

17th IICF – a platform for promoting China’s infrastructure industry

Armando Neves

The three-day 17th International Infrastructure Investment and Construction Forum & Exhibition (IICF) opened yesterday at The Venetian Macao’s Cotai Expo, aiming to serve as a platform for promoting Chinese infrastructure brands in the international market.

According to a statement released yesterday by the Commerce and Investment Promotion Institute (IPIM), the event features over 250 thematic and supporting activities. The exhibition space covers 8,000 square metres and has attracted more than 80 exhibitors, 20 per cent of whom are first-time participants, the statement said.

Yesterday, IPIM organised a media tour to interview two exhibitors and two ministers.

Francisco da Costa Monteiro, Timor-Leste’s minister of Petroleum and Mineral Resources, told reporters he hopes to use the platform to establish connections with China and other countries in the field of strategic infrastructure, as well as to learn about new technologies, equipment, and investment opportunities.

He added that the Timor-Leste government is advancing major projects under its Strategic Development Plan for the South Coast, including a supply base in Suai



Timor-Leste Petroleum and Mineral Resources Minister Francisco da Costa Monteiro (left) and Guyana Public Works Minister Juan Anthony Edghill speak to reporters at the 17th International Infrastructure Investment and Construction Forum & Exhibition (IICF) at The Venetian Macao’s Cotai Expo yesterday. – Photos: Armando Neves



city and a highway. Some of these projects are already under discussion with major Chinese companies for potential collaboration, with the aim of exchanging experience and expertise, Monteiro said.

Timor-Leste, which has 1.3 million inhabitants, is the official Portuguese name of East Timor, a former Portuguese colony which regained its independence in May 2002.

Portuguese and Tetum are its official languages.

Juan Anthony Edghill, minister of Public Works of Guyana, told reporters that Chinese companies have participated in a wide range of local projects, including roads, bridges, hospitals, and renewable energy, and that their engineering efficiency and quality have been highly recognised.

Through technology transfer, he said,

Chinese companies have also contributed to local development. Edghill commended the forum for providing a platform to connect with senior management personnel. He added that he was deeply impressed by the Guangdong-Macao In-Depth Cooperation Zone in Hengqin, noting the great potential for cooperation in the fields of technology and digitalisation.

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Sam praises Portuguese, Macanese communities as ‘important components’ of multicultural Macau

Staff Reporter

Chief Executive Sam Hou Fai addressed Portugal’s National Day reception at the local Portuguese School yesterday evening, during which he praised the special administrative region’s Portuguese and Macanese communities as “important components of Macau’s multicultural society”.

Sam, who delivered his speech in Portuguese, pointed out that both communities “have played a significant and positive role in the city’s harmony, stability, and prosperous development”.

The chief executive also said that the local government “is committed to leveraging Macau’s unique strengths and expanding its role as a platform serving China and the [world’s nine] Portuguese-speaking countries”.

The reception, which was at the Macau Portuguese School, was also attended by Portugal’s Minister of Education, Science and Innovation Fernando Alexandre and the Commissioner of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People’s Republic of China in the Macau Special Administrative Region (MSAR), Bian Lixin.

Customarily, the term “Macanese” denotes Macau’s community of mixed Portuguese and Asian descent, and their diaspora.

Sam also said that his recent official visit to Portugal “was intended to strengthen the longstanding friendship between the two sides and comprehensively deepen cooperation across a range of sectors”.

Sam also said that “Macau and Hengqin can serve as gateways for

Portuguese enterprises and those from other Portuguese-speaking enterprises, as well as European enterprises, to enter the Chinese mainland and the broader Asian market”.

Sam pointed out that earlier yesterday afternoon, he and Alexandre witnessed the signing of the “Cooperation Agreement between Macao Polytechnic University and the University of Coimbra on the Development of a Joint Global Campus in the Guangdong-Macao In-Depth Cooperation Zone in Hengqin”. The chief executive said that the agreement was “of great importance to Macau-Portugal education collaboration”.

According to local statisticians, the Portuguese and Macanese communities are estimated to account for about 2.0 percent of Macau’s population. ■



Macau SAR Chief Executive Sam Hou Fai addresses Portugal’s National Day reception at the Macau Portuguese School yesterday afternoon. – Photo: GCS

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Beyond skyscrapers: CPC’s birthplace Shanghai builds people’s city

Amid Shanghai’s vibrant downtown district stands a modest stone-doorframe house, the birthplace of the Communist Party of China (CPC).

– Story on p. 7

Trump vows attacks on Iran for ‘playing’ US over peace deal

Donald Trump warned yesterday that he would renew US attacks on Iran, saying Tehran had taken too long to agree a deal to end the Middle East war and accusing its negotiators of “playing us for suckers.”

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Peru’s election chief says election count could take 2 weeks

The head of Peru’s election authority has told AFP that the results of Sunday’s presidential election may not be known for a fortnight, dashing hopes of a quick resolution to the ultra-tight race.

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Lisboeta hosts football history exhibition during World Cup



Stephen Ho (何展鵬), chief executive officer of MacauSLOT, poses with the Jules Rimet Trophy (the World Cup Trophy from 1930-1970) during yesterday's "Classic Revival: World Football History Exhibition" opening ceremony at Lisboeta Macau in Cotai. — Photo: Khalel Vallo

Khalel Vallo

A football-themed exhibition showcasing historic memorabilia, trophies and tributes to some of the sport's greatest figures has opened at the Lisboeta Macau integrated resort in Cotai, offering residents and visitors a free immersive experience during the 2026 FIFA World Cup which starts today in Mexico City (local time), ending on July 19. The first game is Mexico against South Africa, played in Mexico. The game will kick off at 3:00 a.m. tomorrow morning Macau time.

The "Classic Revival: World Football History Exhibition" opened yesterday at the H853 Fun Factory of Lisboeta Macau and will run until July 19 as well.

Hosted by MacauSLOT with support from Lisboeta Macau, the exhibition aims to celebrate the history and cultural legacy of world football as anticipation builds for the 2026 FIFA World Cup, which will be jointly hosted by Canada, Mexico and the United States.

The exhibition is divided into six themed zones designed to highlight key moments in football history while offering interactive experiences for visitors. Among the highlights is the "World Football History Area", featuring 70 collections of trophies, jerseys and memorabilia spanning from 1930 to the present day.

Meanwhile, a dedicated

screening area pays tribute to the late Brazilian football icon Edson Arantes do Nascimento (1940-2022), known internationally as Pelé, while the "Pelé Jersey Corridor" displays 14 autographed jerseys associated with the three-time World Cup winner.

Exhibitiongoers can also view championship trophies in the "World Champion Trophies Display Area" and explore photo spots featuring football-themed installations, including a wall displaying footballs from past tournaments.

Guests who share photographs taken at the exhibition on social media will have the opportunity to win prizes including electronics, hotel accommodation and exclusive MacauSLOT collectibles, the statement said.

Stephen Ho (何展鵬), chief executive officer of MacauSLOT, said that the exhibition serves not only as a celebration of football history but also as a platform promoting the integration of tourism, culture and sports in Macau.

Running daily from noon to 9:00 p.m. with free admission, the exhibition seeks to bring football fans closer to the sport's rich heritage while contributing to Macau's development as a World Centre of Tourism and Leisure through tourism and sports-related events, the statement noted. ■

Stay tuned for an upcoming page 4. More on World Cup on page 13.

Health Bureau honours over 1,000 blood donors ahead of World Blood Donor Day

Khalel Vallo

The Health Bureau (SSM) said in a statement yesterday that it has recognised more than 1,000 residents who completed five blood donations last year during a commendation ceremony held as part of the activities marking World Blood Donor Day on Sunday, highlighting the contribution of voluntary donors to Macau's healthcare system.

The "5-time Blood Donor Recognition Ceremony" was held on Sunday to honour the 1,009 blood donors who reached the five-donation milestone last year, the statement said, noting that the event was attended by more than 300 donors alongside their families and friends.

In his speech, SSM Director Alvis Lo Iek Long said voluntary blood donation reflects the spirit of mutual support and care among Macau residents, the statement added.

Pointing to this year's World Blood Donor Day theme, "A drop of humanity. Give blood. Save lives", Dr Lo emphasised that these altruistic actions are essential to the safe operation of Macau's healthcare services, the statement noted.

