it described as a network aimed at undermining judicial proceedings involving the party or the government.

Sánchez said his party "respects the judiciary" and "cooperates" with investigations, adding that it had previously cut ties with Díez after concerns emerged.

"Obviously, if there are irregular behaviours – new ones, I mean – we will act with the same firmness as before," he said, referring to previous internal disciplinary actions within his party. – AFP

Under US pressure, Cuba appeals for int'l help

UNITED NATIONS, New York – Cuban Foreign Minister Bruno Rodríguez Parrilla asked the international community for urgent help to prevent disaster in his country, which is under a US energy blockade, in a speech to the UN Security Council on Tuesday.

"I call on the international community to mobilise to prevent a humanitarian catastrophe that could be imposed through arms or the fuel blockade," Rodríguez said.

He added, "now should be the time for solidarity with Cuba."

US President Donald Trump has openly mused about taking over communist Cuba, saying that after the US attack in January that ousted Nicolás Maduro in Venezuela, Havana could be his next target for military action and big change.

Due in part to a US trade embargo imposed after Fidel Castro came to power in 1959, Cubans have suffered dire economic conditions for years, with shortages of food, medicine

and other basics. Nationwide power blackouts are common.

Things got worse when Trump cut off the supply of oil from Havana's ally Venezuela after the ouster of Maduro.

The Trump administration tightened the screws last week by indicting Raúl Castro over the downing of two small US-based planes in 1996, fuelling fears the United States was seeking a pretext to overthrow the government in Havana.

The day after the Castro indictment was announced, Secretary of State Marco Rubio warned Cuba that the United States was laser-focused on changing the communist system.

On Tuesday, Rodríguez called the indictment politically motivated and denied US allegations that Cuba poses a national security threat to the United States.

"It is an idea that goes against logic and common sense," he told the council. "Let Cuba live in peace."

– AFP

Lula launches new oil, gas drilling in western Amazon

MANAUS – Brazilian oil giant Petrobras announced yesterday the drilling of new wells at an oil and gas field in the Amazon rainforest for the first time in a decade, at an event attended by President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva.

Petrobras president Magda Chambriard announced 2.5 billion reais (US\$500 million) in investments to drill 22 new wells to boost production and explore for new oil at the Urucu field in the northern state of Amazonas.

The field, which has been operating for 40 years, is Brazil's largest onshore oil and natural gas field and produces about 105,000 barrels of oil a day.

"We are back to fulfill, among other things, our role of ensuring oil and gas production within the state," Chambriard said.

Lula, 80, has said that while he is against fossil fuels, the world cannot yet live without them, and argues that oil can finance the transition to clean energy.

"We are Brazilians; we love Brazil, we love Petrobras, we want to live well, we want to work well, and we want to study well – and this will only be possible if the economy is growing," said Lula.

Chambriard said the investment at Urucu would lead to a 20-percent

increase in oil and gas production, and the creation of 14,000 jobs.

Brazil is the world's ninth biggest oil producer, almost 95 percent of which comes from offshore reserves.

Natural gas from Urucu is used to generate 65 percent of the electricity consumed in Manaus and five other municipalities in the impoverished northern Amazon region.

Chambriard sought to allay fears about damage to the world's largest rainforest.

"For every trail we cut, we carry out reforestation."

Lula angered environmentalists by backing oil exploration near the mouth of the Amazon river, which began in October last year.

"Ideally, the entire Amazon region would be declared a zone free of fossil fuel exploration," said Suely Araújo, coordinator of the Climate Observatory NGO.

"However, at the very least, we must fight to ensure that no new frontiers are opened up for this purpose."

In November, Lula hosted the COP30 UN climate conference where he urged world leaders to present "roadmaps" for the transition away from fossil fuels.

However, his own government has yet to deliver its own, which it had promised to do by February. – AFP

Deforestation in Brazil's Amazon drops to lowest level since 2019

RIO DE JANEIRO – Deforestation in the Brazilian Amazon fell last year to its lowest level since 2019, according to a report published yesterday that will be seen as good news for leftist President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva.

South America's biggest country lost 985,000 hectares of native vegetation last year, down 20.6 percent from 2024, the MapBiomias monitoring network announced.

The figure is the lowest since the network began keeping records in 2019.