According to SSM data, 13,942 people registered to donate blood in 2025, providing critical support for 3,669 patients who received transfusions totalling 16,853 units



This unlocated handout photo provided by the Health Bureau (SSM) yesterday shows SSM Director Alvis Lo Iek Long addressing Sunday's "5-time Blood Donor Recognition Ceremony".

of red blood cells (RBC).

The bureau noted that donors who were unable to attend the ceremony can collect their certificates directly from the Blood Donation Centre in Nape, adding that it will continue its promotional efforts leading up to World Blood Donor Day this Sunday.

Publicity banners have been installed across Macau and Taipa until this Sunday, and residents who donate blood on the day itself will receive a special souvenir and have access to a themed photo backdrop

at the centre, the statement said.

Additionally, the centre will send appreciation cards and souvenirs to over 60 institutions, public entities and schools that coordinated blood drives over the past year, said the statement. In order to ensure an efficient service and reduce waiting times, the bureau reminded those planning to donate blood this Sunday to book an appointment in advance via the centre's website (<https://www.ssm.gov.mo/cts/blook-ser/preson-make>) or the "Macau One Account" mobile application. ■

Gourmet Feast 2026 marks Portuguese National Day, cuisine

Rui Pastorin

The Portuguese Gourmet Feast 2026 was held at Sofitel Macau at Ponte 16 ahead of yesterday's Portuguese National Day and as part of "June, Month of Portugal", according to a statement yesterday by the Portugal-China Chamber of Commerce and Industry (CCILC).

Portugal's National Day is celebrated on June 10.

The event, a highlight in this month's celebratory programme that took place on Monday, was sponsored by BNU and CCILC. The statement added that the event was also part of the ongoing fourth edition of the Gastronomic Route "Comer e Beber à Portuguesa", or "Eating and Drinking in the Portuguese Style", wherein 35 restaurants across Macau are offering themed menus and a 10.6 percent discount.

Featured at the event were 28 wines from nine Portuguese regions curated by VINO Veritas, Portuguese egg tarts from Manteigaria, a selection of Portuguese food brands, and a buffet highlighting Portugal's culinary diversity, the statement said.

The statement also noted Portugal's growing agri-food sector exports with global sales above €8 billion (74.6 billion patacas) in recent years. "Macau's hospitality and retail sectors continue to be important gateways for products from Portuguese-speaking countries



BNU CEO and CCILC Macau President Carlos Cid Álvares (left) delivers his remarks during Monday's Portuguese Gourmet Feast 2026 in Sofitel Macau at Ponte 16. — Photo: Chinese Portuguese Chamber of Commerce (CCILC Macau)

entering Asian markets, supported by the city's cultural familiarity with Portuguese cuisine", the statement said.

The statement said that the event was attended by Consul General of Portugal in Hong Kong and Macau, Alexandre Leitão.

Moreover, BNU CEO and CCILC Macau President Carlos Cid Álvares was quoted by the statement as saying: "The Portuguese wine and dine annual dinner has gained traction, and this year we had more than 200 guests", highlighting the partnership between the entities involved while adding that the

event gave "people a real sense of Portuguese gastronomy."

The statement also quoted various representatives. Among them, Casa de Portugal President Amélia António said: "This Portuguese Gourmet Feast plays a vital role in showcasing Portuguese products", while Macanese chef Marina de Senna Fernandes noted that the June celebration "anchors us to our roots, honouring where our ancestors came from while reminding us how that beautifully shared history continues to flavour the vibrant, multicultural Macau we call home today". ■

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Source: SMG

17th IICF – a platform for promoting China’s infrastructure industry

Continued from p.1

Guyana has a population of nearly one million. English is its official language. It gained its independence from the UK in 1966.

Misa Chan (陳美莎), sales manager of Macau Digit Force Technology Co., Ltd., told reporters that the company is showcasing three AI products at the exhibition: a spatial intelligence agent called Athpace Spatial Intelligence, an intelligent community intercom system, and an all-digital intelligent lift intercom system.

The products which focus on specific niche scenarios, can perform self-diagnostics and predictive maintenance, and have already been installed in more than 3,000 buildings across the Chinese mainland, she said. The company has a branch office in Brazil and hopes to use international platforms such as this exhibition to connect with overseas clients and address the challenge of a shortage of research and development (R&D) personnel, Chan added.

Roy Ba (巴都呼), general manager of the French Haulotte Group, told reporters that the company is taking part in the forum for the first time. He explained that the company specialises in battery-powered elevating work platforms (EWPs), which feature zero noise, zero emissions, and zero pollution, and offer the EWP industry’s only five-year warranty.

The company already has distributors in Hong Kong, Macau, and elsewhere in the Greater Bay Area (GBA), and hopes to use the forum to connect with more international clients to jointly promote the development of green infrastructure, Ba said. ■

Rolling towards sunset? An R/C hobbyist, retailer’s experience

Interview by Rui Pastorin

Frankie Lai (黎兆榮) has been selling R/C (radio-controlled) model vehicles of different sizes and related items to fellow enthusiasts since 1996.

The 62-year-old has had a passion for the R/C hobby ever since he was a kid in the early 1970s. And when it came time to open his own shop, that hobby portion didn’t disappear. In fact, he opened it “half for fun, half for work”, Lai told the *Post* on Tuesday during an interview at his shop, Cheong Lei Hobby, which has been sitting on Beco do Padre António Roliz for half of its 20-year history.

In the past and when he first opened, he recalled, it was common for people to build these intricate kits and take them out to play, space allowing. But today, there is a “big difference”.

While it was supported and promoted in the city back then, Lei said that nowadays, if you wanted to race an R/C car or perhaps operate other related model vehicles like large model planes, you would most likely have to do it in the Chinese mainland, where the hobby is alive and kicking with shops and spaces to engage in it.

In Macau, the scene, according to Lai, has changed. The market and interest still definitely exist as the hobby is, after all, a fun one. However, in terms of openly racing or playing with these R/C vehicles in the city? Lai said it wasn’t the same, pegging today’s stricter rules and a lack of dedicated spaces, even just for R/C cars,



Cheong Lei Hobby Shop owner Frankie Lai poses on Tuesday in front of some of the R/C cars he is selling. — Photo: Rui Pastorin

that allow enthusiasts to openly engage in the hobby, as among the reasons. He added that the latter point also comes into play despite spaces that he thinks could possibly be used.

Consumption attitudes are also different, with many more likely to shop for their products online through platforms like Taobao. Moreover, Lai said that local hobbyists, or at least 70 percent of the people who buy products from him, are also more likely to purchase these kits for display, or to resell later when their value goes up.

These days, Lai said he sees fewer

customers entering his shop. And it is not just his, he said, noting his outlook that others offering the same products could also be experiencing the same thing. “The situation is, you cannot make money”.

Down the line, Lei considers retiring in a few years. While still passionate and noting that he would like to see this particular hobby culture improve, he has a bleak outlook on its future in Macau in terms of doing something to improve the situation or joining others who might have the same idea, it will be up to the younger generation to change the situation. ■



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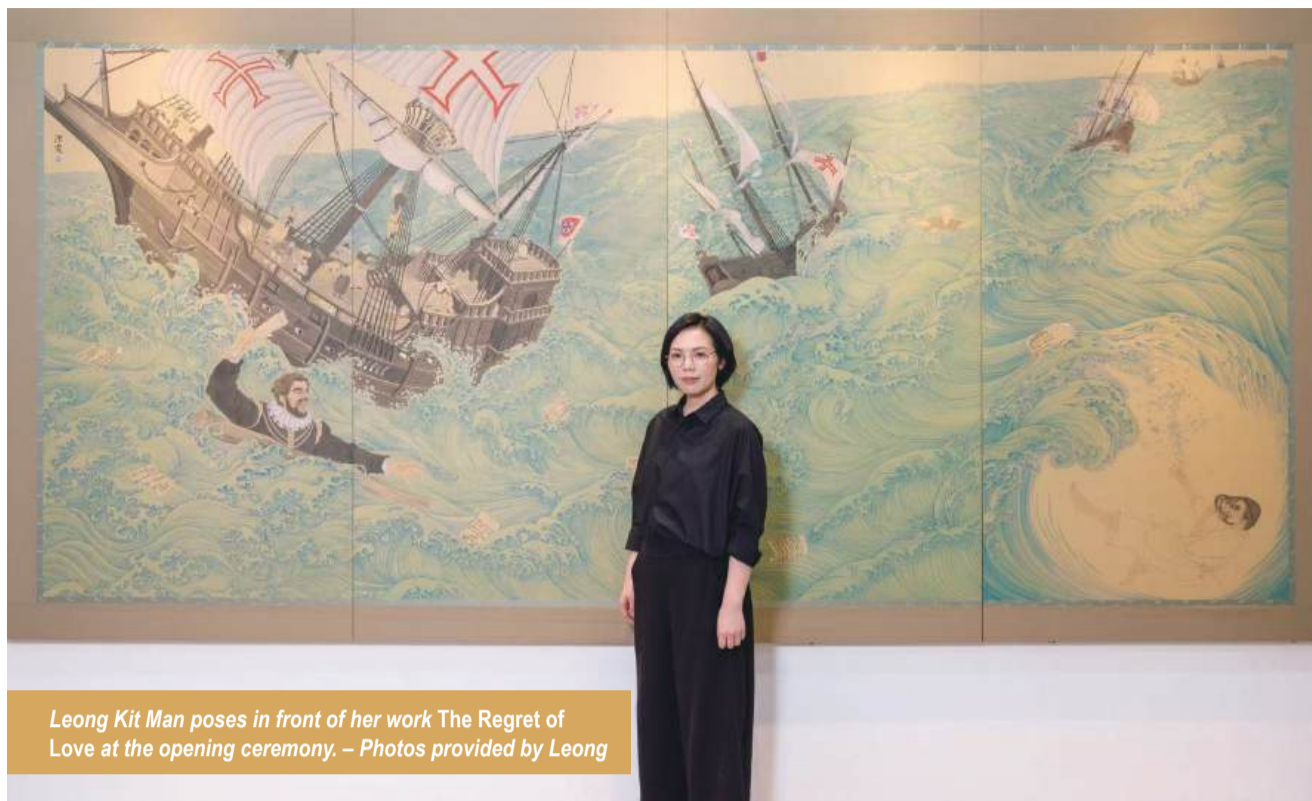
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Leong Kit Man poses in front of her work *The Regret of Love* at the opening ceremony. – Photos provided by Leong



Bridging civilisations on silk: Leong Kit Man's 'Ilha dos Amores' opens at Albergue SCM

William Chan

An exhibition celebrating the Day of Portugal, Camões, and the Portuguese Communities kick-started at Albergue SCM last Wednesday, offering a cross-cultural exploration of Portuguese literary history through traditional Chinese painting techniques.

Organised by the Círculo dos Amigos da Cultura de Macau ("Circle of the Friends of Macau's Culture" – CAC), "Ilha dos Amores" ("Island of Lovers") features the recent works of local artist Leong Kit Man. Curated by Carlos Marreiros, the solo exhibition focuses on the mythical sojourn of epic poet Luís de Camões in Macau and the vivid imagery of his masterwork, *Os Lusíadas*.*

Leong, an assistant professor of Fine Arts at the Macau University of Science and Technology (MUST), holds a PhD from the Chinese National Academy of Arts. She specialises in the Gongbi (meticulous) and Mogu (boneless) heavy-colour painting traditions.** By applying these highly disciplined, detailed Chinese techniques to Western literary themes, Leong aims to establish a visual dialogue between Eastern and Western interpretations of an ideal paradise. The collection explores the shared human imagination, uncovering common cultural threads that bind the two distinct traditions together.

The anatomy of *The Regret of Love*

At the opening ceremony, Leong and Marreiros introduced the artwork to the audience. The centrepiece of the exhibition is *The Regret of Love* (*O Arrependimento do Amor*), a monumental painting measuring 400 by 180 centimetres, executed with mineral pigments and silver foil on silk. The work depicts the tragic 1558 shipwreck on the Mekong River, an event in which legend has it that Camões salvaged his manuscript of *Os Lusíadas* from the waves but was unable to save his Eastern lover.

Rather than adopting a traditional macroscopic view of the sea, Leong employs a micro-level perspective to

examine the disaster. The composition meticulously details the structural mechanics, internal decks, and rigging of the listing Portuguese vessel. This intricate layout aligns with the traditional Chinese landscape painting philosophy of ke ju ke you (可居可遊, literally "inhabitable and wanderable"), creating a visual space that feels structurally traversable to the observer. The narrative imagery depicts Camões submerged in turbulent waves while hoisting his scroll to safety, juxtaposed against his lover floating weightlessly beneath the surface surrounded by rising air bubbles and sinking letters.

A Portuguese Yaji Calligraphy Collaboration

In a deliberate nod to the traditional Chinese *Yaji* (雅集, literally "elegant gathering") – a historical gathering where artists and scholars collaborated on poetry and painting – the artwork integrates classical Portuguese verses directly onto the silk medium. Because no original manuscripts written by Camões survive today, Macau architect and artist Marreiros conducted historical research into 16th-century Western scripts, analysing contemporary archival documents to reconstruct the orthography of that period. Marreiros designed the calligraphic template, which was then transcribed onto the painting to create a literal synthesis of European epic poetry and Chinese artistic presentation.

Complementing the large-scale *The Regret of Love*, the exhibition features a singular circular silk painting titled *Ilha dos Amores* ("Island of Loves"), measuring 80 cm in diameter. This framed piece, in a traditional Chinese round-screen format, presents a detailed Gongbi landscape of the mythical paradise. A large, steep mountain of stylised blue-green rock, dotted with sparse trees, dominates the right side. On a central golden sandy plain, dozens of miniature figures, rendered in meticulous detail, interact. In a unique fusion, these figures, with Camões standing at the top of the mountain, are dressed in classical 16th-century Portuguese and European attire, navigating and congregating within



Curator Carlos Marreiros introduces *Ilha dos Amores* (Isle of Loves) last Wednesday at the gallery. – Photo: William Chan

the idyllic scene. The composition visually realises the idealised island paradise described in Cantos IX and X of *Os Lusíadas*, symbolising a moment of intercultural harmony and peaceful co-existence.

The solo exhibition is being held at Albergue SCM's Gallery A2, with the exhibition running until July 6; free admission, open every day, from 12:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m., and from 3:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. on Mondays.

* "*Os Lusíadas* (often anglicised as *The Lusíads*) is a monumental epic poem written by Luís Vaz de Camões and published in 1572. It is widely regarded as the national epic of Portugal and the most important work of Portuguese literature. Written in the classical style of Homer's *Iliad* and Virgil's *Aeneid*, the poem depicts the heyday of Portuguese maritime exploration. Etymologically, the term *Lusíadas* means "the sons of Lusus," referring to the Portuguese people as descendants of their mythical founder. – DeepSeek/Poe

** On Leong's artistic technique and style, view the Post's previous interview: www.macaupostdaily.com/news/24792



60 pct of CEM 2025 investment used for network upgrade

Tony Wong

Power utility CEM's total investment for 2025 reached 967 million patacas, of which 586 million patacas (60.6 percent of the total) was invested in improving and upgrading its electricity transmission and distribution network, according to a statement published in the Official Gazette (BO) yesterday.

The statement said that the Tai On Substation project, which includes the power utility's new dispatch centre in the Zone A new urban area, is progressing as planned, with its 110kV and 11kV networks already in operation.

Zone A, a new land reclamation area primarily being developed for public housing projects, is located between the peninsula's north-eastern coast and the man-made island where the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge (HZMB) Macau checkpoint is located.

The statement also said that the construction of the Barra Substation, located in the area near A-Ma Temple and the Barra entrance to the Macau-Taipa Sai Van Bridge, is underway as scheduled, while the construction of a new substation located near the power utility's power plant is also underway.

At the peninsula side, Sai Van Bridge has two entrances, one at Barra and the other near Macau Tower.

CEM's power plant is located at Ka Ho on Coloane island. Most of Macau's electricity consumption is currently imported from the Chinese mainland.

Electricity imported into Macau from the Chinese mainland is supplied and transmitted by China Southern Power Grid (CSG).

CEM 66kV substations across the city will gradually be upgraded to 110kV ones. The first upgrade project, the statement said, has been



This file photo taken in 2024 shows the CEM headquarters (right) in northern peninsula.

launched at the Lisboa Substation in Zape, which has been in operation for 42 years.

The statement also underlined that the reliability of CEM's energy supply has remained at a world-class level of 99.9999 percent for six consecutive years.