It notably does not include forest lost to fires, but after a record fire season in 2024, the country was relatively spared major infernos last year.

Lula, who is seeking a fourth term in October elections, has made the fight against deforestation a central tenet of his administration.

Preserving forest cover is essential to fighting climate warming as trees act as a natural carbon sink.

After four years of widespread logging under his far-right predecessor Jair Bolsonaro, Lula has pledged to eradicate illegal deforestation altogether by 2030.

The reduction in deforestation was noted across Brazil's six major ecosystems.

"We are seeing an increase in enforcement actions and sanctions (...) which have a direct correlation with the drop in deforestation in all Brazilian biomes," Marcos Rosa, MapBiomias's technical coordinator, told AFP.

5 trees felled per second

Even so, the rate of destruction remains breathtaking.

In the Amazon, the world's

largest rainforest, where deforestation slowed by 23.5 percent, five trees are still felled every second.

The hardest-hit biome last year was once again the Cerrado, a vast, biodiverse savanna south of the Amazon.

It alone accounted for more than half of the deforestation.

MapBiomias – a consortium of universities, NGOs and technology companies – said agriculture accounted for 99 percent of vegetation loss.

Lula is keen to showcase his environmental achievements ahead of the election.

Last year, he hosted the COP30 climate summit in the Amazonian city of Belem.

He has however been criticised by environmentalists for his support of a massive oil exploration project near the mouth of the Amazon River. – AFP



Brazilian President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva (right) poses with an indigenous family during a ceremony marking the handover of social housing units in Manaus, Amazonas state, northern Brazil, on Tuesday. – AFP

Football shorts

Sarri terminates Lazio contract ahead of Atalanta move

MILAN – Maurizio Sarri left Lazio yesterday after coming to an agreement to terminate his contract ahead of his expected switch to Atalanta.

“S.S. Lazio announces that a mutual agreement has been reached to terminate the contracts of Head Coach Maurizio Sarri and his coaching staff,” said Lazio in a statement.

Sarri, 67, leaves Lazio for the second time in just over two years after a disastrous season in which the Rome-based club finished ninth and lost in the Italian Cup final.

The campaign has been marked by a mass boycott of matches by supporters who want long-time owner Claudio Lotito to sell the club.

They have been crowned Italian champions twice, but the last time they won the Serie A title dates back to 2000.

Gennaro Gattuso is reported to be the favourite to replace Sarri at Lazio, his first job since stepping down as Italy coach following the Azzurri's failure to qualify for the World Cup.

Sarri is widely reported to be heading to Atalanta who are yet to dismiss their current coach Raffaele Palladino. – AFP

Dembele, Hakimi back in PSG training ahead of Champions League final

PARIS – Ousmane Dembele and Achraf Hakimi are both back in full training in a tonic for Paris Saint-Germain ahead of their Champions League final against Arsenal.

Dembele, last year's Ballon d'Or winner, returned after injuring his right calf in Ligue 1 action against Paris FC on May 17.

Hakimi sustained a right thigh injury in the thrilling semi-final win over Bayern Munich, but the duo was back, according to social media posts by the Parisian club.

Defending champions PSG take on Arsenal in Budapest on Saturday in the final of the Champions League. – AFP

Hakimi, Diaz headline Morocco's World Cup squad

RABAT – Paris Saint-Germain's Achraf Hakimi and Real Madrid star Brahim Diaz headline the Morocco squad for the World Cup unveiled Tuesday by coach Mohamed Ouahbi.

Ouahbi, who took up the Moroccan coaching role three months ago, has kept faith with the majority of the squad that took part in the African Cup of Nations.

New names include Fulham defender Issa Diop, Strasbourg midfielder Samir El Mourabet and Franco-Moroccan Ayoub Bouaddi, the Lille midfielder who opted for the North African nation over France earlier this month.

Morocco kicks off its World Cup campaign against Brazil, before taking on Scotland and Haiti in Group C. – AFP

Two-time Ballon d'Or winner Putellas leaving Barca women's team



BARCELONA – Barcelona women's star Alexia Putellas will leave the Catalan giants at the end of her contract this summer bringing a “perfect story” to a close, she said Tuesday.

“The eternal captain will close the curtain on her career as a Barca player after 14 years with the first team,” said Barcelona in a statement.

The two-time Ballon d'Or winner, 32, helped Barca claim a fourth Champions League title on Saturday as they beat Lyon in Oslo, completing a quadruple.

“I've always said that you can't defend this shirt (only) halfway, and I understand that I have given everything I have,” said Putellas in a video on Instagram.

“I said I wanted the final moment to come when I was at my best, giving everything and with 100 percent energy.

“That's it, now it's time. It has been a perfect story.”

Putellas has been linked by Spanish media with a move to London City Lionesses, who belong to Lyon owner Michele Kang, among other sides.

She played her final home match as a Barca player against Real Sociedad yesterday in Liga F.

“Fourteen seasons and more than 500 matches, with moments that will remain forever in Barca's memory and in my heart,” continued Putellas.

“I have been, and will always be, just another cule (Barca fan), like you. That's why I don't want this to be a sad moment. This is just a chapter that ends.

“But luckily, I was born a cule and I will



Barcelona's Spanish midfielder Alexia Putellas (left) fights for the ball with Lyon's US midfielder Lindsey Heaps during the UEFA Women's Champions League final between FC Barcelona and Olympique Lyonnais (OL) at the Ullevaal Stadium in Oslo, Norway on Saturday. – AFP

die a cule. So, we'll see each other again.”

The 2023 World Cup winner could claim another Ballon d'Or this year after her strong performances ensured Barca did not suffer in Aitana Bonmati's absence after she broke her leg in December.

The midfielder started her career with Espanyol before moving to Levante in 2011 and then to Barcelona in 2012.

Putellas has won the Spanish top flight on 10 occasions and the Champions League four times, playing a key role in Barca's dominance both at home and in Europe.

“(At six years old) I only saw men playing in the stadium and it would never have occurred to me that one day, in that very

same place, more than 90,000 cules would be shouting my name,” added Putellas.

“We have taken the women's team further than we ever could have imagined.

“At the beginning, being a footballer wasn't even recognised as a profession. And now I feel only the privilege of having been part of this change.”

Several members of Barca's squad are out of contract in the summer with their futures not confirmed.

Defenders Mapi Leon, Ona Batlle and Marta Torrejon are expected to leave, while Caroline Graham Hansen and Salma Paralluelo might pen new deals, along with coach Pere Romeu. – AFP



Luis Enrique's PSG eye greatness with back-to-back Champions Leagues in sight

Andy Scott

PARIS – If Paris Saint-Germain's maiden triumph last year allowed the French club to break their Champions League hoodoo, winning the title again this season would allow them to be remembered as one of Europe's all-time great teams.

Twelve months after crushing Inter Milan 5-0 in Munich to take the trophy with the biggest win in the final in European Cup history, PSG head to Budapest to face Premier League champions Arsenal.

Stopping Luis Enrique's thrilling PSG side has proven impossible for everyone over the last 18 months, from Pep Guardiola's Manchester City to Bayern Munich in their recent semi-final clash.

Arsenal tried, and failed, in last season's semis, and the Parisians are the favourites to retain their title this time.

“We understand that we are the reigning champions and we can win again,” Khvicha Kvaratskhelia said in an interview with UEFA.

“Of course this will be difficult, but we've proved once more that we can beat any team as long as we play our way and give our all on the pitch,” added the Georgian winger, surely the best player in this season's Champions League with seven goals and three assists in the knockout rounds.

When Luis Enrique, a Champions League winner with Barcelona in 2015, arrived in 2023, PSG were transitioning away from the era of splashing vast sums on superstar players.

Lionel Messi and Neymar left that same summer, ending underwhelming spells in the French capital. Kylian Mbappe departed a year later.

PSG had been completely transformed since the Qatari takeover of the club in 2011 but - one run to the final in 2020 and a semi-final in 2021 apart - they had become associated with frequent disappointment in the Champions League, and occasional humiliation.

Luis Enrique has overseen a radical change, completely altering perceptions of the club in France.

‘Keep writing history’

PSG were almost once seen as a little bit of a joke in Europe due to their enormous spending and lack of continental success.

Now they are taken very seriously and have won admirers for the breathtaking football played by an exciting young team, built with the transfer market nous of their “football advisor” Luis Campos and coached by Luis Enrique.