In 2025, the statement said, Macau's overall electricity demand remained virtually unchanged from 2024, with last year's total consumption amounting to 6,262.6 GWh, a slight year-on-year increase of 0.4 percent.

87.2 pct of electricity consumption from Chinese mainland

The statement said that electricity supply to Macau continued to be predominantly from China Southern Power Grid (CSG) in 2025, which accounted for 87.2 percent of Macau's total electricity consumption last year, corresponding to 5,463.7 GWh, a year-on-year decrease of 0.7 percent.

In 2025, according to the statement, local power generation contributed 9.3 percent of the total consumption, reaching 582.9 GWh, a year-on-year increase of 8.5 percent,

while electricity purchased from the city's waste incineration plant located in Taipa's Pac On district, which also generates electricity during its waste treatment process, accounted for 3.4 percent of Macau's total electricity consumption, corresponding to 213.1 GWh, a year-on-year increase of 10.1 percent.

The statement also said that "with full smart meter coverage in Macau, a new energy management model has been implemented. Robot dogs have been deployed in substations, making them a fundamental technical component of CEM's intelligent inspection systems. The intelligent voice chatbot system has been officially launched, making CEM the first company in Macau to integrate cutting-edge AI technology with large language models into its customer services".

The statement also said that the total number of charging piles for e-cars and those for e-motorcycles across the city has now exceeded 3,000.

Furthermore, the statement said, CEM has launched a solar electricity project to install a floating photovoltaic (FPV) system



This file photo taken in 2024 shows the CTM headquarters in central Taipa.

– Photos: Tony Wong

on the reservoir at its power plant in Coloane, and has installed photovoltaic systems on the roof of the new Tai On Substation in Zone A and on the roof of the CEM headquarters located on Estrada de D. Maria II in the peninsula.

CEM has also established a team of photovoltaic energy experts with strong design skills to provide feasibility analysis and specialised technical advice to clients intending to install photovoltaic systems on their premises, the statement said.

Macau's mobile phone penetration rate reaches 217 pct

Meanwhile, CTM spent 208 million patacas on its investment projects in 2025, representing a reduction of 21 million patacas from 229 million in 2024, according to a statement published by the telecom operator in the gazette yesterday.

CTM's major investment projects in 2025, the statement said, included the installation of fibre optic broadband internet for its clients, the expansion of its 5.5G mobile network, and the development of its information technology (IT) system.

Neither the CEM nor the CTM statement gazetted yesterday mentioned other key financial performance data such as revenues and profits.

At the end of 2025, the statement said, Macau's mobile phone penetration rate reached 217 percent, an increase from 210 percent at the end of 2024. CTM's mobile customer base grew by six percent to 817,165 at the end of 2025 from 771,678 at the end of 2024, while the number of mobile broadband subscribers increased 10 percent to 598,862 from 546,025 during the period.

According to the statement, CTM's total internet customer base increased to 210,203 at the end of 2025 from 208,049 at the end of 2024, with the telecom operator also achieving 100 percent fibre optic coverage for its users. The statement said that the company's residential customers with copper cable-based internet access have all upgraded their service to fibre optic cable-based internet plans. By the end of 2025, 210,085 customers had already adopted fibre optic broadband internet, the statement said. ■

Casino black box schemes are rumours: gaming inspector

Tony Wong

The Gaming Inspection and Coordination Bureau (DICJ) said in a statement yesterday that social media reports regarding local casinos' purported schemes to defraud gamblers with "black boxes"* are entirely unfounded rumours.

The statement also said that recently, several unverified messages have emerged online concerning "betting refunds after being cheated", in which individuals claiming to be victims urged others to contact specific third parties for assistance. As these messages, the statement said, may be linked to fraudulent schemes, the public is strongly advised against believing or sharing unconfirmed information and is urged to remain vigilant to avoid being deceived.

The statement underlined that all gaming equipment currently operating in local casinos is subject to the government's stringent regulation and supervision and must strictly comply with the relevant laws and regulations,

technical standards, and security requirements.

The statement said that every piece of electronic gaming equipment must be tested by independent, DICJ-accredited entities and can only be operated after thorough review and formal authorisation. Furthermore, DICJ officials conduct routine and unannounced inspections on gaming premises to verify on-site software versions, seal integrity, and random number generator (RNG) mechanisms, ensuring continuous regulatory compliance. No anomalies or instances of non-compliance have been detected in any equipment in local casinos recently, the statement underlined.

Concerning claims spread online by individuals who asserted they were "cheated by the black box but successfully recovered their stakes through unofficial channels", the statement underlined that such remarks possess absolutely no factual basis. This type of misinformation, the statement said, is highly likely



This undated handout photo provided by the Gaming Inspection and Coordination Bureau (DICJ) to public broadcaster TDM earlier this month shows a DICJ inspector examining an electronic card shoe at a local casino.

a tactic used to perpetrate fraud. Consequently, members of the public must enhance their vigilance and disregard such claims.

The statement underlined that all gaming-related disputes must be reported through official channels. To support this, DICJ inspectors are stationed across all local casinos to

monitor operations in real time.

The statement said that anyone who suspects they have fallen victim to a scam should immediately cease the transaction and file a report with the Judiciary Police.

The DICJ will not tolerate the malicious dissemination of false

information that damages Macau's reputation and will take appropriate legal action against offenders, the statement said. ■

* The recent online rumours originating from social media videos claim that all six of Macau's gaming concessionaires use rigged electronic card shoes, referred to as "black boxes", to defraud gamblers. The rumours allege that these cheating devices allow the casinos to manipulate gaming outcomes and cards directly via a mobile application. Furthermore, follow-up messages circulating alongside these claims suggest that victims who were cheated can successfully secure refunds for their betting losses through unofficial channels. These fraudulent posts actively urge people to contact specific individuals under the guise of recovering their lost stakes. Ultimately, the gaming regulator has clarified that these specific "black box" claims are entirely baseless and are likely being used as a deceptive tactic to perpetrate phishing or financial scams – Gemini

Local boneless chicken feet found to contain Listeria: IAM

Armando Neves

The Municipal Affairs Bureau (IAM) announced in a statement yesterday that Listeria has been detected in boneless chicken feet (無骨鳳爪) product samples from a local food processing plant.

The bureau has ordered the establishment to cease production and supply, and recall the affected food products, the statement, adding that the bureau has also demanded that the business rectify the production and preparation processes of the problematic food items until they meet safety and hygiene requirements and pass a re-inspection.

The sample of sour and spicy lemon boneless chicken feet in question was taken from a food processing plant at Veng Kin Industrial Building in Areia Preta district. According to Macau's "Microbiological Guidelines for Ready-to-eat Food," the sample was found to contain Listeria at a level classified as "unsatisfactory".

According to Hong Kong's Centre for Health Protection (CHP), Listeria is commonly found in the natural environment. The bacteria may be found in some contaminated raw foods, such as



This undated handout photo provided by the Macau Municipal Affairs Bureau (IAM) yesterday show a boneless chicken feet product found to contain Listeria.

vegetables and uncooked meats as well as unpasteurised milk.

A person with listeriosis usually comes down with fever, headache, and sometimes gastrointestinal symptoms such as nausea, vomiting and diarrhoea. Some patients may develop severe complications such as meningoencephalitis or septicaemia. Pregnant women, newborns/infants, the elderly and persons with chronic diseases or

weakened immunity are at higher risk of being infected. Although pregnant women with listeriosis are mostly asymptomatic or only develop mild symptoms, they may transmit the infection to their fetuses or newborns, resulting in miscarriage, stillbirth, preterm birth and septicaemia (blood poisoning) or meningitis in the newborns, according to the CHP statement. ■

AI agents give 'world's supermarket' faster lanes to global markets

Analysis

YIWU, Zhejiang – Yiwu merchant Wei Jun still marvels at the sheer speed of his recent deal for 1,000 starry-sky projector lamps, aided by an artificial intelligence (AI) agent.

While his Kenyan buyer was inspecting samples in Yiwu, known as the "world's supermarket" in east China's Zhejiang Province, an automated workflow was triggered: an AI agent instantly beamed the specifications to R&D and supply chain teams, bypassing tedious back-and-forth communication.

This seamless transaction offers a glimpse into a broader transformation unfolding on the supply side. From individuals leading AI agent teams to run cross-border businesses to autonomous transaction matching between buyers' and sellers' agents – AI is rewriting the rules of cross-border trade.

Yiwu is among the places where this transformation is most visible. It hosts the world's largest wholesale market for small commodities, supplying everything from Christmas goods to World Cup souvenirs. Through the market, an astounding 2.1 million varieties of small commodities have been sold to 233 countries and regions. In 2025, Yiwu's export value ranked first among all county-level regions nationwide.

The viral social media topic "Yiwu's latest sales boom" is not merely a stroke of luck. Behind the viral hits lie a rigorous pursuit of

emerging trends by local merchants and a precise judgment based on quantitative analysis. They closely track the next popular category by analyzing trends in short videos and popular keywords in comment sections.

"It used to take us a lot of time to collect and sort information from different platforms. Now, we let AI agents handle the heavy lifting," said Li Shenghai, who has transitioned from an operations specialist to a dedicated AI skills developer.

This trend is not just for experienced merchants. AI has also lowered the barrier to entry for entrepreneurship, creating opportunities for One-Person Companies.

Zhang Qianchao, a novice with no prior experience in cross-border e-commerce, successfully tapped into overseas markets with customized baseball caps. He relies solely on himself and eight AI agents on Accio Work, an AI agent platform by tech giant Alibaba, for market research, product design and trade policy analysis.

For instance, every two weeks, the market research agent generates a report detailing overseas social media trends in the baseball cap industry. Once the report highlights a surge in demand for a specific style, it automatically triggers the product design agent to take over.

The AI agents have compressed what was once a two- to three-week selection and design cycle into a single day. The accelerated pace

has yielded rapid results: within two months of launching his online store, Zhang has sold over 3,000 caps to markets across Europe, the United States and Africa.

AI is transforming business "experience" into an on-demand service and providing small and medium-sized enterprises with a "business operating system," said Hong Yong, an associate researcher at the Chinese Academy of International Trade and Economic Cooperation under the Ministry of Commerce.

China's AI strategy is entering a more comprehensive phase. Rather than focusing mainly on technological breakthroughs, policymakers are now underscoring the integration of AI with the real economy – from manufacturing and agriculture to public services and consumer markets.

This broader orientation is reinforced in the outline of the 15th Five-Year Plan (2026-2030), which calls for advances in areas such as multimodal systems, AI agents, embodied AI and swarm intelligence.

Observers believe that AI agents are forging tighter connections across global markets. Pan Helin, an expert with the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology, said that China's supply chain advantages are being amplified through digital services, allowing "Made in China" products to reach global buyers with unprecedented precision.

– Xinhua

Advanced technology boosts panda conservation in China

CHENGDU/LANZHOU – At a wildlife rescue and breeding base in Wenxian County, Gansu Province, a screen tracks wild giant pandas in real time. Base director Liu Zhi can plan the next patrol route with just a few clicks – a far cry from over two decades ago, when rangers trudged through mountains guided only by luck and experience.

Liu has been working in the mountains since 2000. According to him, the area managed by the base is one of the regions with the highest density of wild giant pandas in the Giant Panda National Park, which was officially established in 2021 to strengthen protection of giant pandas and their habitats, spanning the three provinces of Sichuan, Shaanxi and Gansu.

"Many wild animals, including giant pandas, are actually quite shy. One of our tasks is to protect wildlife and their habitats while minimizing human impact on nature," Liu said.

A "space-air-ground" intelligent monitoring system is now in place locally, integrating satellite remote sensing, aerial photography, and ground sensor networks. With more than 1,500 infrared cameras and over 20 drones deployed, and linked to a smart forestry and grassland big data platform, the system enables round-the-clock, multidimensional monitoring of hydrology, meteorology, wildlife and plant life.

"The new technologies give us a more accurate understanding of population changes," Liu added.

Similar tech-driven efforts are now quietly unfolding deep in the forests of other areas within the Giant Panda National Park. In the area of Chengdu, the capital of Sichuan Province, more than 600 infrared cameras have been deployed, capturing over 300 images of wild giant pandas each year on average. With 178 monitoring grids also set up, an initial intelligent ecological monitoring system has thereby been established, combining biodiversity monitoring, electronic fencing, and smart patrolling.

Thanks to real-time forest footage transmitted by a smart management platform, the area in Tianquan County, Sichuan, has launched a live online wildlife streaming service. It once attracted more than 500,000 viewers in a single hour – a record that has both raised public conservation awareness and driven local ecotourism, as well as educational and research activities.

In addition to figuring out "where" the wild giant pandas are, technology is now being used to more accurately identify individual animals.

Traditional field monitoring methods relied primarily on analyzing the length and characteristics of bamboo stem fragments found in giant panda feces for rough identification. In the Tangjiahe area of the Giant

Panda National Park in Sichuan, technological upgrades now allow staff to collect fresh wild panda feces and perform DNA testing to identify individuals. This enables them to accurately obtain core data, including sex, age, health status, and activity patterns.

Building on this foundation, the area saw another technological breakthrough in panda conservation last year. "We have fully rolled out AI-powered 'panda face recognition' technology," said Xiao Mei, an official with the administrative office of Tangjiahe National Nature Reserve.

Researchers trained the AI model on a massive dataset of field images, developing a customized intelligent recognition system for giant pandas. Once the system is fed with monitoring data from all infrared cameras in the area, it can automatically distinguish individual pandas in the footage.

The Tangjiahe area now operates a dual monitoring system that combines fecal DNA analysis with AI-powered panda face recognition. In 2025, the system detected a total of 44 individual giant pandas. It has clarified the size of the wild panda population, individual traits, and activity ranges in the area, providing scientific data to support wildlife conservation and regional ecosystem restoration.

Eco-environmental research experts from the Chinese Academy of Sciences noted that digital tools are shifting giant panda conservation from an "experience-driven" to a "data-driven" approach. With AI image recognition technology, the efficiency of monitoring wild panda populations can be increased by more than 40 percent.

Beyond facial recognition for wild pandas, AI is also poised for further application in monitoring the behavior of captive giant pandas. According to a paper published in February in the international journal *Applied Sciences*, the DeepPanda model developed by a Chinese research team can automatically identify four basic panda behaviors: eating, walking, resting, and drinking. Under experimental conditions, the model achieved an identification accuracy of 98.8 percent.

China not only leverages technology to support giant panda conservation but is also willing to share its achievements with the world and lead international cooperation.

Last November, a shared platform for giant panda ecological big data was launched at the Global Panda Partners Conference 2025 in Chengdu. This platform aggregates real-time monitoring data from 4,194.26 square kilometers of core zones within the Giant Panda National Park and provides 12 types of data interfaces, including vegetation coverage and population activity, to research institutions worldwide.

– Xinhua



This aerial drone photo taken yesterday shows a step-up substation and surrounding wind turbines at an offshore wind farm in Rudong, Jiangsu Province. Recently, staff members have carried out maintenance of offshore wind turbines and step-up substations at two offshore wind farms, so as to ensure a stable and safe power supply during the incoming high temperature period. From January to May this year, the total power generation capacity of the two wind farms reached 880 million kWh, with an accumulated power output of 10.26 billion kWh since their operation in December 2021. — Xinhua

China issues 3-year plan to boost AI integration with information, communications sector

BEIJING — The Ministry of Industry and Information Technology yesterday released a three-year plan to accelerate the integration of artificial intelligence (AI) with the country's information and communications sector, setting targets for more autonomous networks, wider low-latency computing-power coverage and expanded AI applications by 2028.

The implementation guideline, covering 2026 to 2028, aims for information and communications networks to reach an initial stage of high-level autonomous intelligence by 2028.

It also calls for more than 30 high-value use cases, a number of typical applications and specialized intelligent agents, as well as at least 75-percent coverage regarding

one-millisecond-latency access to computing power in metropolitan areas.

The ministry said AI technologies are in a period of rapid iteration and accelerating breakthroughs, while the deep integration of AI with information and communications remains complex and systemic, due to challenges in terms of key technological breakthroughs, integration pathways and business model innovation.

By 2030, China aims to make significant breakthroughs in core technologies in key areas for integrating AI with information and communications networks, greatly improve integrated sensing, communications, computing and intelligence service capabilities, and build a complete collaborative

innovation and industrial ecosystem.

The ministry has set out 17 tasks in four areas, namely intelligent upgrading of the information and communications industry, strengthening the foundation for AI development, promoting integrated applications and enhancing industry governance.