“He is a top-class coach with clear ideas. He is full of energy. He is exceptional and we hope he will stay for a very long time,” said Ousmane Dembele.

The France forward has been transformed from dazzling but often wasteful winger into a prolific striker.

He scored 35 times last season and won the Ballon d'Or. This season his minutes have been carefully managed amid numerous fitness scares, but he has still scored 19 goals and set up 11 more in just 24 starts.

Dembele, at 29, is the fourth-oldest player in the squad, behind only Fabian Ruiz, Lucas Hernandez (both 30) and 32-year-old captain Marquinhos.

The youthful energy all over the team allows them to play with a terrifying intensity

that has blown away most opponents.

Things might not be so easy against Arsenal but PSG have already reached three consecutive semi-finals under Luis Enrique. Before his arrival they had got to the semis three times in their history.

Getting to consecutive Champions League finals is incredibly hard, but retaining the title is almost impossible.

Zinedine Zidane's Real Madrid side that won three on the bounce from 2016-18 is the only side to have gone back-to-back in the modern Champions League era - before them you have to go back to Arrigo Sacchi's AC Milan in 1989 and 1990.

Within a French context, the country had only ever produced one Champions League winner before last season, with Marseille in 1993.

This is not a fairytale story for a club backed by the wealth of Qatar and with the fourth-highest revenue in world football last year according to the Deloitte Football Money League, behind only Real, Barcelona and Bayern.

But it shows they did the right thing in abandoning the old superstar project, even if plenty of their current squad - Dembele, Kvaratskhelia, Vitorino, Achraf Hakimi - should really be considered as superstars.

The true superstar now is the coach, and Luis Enrique can become just the fifth manager to win three European Cups after Carlo Ancelotti, Bob Paisley, Zidane and Guardiola.

“When I came to the club I said my objective was to make history,” he told UEFA.com “We want to keep writing history because we feel there are still things to be achieved.”

– AFP



Manchester United's Portuguese head coach Ruben Amorim reacts ahead of the English Premier League match against Crystal Palace at Selhurst Park in south London on November 30, 2025.

Manchester United's decision to sack head coach Amorim and his staff with 18 months left on the Portuguese's contract cost the Premier League giants £16.7 million (US\$22.5 million), according to a club financial statement published yesterday. – AFP

Swiatek, Svitolina cruise into French Open 3rd round



PARIS – Four-time champion Iga Swiatek and Elina Svitolina both eased into the French Open third round with straight-sets wins yesterday.

Swiatek, looking to regain the title she last won in 2024, saw off battling Czech youngster Sara Bejlek 6-2, 6-3 on Court Philippe Chatrier.

The third-seeded Pole will next face compatriot Magda Linette, who beat former winner Jelena Ostapenko 2-6, 6-2, 2-6, as she bids to preserve her record of having always reached the second week at Roland Garros.

“Usually, the weather is quite different here, but it doesn’t matter,” said Swiatek after spending 93 minutes on court on another boiling hot day in Paris.

“It’s going to change, I feel, in the second part of the tournament.

“So, I guess this tournament is really about: whoever will cope with both of these conditions will win.”

Swiatek is playing at a first Grand Slam tournament since linking up with Rafael Nadal’s former coach Francisco Roig.



Serbia’s Novak Djokovic celebrates his victory over France’s Valentin Royer during their singles match at the French Open tennis tournament on Court Philippe-Chatrier at the Roland-Garros Complex in Paris yesterday. – AFP

She is among the favourites for a seventh major title after impressing in a run to the Italian Open semi-finals earlier this month.

Svitolina, who beat Swiatek en route to the Rome title, beat world number 126 Kaitlin Quevedo 6-0, 6-4.

The Ukrainian seventh seed ended an eight-year wait for her fifth WTA 1000 trophy at the Italian

Open to underline her credentials as a contender in Paris.

She struggled through her first-round tie, edging out Hungary’s Anna Bondar in a deciding-set tie-break on Monday, before watching her husband Gael Monfils’ final French Open match in the night session.

But Svitolina raced out of the blocks this time, quickly taking

control against Quevedo.

The Spaniard competed better in the second set until a break in the ninth game helped Svitolina wrap up victory.

Svitolina, who reached her fourth career Slam semi-final earlier this year at the Australian Open, will next play Germany’s Tamara Korpatsch, who made a major third round for the first time at the age of 31 by beating Chinese 32nd seed Wang Xinyu.

Former Olympic champion Belinda Bencic eased into the last 32 for the third time, brushing aside Caty McNally 6-4, 6-0.

Djokovic waiting

Djokovic came from a set down in the first round against Giovanni Mpetshi Perricard to keep his latest bid for a record-breaking 25th Grand Slam title alive.

Last night he faced another home player in 74th-ranked Royer on Court Philippe Chatrier.

After opening his campaign in the night session on Sunday, the 39-year-old Djokovic had to negotiate the hottest conditions of

the day against Royer.

Djokovic won the gruelling 4 set match 3-6, 2-6, 9-7, 3-6 taking him through to the third round tomorrow.

Russian 13th seed Karen Khachanov came through a gruelling battle with Marco Trungelliti 7-6 (7/5), 5-7, 6-1, 7-6 (7/4).

He will play Dutch lucky loser Jesper de Jong, who backed up his win over Stan Wawrinka by defeating Federico Cina, for a last-16 berth tomorrow.

Two-time former finalist Casper Ruud said he felt “like a zombie” at times during his first-round five-set marathon under the blazing Parisian sun.

With the heat showing no signs of abating, the Norwegian will be hoping for a shorter match later yesterday against Serbian Hamad Medjedovic.

Kazakh world number two Elena Rybakina lost 6-3, 1-6, 10-4 Ukrainian Yuliia Starodubtseva on Court Suzanne Lenglen.

Teenage stars Mirra Andreeva, Rafael Jodar and Joao Fonseca are all also in second-round action. – AFP

Yapp named coach of British & Irish Lions women’s team



LONDON – Former Australia women’s boss Jo Yapp has been appointed head coach of the British and Irish Lions women’s team for their inaugural tour of New Zealand next year.

The 46-year-old, also a former England captain, currently acts as head of women’s pathway at England’s governing Rugby Football Union, having been in charge of Australia at last year’s World Cup.

“To lead the first-ever Lions women’s team is an incredible honour and something I’m immensely proud of,” Yapp said in a statement.

“The Lions represents the very best of our sport and this tour to New Zealand is an opportunity to create something truly special and help shape the future of women’s rugby for years to come.

“I know from experience how challenging it is to face the Black Ferns on home soil, but that

challenge is exactly what makes this tour so exciting.

“There is an enormous amount of talent across the four unions.”

John Mitchell, the head coach of an all-conquering England, was also understood to be a candidate for the Lions role following the Red Roses’ World Cup triumph on home soil in September 2025.

Lions chief executive Ben Calveley explained the decision was influenced by the desire to promote female coaches within women’s rugby union.

“Jo’s breadth of experience across the UK club game and the international women’s game in the southern hemisphere made her an outstanding candidate for this role,” Calveley said.

“Her vision for bringing together players from the four unions was hugely compelling and we are thrilled to welcome her on board.

“For a moment that represents such a step forward for the game, it was important to us that this appointment serves our desire to grow and support all aspects of the women’s game including the promotion of female coaches.”

The Lions face three Tests against New Zealand’s Black Ferns in September 2027 and will play two further games in the five-fixture programme.

England are set to provide the overwhelming majority of the touring party given the Red Roses recently completed their fifth straight Grand Slam in the Women’s Six Nations.

But such is England’s dominance many observers have questioned the decision to replicate the Lions format in the women’s game as soon as next year, given the team is meant to represent a blend of leading players from the four Home Unions - England, Scotland, Ireland and Wales. – AFP

Valgren wins Giro 17th stage, Vingegaard stays in pink

Cycling

ANDALO, Italy – Danish rider Michael Valgren won the 17th stage of the Giro d’Italia yesterday as Jonas Vingegaard continued his march to a first overall victory on the Grand Tour.

Valgren took the honours in Andalo after attacking from a small group with a kilometre remaining of the undulating 202km ride from Cassano d’Adda in which riders suffered both from punishing heat and also sudden downpours.

The 34-year-old EF Education–EasyPost rider claimed his second win of the season, with his other also coming in Italy at the Tirreno-Adriatico, celebrating with his

lucky charm Pokemon.