It is also calling for research into AI-driven new network architectures, advances in technologies such as collaboration between large and small models, multi-agent collaboration and intelligent agent communications, faster construction of major computing power channels and improved network resource scheduling.

— Xinhua

Beyond skyscrapers: CPC's birthplace Shanghai builds people's city

Analysis by Xinhua writers Tian Ying, Zhang Yunlong and Xu Xiaoqing

SHANGHAI — Amid Shanghai's vibrant downtown district stands a modest stone-doorframe house, the birthplace of the Communist Party of China (CPC).

Drawing millions of visitors annually, the site, preserved as part of the Memorial Hall of the First National Congress of the CPC, inspires reverence for its history, while remaining deeply woven into the city's daily life.

On June 1, International Children's Day, four women in their late 60s and early 70s gathered outside the memorial to reconnect with childhood memories, wearing matching white polo shirts, red Young Pioneers scarves and carefully applied makeup.

They reenacted the marching steps they remembered, and asked a passerby to film them performing the routine with a cellphone in front of the memorial.

"Children's Day isn't just for children," 70-year-old Liu Honglan, a local retiree, told Xinhua. "It's also a chance for us to realize a dream from our youth." The sentiment strikes a chord with many of her peers, who spent their youth in an era of scarcity and rarely had the opportunity to celebrate the holiday themselves.

Liu said patriotism was what drew them back to the birthplace of the CPC. Standing before the memorial in their Young Pioneers scarves and capturing the moment on video felt solemn and meaningful.

"When I compare life today with what it was like when we were young, I can't help but feel happy," she said.

Her sentiment is shared by many Chinese after witnessing the country's transformation from poverty to prosperity. Improving people's well-being has been at the



Media workers look at an exhibit during a press preview of the exhibition "Dawn of The First Empire: The Qin's Unification in Archaeological Treasures" at the Shanghai Museum in Shanghai on Tuesday. The exhibition will be open to the public from yesterday to September 7, displaying 328 sets (510 pieces) of cultural relics from 14 archaeological and cultural heritage institutions from northwest China's Gansu and Shaanxi provinces and Shanghai. — Xinhua

heart of the CPC's mission for more than a century.

Starting out from the stone-doorframe house where the Party was founded in 1921, Shanghai has become a vivid example of how that aspiration is being translated into everyday life. In a new era, that goal is reflected in the concept of being a "people's city," with authorities striving to put residents at the center of development.

Few places embodied this philosophy more clearly than the Hudiewan riverside Party-masses service complex in Jing'an District, nestled along the banks of Shanghai's Suzhou River.

The complex, made up of three buildings, including one heritage building in the style of a European castle and a 16,000-square-meter public space, now serves more than 4,000 residents and travelers daily. It has become a popular destination.

Operated by community authorities in partnership with

market entities, it provides a wide range of nonprofit services designed to serve residents of all ages.

At lunchtime, elderly residents line up at the first-floor canteen for affordable meals with familiar local flavors. In the attic of the historic building, toddlers play in a child-safe activity space and climb up to explore the castle tower. Meanwhile, students and young professionals settle into quiet study rooms to read and work.

The complex also designates a space as a rest lounge for delivery workers, and offers scheduled free haircuts. It also operates a runners' station, where visitors can rent a pair of sneakers for a jog along the nearby premium waterfront running trail, and freshen up with a shower afterward.

"We reserve the best resources for the people," said He Hanqing, who works at the service complex.

A wide range of educational programs is also on offer, including

one on artificial intelligence. The class is part of a public-interest program provided by Eastday.com, and provides hands-on courses in drone operation simulation, AI modeling, 3D printing, and other emerging technologies. It helps participants better understand how AI is reshaping everyday life, according to Yang Jiaxiong, a senior AI engineer with the company.

Since its launch in June last year, the AI classroom in Hudiewan has hosted nearly 50 sessions attended by close to 1,000 participants. Children often fill the classroom during school holidays, while older residents make up a significant portion of attendees, Yang said.

The growing popularity of the courses reflects a broader shift in public expectations. For many residents, quality of life is no longer measured solely by material well-being. Meeting people's growing needs for "new experiences, knowledge, beauty, and enjoyment"

has become an important part of community governance, He said.

At the same time, building a people's city requires fighting tougher battles to address residents' most pressing needs and concerns. Alongside efforts to enrich cultural life, Shanghai has worked to improve living conditions in older neighborhoods in recent years.

In Shanghai's historic Hengfu neighborhood, the renovation of Changlecun, a century-old residential compound with French-style buildings, reflects these efforts. For decades, residents of the so-called "snail shell houses" endured cramped living conditions, shared bathrooms, leaking roofs and aging facilities.

Between 2023 and 2025, extensive upgrades were completed through a community-led renovation project. Gone are the days when multiple households were cramped in a two-story building, said resident Qiu Minwen, who moved back last year to take care of her 91-year-old father.

Born in the house, 59-year-old Qiu recalled how days looked. "People had to queue for showers, sometimes from three in the afternoon until late in the evening," she said. "Now, nobody has to compete for the bathroom anymore, and the leaking problems that troubled us for years have finally been solved."

With the addition of a private bathroom and age-friendly amenities, his father can continue living in the apartment he has called home for decades, instead of moving into a nursing home.

From installing in-home bathrooms and creating rest lounges for couriers to hosting lawn concerts and AI classes in local communities, Shanghai is evolving into more than a metropolis defined by glittering skyscrapers and dazzling lights. It is becoming a city built for its people.

— Xinhua

University students across S Korea to protest in ballot shortage row

SEOUL – University students across South Korea staged protests yesterday as anger grew over ballot paper shortages at recent local elections.

Dozens of polling stations nationwide were short of around 7,000 ballot papers on June 3 election day, official data showed.

The supplies were eventually replenished on voting day, but the mishap fuelled fury in a nation where unfounded claims of vote tampering have found a growing audience.

The local election was the first nationwide vote since President Lee Jae Myung took office following conservative Yoon Suk Yeol's ouster over his brief martial law declaration in late 2024.

Lee's ruling liberal Democratic Party won most races in the vote for mayors, local government officials and assembly members, but failed to flip the critical Seoul mayoral seat.

The head of the election watchdog has resigned over the ballot paper row, but authorities have not offered to hold a new vote, sparking huge protests at the weekend.

Student unions at 18 universities held new demonstrations from 6 pm yesterday.



South Korean protesters wave national flags outside a vote-counting centre in Seoul yesterday, to call for a rerun of the local elections due to a shortage of ballot papers. – AFP

"We are determined to protest because people are universally outraged regardless of political affiliation," Hwang In-seo of Yonsei University's student council, told AFP.

Analysts say the National Election Commission, a constitutional body with limited external oversight, has long faced gaps in internal discipline and review mechanisms.

A Seoul court this week ordered evidence from an affected polling station in the capital be preserved for investigation, while local media reported prosecutors and police had agreed to set up a joint investigation team.

The evidence includes ballot boxes and CCTV footage, a representative of the Seoul Eastern District Court told AFP. – AFP

Military court jails Indonesian soldiers over acid attack on activist

Dessy Sagita

JAKARTA – An Indonesian military court sentenced four soldiers to up to three years in prison yesterday over an acid attack that left an activist blind in one eye.

Rights groups condemned what they deemed a light sentence, arguing the verdict was designed to shield others who had ordered and planned the attack against Andrie Yunus.

The 27-year-old activist had criticised the armed forces' perceived expanding role in government.

The four soldiers, all members of the military's Strategic Intelligence Agency (BAIS), were found guilty of premeditated assault for the attack that left Andrie seriously injured.

They were arrested shortly after the attack, and BAIS head Yudi Abrimantyo stepped down in what officials called a "form of responsibility".

But critics say those who had planned the crime have not been identified and likely never will be, in a country where attacks on activists are rarely punished.

The soldiers – Edi Sudarko, 45; Budi Hariyanto Widhi Cahyono, 43; Nandala Dwi Prasetya, 40; and Sami Lakka, 41 – were sentenced to between one-and-a-half and three years in prison.

Two of them were also dismissed from the military for what presiding judge Fredy Ferdian Isnartanto described as "arrogant conduct".

Military prosecutors contended the soldiers did not act on orders but on their own initiative.

They were said to have been angered by Andrie and another activist interrupting a lawmakers' meeting in 2025 to protest a revision to Indonesia's armed forces law.