Valgren was part of a group which pulled away from the break on the final categorised Andalo-Lever climb.

Initially he looked to be contesting the stage honours with Einer Rubio before the pair were caught by a handful of other riders in the concluding kilometres.

“I thought I’d be beaten on the sprint so I attacked. I was really tired and I was lucky that the stage wasn’t 500 metres longer,” said Valgren.

“I’d never won a Grand Tour stage before and I’m happy that I did it in Italy where I’ve had a lot of my success.”

Valgren’s success is something of a miracle as he has come back

from a horror crash during the 2022 Route d’Occitanie when he fell into a ravine, fracturing his pelvis.

His countryman Vingegaard, who is hunting a Giro-Tour de France double this year, stays four minutes ahead of Felix Gall in the overall standings after rolling home with the peloton.

Jhonatan Narvaez won the intermediate sprint and took the points jersey from France’s Paul Magnier, who wasn’t part of the break and now trails the UAE rider by 12 points.

Vingegaard is likely to maintain his advantage at the top of the general classification today when the peloton takes on a hilly 171km ride between Fai delle Paganella and Piege di Soligo. – AFP

Former heavyweight champion Fury announces August return in Dublin



Britain’s Tyson Fury (left) throws a jab against Russia’s Arslanbek Makhmudov during their heavyweight ‘Clash of the Giants’ contest at the Tottenham Hotspur stadium in London on April 11. – AFP

Boxing

LONDON – Tyson Fury has said he plans to return to the ring in Dublin on August 1 – one week after fellow former world heavyweight champion Anthony Joshua makes his comeback.

The pair are heading for a long-awaited ‘Battle of Britain’, probably in November, although it appears that both boxers will first have a warm-up fight.

Joshua will face unheralded Albanian Kristian Prenga in Riyadh on July 25 in his first bout since being involved in a car crash in Nigeria in December which killed two of his close friends.

Fury posted a video in an Instagram story showing him back in training in Thailand alongside the caption: “Let’s go August 1, Dublin, Ireland.”

Fury could take a place on a card

being put together by veteran promoter Frank Warren in the Republic of Ireland capital on that date.

No opponent has yet been named, although Warren has ruled out Fury fighting Andy Ruiz Jr, who dethroned Joshua as world champion in 2019 before losing the rematch later that year.

Fury marked his return from a 16-month retirement with a dominant points win over Russia’s Arslanbek Makhmudov in April, after which he immediately called out Joshua, who was present at ringside.

Rather than face-off at the Tottenham Hotspur Stadium, a verbal exchange followed in which Joshua taunted Fury by declaring: “I’m the landlord, remember that. You work for me.”

Joshua’s promoter Eddie Hearn has since stated: “Signed, sealed, delivered! AJ v Fury is on.” – AFP

Kanye West to play Istanbul show Saturday

ISTANBUL – US rapper Kanye West, whose concerts have been banned in several European venues over controversial antisemitic remarks, will appear in Istanbul this Saturday, organisers said.

The 48-year-old, also known as “Ye”, has sparked widespread anger over remarks glorifying Nazi leader Adolf Hitler and for antisemitic rants which he has blamed on having bipolar disorder.

US rapper Travis Scott is also expected to play at Saturday’s event at Istanbul’s Ataturk Olympic stadium, organiser Erdem Karahan of ILS Vision told Anadolu state news agency on Tuesday.

Around 120,000 fans are expected to attend the festival-style event, with the city laying on 100 free buses to get people home, CNN Turk reported.

West’s extreme statements and actions – last year he released a song called “Heil Hitler” with swastika T-shirts advertised on his website – caused a backlash against his planned European tour.

In April, the British government banned him from entering the country to headline a festival, forcing organisers to cancel the event.

A week later, he postponed a concert in Marseille following reports France’s interior minister was seeking to block the performance.

A Polish stadium cancelled a West concert scheduled for June 19, with the culture minister saying Poland wanted to bar him over his “promotion of Nazism”.

Later, Swiss football club FC Basel told AFP they had turned down an approach about hosting a West concert.

In January, West took out an advert in The Wall Street Journal to defend himself, saying: “I am not a Nazi or an antisemite” and “I love Jewish people”.