The amendment, approved by parliament, expanded the number of government ministries and state institutions that active-duty military personnel can work in from 10 to 14.

Andrie had just finished recording a podcast on the perceived expanding influence of the military when he was attacked while riding his motorbike in Jakarta.

"The actions of the defendants constitute an extrajudicial act of revenge," prosecutor Wasinton Marpaung said last week.

Reacting to the verdict, Amnesty International Indonesia head Usman Hamid said it "downplays the severity and impact of the life-threatening attack on Andrie".

"It fails to duly consider the involvement of other actors," he said in a statement.

The government, for its part, said it rejected "all forms of intimidation, physical violence, and acts of retaliation... against citizens who voice criticism or express their opinions".

"There is no place for rogue officials who commit anarchic acts, break the law, or use violence to silence others," the minister for law and human rights, Yusril Ihza Mahendra, said in a statement.

'Whitewash'

Andrie and others – including United Nations human rights

experts – had asked for the trial to be held in a civilian court, not a military one, for fear of a cover-up.

The activist refused to attend any of the trial hearings.

One of the judges on the panel, Mokhammad Zainal Abidin, said yesterday the defendants had "only intended to teach (Andrie) a lesson" so that he would "no longer trample upon and demean" the military.

For Usman, the verdict "shields the full chain of command and other actors potentially linked to this incident from scrutiny".

"It is a blatant whitewash which brings neither justice nor truth to Andrie Yunus."

Human Rights Watch said the sentence made a "mockery of justice".

"The light sentences... show exactly why the military court system is not fit for cases like these," said the organisation's Asia director, Elaine Pearson.

Parliament passed a revision to the national police law on Tuesday that critics say would grant the force too much power in the government, similar to that enjoyed by the military.

Last month, Amnesty warned that the government under President Prabowo Subianto was taking an "authoritarian" turn.

It pointed to "a growing pattern in which Indonesian authorities – including the military – deploy online disinformation to target journalists, activists, academics and protesters in retaliation for their legitimate activism and expression".

– AFP

Death toll from Philippines quake rises to 46

GENERAL SANTOS – Rescuers in the southern Philippines pulled a body from the rubble of a collapsed supermarket on Wednesday, as the death toll from a major earthquake climbed to 46.

The 7.8-magnitude tremor just off the coast of Mindanao on Monday brought down buildings, triggered landslides and set off tsunami warnings across a swathe of the southern island.

Joey Deluvio, 39, was one of two employees at a supermarket in General Santos City that has been the focus of recovery efforts despite the constant threat of aftershocks.

Life-detecting equipment had traced a "weak pulse" earlier in the operation, local rescuer Michelle

Chua told AFP yesterday, but "when they got to the body... there were no signs of life".

Deluvio's body was found pinned between two beams, Chua added.

The national disaster agency raised the death toll to 45 yesterday, while the number of people missing jumped dramatically from four to 17.

However, the figure for fatalities did not include Deluvio, the civil defence office confirmed.

Most of the additional dead were from Davao Occidental province, and most had been killed in landslides or collapsing buildings, civil defence official Rafaelito Alejandro said in a radio interview. – AFP

Japan's lawmakers back plan to ease imperial succession crisis

TOKYO – Japan's legislature endorsed yesterday a proposed framework aimed at easing a looming imperial succession crisis, with just one young heir to the throne currently remaining.

The imperial household operates under strict rules that allow only male offsprings from the male side of the family to ascend to the ancient Chrysanthemum Throne.

That means that the household's future currently hinges on 19-year-old Prince Hisahito, Emperor Naruhito's nephew and the only young man in the family.

Other family members are either women – who are not allowed to inherit the throne – or older men, the youngest among them 60-year-old Crown Prince Akishino, who is Naruhito's brother and Hisahito's father.

In a bid to expand the thinning line of succession, lawmakers endorsed in principle amending the Imperial Household Law, presenting their initiative to Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi.

The proposals would allow women keep their royal status even after marrying someone outside the family, and let the

imperial family adopt male distant relatives.

"Given all the differing opinions, we believe we've managed to produce the best possible result," lower house speaker Eisuke Mori told a news conference before presenting the legislature's view to Takaichi.

Once her government drafts the amendments, the bill will return to the legislature, with Mori expressing his wish to pass it before the current parliament session ends on July 17.

Under the proposal, adopted men would not be heirs but their sons could be placed in line to succeed the throne, Mori said this week.

The imperial family now has 16 members in total, including five men – the 66-year-old emperor and his brother, Prince Hisahito, retired emperor Akihito, who is 92, and his 90-year-old brother.

Emperor Naruhito has a daughter, Princess Aiko. The existing male-succession rule means that she would have to leave the family once she marries a commoner.

The lawmakers' proposal did not address the possibility of a woman emperor, an idea that has wide public support. – AFP



Visitors pray at the Erawan Shrine in Bangkok on Tuesday. – AFP



Sri Lanka's opposition activists demanding the release of detained former intelligence chief Suresh Sallay take part in a sit-in protest outside the railway station in Colombo yesterday.

Sri Lanka's public security minister told parliament yesterday the nation's ex-intelligence chief directed the 2019 Easter Sunday attack, in the first official statement linking him directly to the bombings that killed 279 people. — AFP

Pakistan launches deadly strikes on Afghanistan

Mohammad Yusuf Mangal

KHOST, Afghanistan—Pakistan has renewed deadly airstrikes on neighbouring Afghanistan, officials in both countries said yesterday, in the worst violence in weeks following a period of relative calm. An AFP journalist saw a house completely destroyed in the southeastern province of Khost, where residents were digging graves to bury those killed in a nighttime attack.

Afghanistan's government spokesman, Zabihullah Mujahid, said "11 children, one woman, and one elderly man were killed" in strikes on Khost, Kunar and Paktika provinces.

Islamabad said the strikes came in response to "recent terrorist incidents in Pakistan" and killed 26 militants linked to the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) group.

Pakistan's Information Minister Attaullah Tarar said that "precise and calibrated strikes" targeted militant "hideouts and safe havens" in border areas, without commenting on civilian casualties.

The attack in Khost's Spera district killed nine people and wounded 10 others, including children, a provincial official told AFP on condition of anonymity.

Multiple residents confirmed the death toll and said the strike hit Mane village soon after midnight [local time].

"We and people from the neighbouring areas rushed to the scene and rescued the remaining people. We even took some wounded to the clinic," said Ali Jan Akhlaqi, a 29-year-old resident.

Shirbat Khan, a 55-year-old resident, told AFP those killed were "a poor family, they had done nothing" and had no ties to militants. Pakistan's information chief said the strikes hit four targets, including a training camp, an ammunition cache and a hideout linked to two TTP commanders.

Fraught relations

In neighbouring Paktika, two residents said a separate attack

killed three civilians in Barmal district.

The strike hit a home, and those killed were children, one of the residents said.

The strikes are the deadliest in weeks and follow a period of relative calm at the border after conflict between the two countries erupted in late February.

An escalation saw fierce fighting along the frontier and unprecedented Pakistani airstrikes on Afghan cities — including the capital Kabul and southern Kandahar, where the supreme leader is based.

At least 372 Afghan civilians were killed and 397 others wounded in that conflict in the first three months of this year, a United Nations report published last month said.

Relations between Pakistan and Afghanistan have been fraught since the Taliban authorities took power in Kabul for a second time in 2021.

Security issues have proved a sticking point, especially Pakistan's demand that Afghanistan curb the TTP militant group.

Islamabad accuses the Taliban government of sheltering militants behind a surge in attacks, particularly the TTP, which has waged a violent campaign against Pakistan for years.

Tarar, Pakistan's information chief, signalled military operations would continue.

"Pakistan has always strived for maintaining peace and stability in the region, but at the same time the safety and security of our citizens remains our top priority," he wrote on X.

Afghan officials have repeatedly denied the accusations from Islamabad, and counter that Pakistan harbours hostile groups and does not respect its sovereignty.

The border between the neighbours has remained largely closed since a flare-up in violence in October, freezing bilateral trade.

— AFP

India says working to stop water flowing into Pakistan

NEW DELHI — India is working to ensure "not a single drop of water" will flow into neighbouring Pakistan, the water minister has said, after New Delhi suspended a major treaty last year.

Pakistan has previously said it would consider any attempt to change the flow of cross-border waterways as an "act of war", and says that the 1960 Indus Water Treaty (IWT) remains in force as there is no mechanism to unilaterally withdraw from it.