He attributed his behaviour to a “manic episode” brought on by bipolar disorder.

He is to perform in the Netherlands on June 6 and 8, in the Albanian capital Tirana on July 11, and in Prague on July 25. – AFP

Iñárritu joins Mexico’s intellectual elite



Mexican filmmaker Alejandro González Iñárritu delivers a speech during a ceremony marking his admission to the Colegio Nacional in Mexico City on Tuesday. Iñárritu became the first filmmaker to be inducted into the prestigious National College, which brings together the country’s intellectual elite. – AFP

MEXICO CITY – Oscar-winning director Alejandro González Iñárritu became the first filmmaker on Tuesday to join Mexico’s prestigious Colegio Nacional, which brings together the country’s intellectual elite.

The 62-year-old filmmaker, who has won five Academy Awards, directed hits including “The Revenant”, starring Leonardo DiCaprio, and “Birdman”.

The Colegio Nacional has

brought together more than a hundred intellectuals since it was founded in 1943, from writers to scientists, including several Nobel Prize winners.

“In choosing me, beyond the recognition of my personal work, you have also recognized a craft and a tradition,” Iñárritu said during his inaugural lecture.

“Mexico is a visual force because our culture has always used imagery as a way of explaining the world,” he added. – AFP

Madrid pumps up the volume on Latin music



Puerto Rican singer Bad Bunny performs onstage during the Apple Music Super Bowl LX Halftime Show at Levi’s Stadium in Santa Clara, California, on February 8, 2026. Bad Bunny kicks off 10 series of ten concerts in Madrid this Saturday, underscoring the Spanish capital’s rapid rise as Europe’s new hub for Latin sounds. – AFP



Colombian singer Shakira performs onstage during her Las Mujeres Ya No Lloran (“Women Don’t Cry Anymore”) World Tour at the Jorge “El Mágico” Gonzalez Stadium in San Salvador on February 8, 2026. Shakira will start a 12-night residency in Madrid from September 18 at a temporary venue under construction in southern Madrid that will hold roughly 50,000 people. – AFP

Daniel Silva

MADRID – Puerto Rican superstar Bad Bunny kicks off a series of 10 concerts this Saturday in Madrid, a city with a booming Latino American population now emerging as a new hub of the Latin music industry.

It will be the most shows of the singer’s “Debí Tirar Más Fotos” (“I Should Have Taken More Photos”) tour outside of his native Puerto Rico, where he staged a 31-show residency last year.

Colombian pop superstar Shakira will follow with a 12-night residency beginning on September 18 at a temporary venue under construction in southern Madrid that will hold roughly 50,000 people.

The so-called Queen of Latin Pop has vowed to go “all-out” for the Madrid shows, the final stop on her “Women Don’t Cry Anymore” tour and her only dates in Europe.

“Right now, Madrid is an indispensable stop for any major Latin artist on tour,” Billboard’s chief content officer for Latin music, Miami-based Leila Cobo, told AFP.

“Every single Latin star of note plays Madrid.”

That was not always the case, despite the Spanish capital’s deep historical ties with Latin America.

For decades, Madrid’s music scene was better known for Spanish pop, rock and flamenco, with Latin music relegated to nightclubs outside the city centre.

But over the past two decades, Latin beats have increasingly taken the limelight.

The surge in high-profile Latin concerts reflects Madrid’s expanding role in the Latin music industry, driven in part by rising immigration from Latin America

that has reshaped the city’s audience and music market.

The number of residents in the Madrid region born in Latin America has risen from about 80,000 in 1999 to just over one million in 2024, roughly one in seven residents, according to the latest official figures.

That demographic shift has pushed Latin rhythms into the mainstream in Madrid, from reggaeton and hip-hop to pop and traditional styles, eased by a shared language, said Cobo, the author of “Decoding ‘Despacito’: An Oral History of Latin Music”. “Despacito” (“Slowly”) is a Spanish-language song recorded by Puerto Rican singer Luis Fonsi, featuring Puerto Rican rapper Daddy Yankee

‘Attracts talent’

Music by Latin artists was largely absent from Spanish radio in 2008, but by 2023 it accounted for 44 percent of all songs played on music stations, according to a Nebrija University study published last year.

Latin artists have also become dominant on streaming platforms in Spain, with reggaeton and urban acts such as Bad Bunny and Karol G regularly topping annual charts.

“Young people have grown up listening to reggaeton and Latin urban music, so it’s basically their natural soundtrack,” the study’s author, Nebrija University communications professor Lourdes Moreno Cazalla, told AFP.

“For them, it doesn’t feel like foreign music; it’s the sound of their youth.”

The genre’s rise has attracted more producers and songwriters to Madrid, and spawned new

festivals dedicated to the genre, a trend that exploded in the 2010s.

Colombian singer, songwriter and producer Mauricio Rengifo, who co-produced the 2017 hit “Despacito”, moved to Madrid in March after a decade in Los Angeles, according to Spanish daily El Pais.

“It has become the capital of Spanish-language music. Madrid is very much in fashion – it’s a place where people live well, and that attracts talent,” he said.

‘Gateway into Europe’

Most major global record labels have offices in the Spanish capital and have stepped up their focus on Latin music, particularly artist development.

Warner Music Spain has hosted multiple Latin artists at its creative hub, The Music Station, in central Madrid, since it opened in 2022.

The space has staged songwriting camps and other sessions bringing together Spanish and Latin American artists to collaborate on writing and recording.

One of the Latin music events that has emerged in Madrid is Iberoexperia, an annual concert cycle focused on Ibero-American contemporary music that has been staged since 2022 and acts as a showcase for talent bookers.

This year’s lineup includes Colombian folk-protest singer La Muchacha and Venezuelan funk band Los Amigos Invisibles, which emerged from Caracas’ alternative music scene.

“Madrid is a gateway into Europe, which is a gigantic market,” the event’s director, Anamaria Rigotto, told AFP, adding that performing in Madrid can help Latin artists raise their international profile. – AFP

World Weather

CHINA	ASIA-PACIFIC	WORLD	LUSOPHONE
Beijing 16°C~30°C	Manila 25°C~35°C	New York 14°C~25°C	Lisbon 15°C~29°C
Shanghai 21°C~31°C	Bangkok 26°C~36°C	London 16°C~31°C	Rio de Janeiro 19°C~24°C
Hong Kong 24°C~31°C	Tokyo 20°C~27°C	Frankfurt 13°C~27°C	Luanda 23°C~28°C
Taipei 25°C~36°C	Singapore 25°C~32°C	Vancouver 13°C~23°C	Maputo 21°C~26°C
Guangzhou 24°C~35°C	Kuala Lumpur 25°C~35°C	Paris 17°C~32°C	Dili 21°C~30°C
Nanjing 21°C~31°C	Jakarta 25°C~33°C	Moscow 4°C~11°C	São Tomé 26°C~31°C
Guilin 23°C~35°C	Seoul 15°C~27°C	Las Vegas 15°C~27°C	Praia 21°C~31°C
Xi’an 17°C~23°C	Sydney 17°C~21°C	Monte Carlo 20°C~23°C	Bissau 26°C~34°C



Cooling 99

A man holds an ice cream after buying it from an ice cream van on Westminster bridge in central London on Tuesday, with heatwave conditions spreading to parts of southeast England and London. Britain registered on Monday its hottest-ever May temperatures on record, with the mercury rising to 34.8C near the capital. – AFP

Interesting living space

This photo taken Tuesday shows a view of Sluishuis in Amsterdam, the Netherlands. Sluishuis is a landmark residential building in Amsterdam. Completed in 2022, the building is known for its unique geometric design, with one corner rising upward to create a large opening over the water. – Xinhua



Not so special now!

This photograph taken last Wednesday, shows mountaineers climbing a slope queuing during their ascent from the Hillary Step to summit Mount Everest in Nepal. – AFP



Looks cool... but!

A woman shields herself from the sun with an umbrella near one of the fountains in the Place de la Concorde during a heatwave in Paris yesterday. – AFP



No heatwave here!

The chasing group rides in heavy rain during the 17th stage of the Giro d'Italia 2026 - Tour of Italy cycling race between Cassano d'Adda and Andalo, Italy, yesterday. – AFP



So true

A pedestrian walks past a mural reading 'Save Water' in Navi Mumbai, India on Tuesday. – AFP