"It is certain, not a single drop of water will go (to Pakistan) in the coming years," Minister of Water C.R. Patil told India's ANI news agency late Tuesday.

Patil, speaking in Hindi, said that India is "actively working on it" after "directives" from Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

The treaty governs the use of water from six rivers, whose headwaters originate in India but flow into Pakistan as part of the

Indus basin — a resource relied on by hundreds of millions.

The Indus cuts through ultra-sensitive demarcation lines between India and Pakistan in contested, Muslim-majority Kashmir — a Himalayan territory both countries claim in full.

India said in May 2025 that it suspended its IWT membership, after accusing Islamabad of backing a deadly attack on tourists on the Indian side of Kashmir — charges Pakistan denied.

The nuclear-armed neighbours fought a four-day conflict — with intense drone, missile and artillery exchanges, killing nearly 70 people on both sides.

The issue of water has remained a bitter point of contention since.

Earlier this month, Pakistan accused India of wanting to "weaponise" water, after two initiatives were announced by New Delhi on the section of the Chenab River it controls.

In May, India's government-owned National Hydroelectric Power Corporation issued a tender notice for a proposed tunnel project that would transfer water from the Chenab River to the Beas Basin.

India's power ministry said in January it was undertaking "sediment removal" at Salal Power Station on the Chenab River "following the termination of the Indus Waters Treaty".

Experts say that India's existing dams do not have the capacity to block or divert water, and can only regulate timings of when it releases flows.

Cutting flows would have serious implications for Pakistan's agriculture and overall economy, but any project would take several years before they have an impact.

An official in the Indian-controlled Kashmir said that any work would "not be possible to start before mid-2027", and would take at least five years to complete. — AFP

Everest survivor out of intensive care, as probe calls grow

Paavan Mathema

KATHMANDU — A Nepali mountaineer who spent six days dragging himself off Mount Everest after being abandoned has been moved out of intensive care as he slowly recovers, his family said Tuesday.

His improbable survival has sparked celebration among fellow climbers, but also anger from family members and the mountaineering community over the failure to locate him sooner.

Dawa Sherpa, 57, disappeared in brutal conditions on the upper slopes of the world's tallest mountain on May 30 during one of the final climbs of the spring season.

He was found last Thursday morning, crawling towards Base Camp, and airlifted to Kathmandu, where doctors are treating him for frostbite, severe dehydration and a fractured thigh bone.

"He has been shifted from the ICU (intensive care unit) to the ward and treatment is ongoing — he is able to speak a little and is eating," his

relative Nuru Sherpa told AFP.

"Doctors are observing his hands and legs for improvement."

Left stranded in freezing temperatures near Everest's "death zone", where oxygen levels are critically low, Dawa Sherpa said he survived for days with almost no food or water.

"I thought I would perish this way. I didn't get lost. As the oxygen ran out, I fell behind. After the oxygen finished, I couldn't walk," he told BBC Nepali on Friday from his hospital bed.

"I didn't eat anything for the first two days. Then I began chewing ice. It hurt my teeth. I chewed the ice hard," he said.

He survived on a few chocolates and snacks he had in his pockets.

'Negligence'

Dawa Sherpa, also known as "Hillary" like legendary climber Edmund Hillary, told others after his rescue that he had fallen into a crevasse.

But he crawled on and was found still slowly moving towards the Base Camp by the Sagarmatha Pollution Control Committee (SPCC), a Nepali team that helps set routes on Everest and clean up waste left behind.

"There has been negligence in his case," Maya Sherpa, president of the Everest Summiters Association, told AFP on Tuesday.

"An investigation has to take place to find out what exactly happened so that such incidents are not repeated."

The Nepal Mountaineering Association has called for a government committee to investigate the incident.

At least five climbers — two Indians and three Nepalis — died during this year's Everest season.

More than 1,000 climbers reached Everest's summit, according to preliminary Nepali government figures, making it the busiest season on record.

The government collected more than US\$7 million from issuing climbing permits for Everest. — AFP

UN says boy was shot dead at rally for Afghan women

KABUL — The United Nations said yesterday a boy was shot dead during a women's rights rally in Afghanistan's Herat city a day earlier, when witnesses told AFP security forces dispersed protesters with live fire.

Police have denied that any weapons were used during Tuesday's demonstration by dozens of men, in response to the Taliban government's morality police detaining women for not wearing the body-cloaking chador or burqa.

The UN mission in Afghanistan, UNAMA, said it was "alarmed by the excessive use of force by Afghanistan's de facto security forces" against protesting residents.

"UNAMA has confirmed that at least one person, a boy, was killed

by gunfire, while several others suffered injuries after being beaten with sticks, and is verifying reports of a second fatality," the mission said in a statement.

Two witnesses told AFP they saw the security forces firing weapons, while one of them said they also saw sticks and whips being used.

Saeed Masoud Hussaini, spokesman for Herat police, accused demonstrators on Tuesday of seeking "to disturb public order".

People "attempted to gather and create tensions under the pretext of protesting issues related to the observance of the hijab" dress code, he told AFP.

"Thanks to the timely presence of security forces, the situation was

brought fully under control, and further escalation of tensions was prevented," he added.

UNAMA documented the arrest of at least 30 women in Herat "for allegedly violating dress code instructions", it said.

The Ministry for the Propagation of Virtue and the Prevention of Vice, which deploys morality police officers to enforce the law, did not comment on women in Herat being detained over the dress code when contacted by AFP.

Across Afghanistan, women must be almost entirely covered when they leave home, with many wearing a flowing abaya robe, a Muslim headscarf and a face covering. — AFP

Trump vows attacks on Iran for 'playing' US over peace deal

WASHINGTON, DC – US President Donald Trump warned yesterday that he would renew US attacks on Iran, saying Tehran had taken too long to agree a deal to end the Middle East war and accusing its negotiators of “playing us for suckers.”

The remarks came after Iran and the US once again traded fire following the downing of an American helicopter, further straining a ceasefire that took effect in April but has been marked by sporadic flare-ups of violence.

The exchange drew international calls for restraint on the eve of the World Cup, which the US is co-hosting and Iran is participating in, including from the head of the United Nations who cautioned against a return to all-out war.

“We hit them hard yesterday [Tuesday]. We’re going to hit them again hard today,” Trump told reporters in the Oval Office.

“We were really close to a deal, but they keep tapping us along, they keep playing us for suckers.”

The US leader had earlier accused Iran of taking too long to negotiate a peace deal after weeks of talks and warned it would “have to pay the price”, offering a different assessment to a day before when he said talks to agree a peace deal were in the “final throes.”

“Iran is all talk and no action,” he said. “They’ve taken too long to negotiate a deal that would have been great for them, now they will have to pay the price!!!”

In a sign that diplomacy was continuing however, negotiators from Qatar – which along with Pakistan has been assisting in mediation efforts – travelled to Tehran yesterday “to meet with the Iranians in an effort to bridge the remaining gaps”, a diplomat with knowledge of the situation said.

At a UN Security Council meeting on the Middle East, United Nations chief Ant

ónio Guterres suggested that an imperfect ceasefire was preferable to a return to full-scale hostilities.

“We should not minimize the risks of a lesser fire becoming full fire, or in another word – full war,” he said.

Warning to the Gulf

The war, which began with US-Israeli strikes on Iran, threw the region into chaos and rattled global markets before the shaky truce began.

Iran said it had attacked US bases in Jordan and Bahrain yesterday after the US carried out strikes on the Islamic republic in retaliation for the downing of a helicopter.

The Apache was the second crewed aircraft that Washington has confirmed to have been shot down by Iran during



First responders and residents gather at the site of an Israeli airstrike that hit a car in the southern Lebanese city of Sidon yesterday. – AFP

the war. Its two crew members were rescued, the US military said.

Bahrain said it intercepted and destroyed “a number of Iranian aerial attacks”, while Jordan’s military said it shot down five missiles, with no casualties or material damage.

The Kuwaiti military also said its air defences were engaging “hostile aerial targets”. Iran has recently carried out deadly attacks there too.

Tehran’s foreign ministry “reiterated the legal and moral responsibility” of its neighbours not to allow the US or Israel to use their territory for attacks.

US Central Command (CENTCOM), which oversees

American forces in the Middle East, said on X that it had earlier “struck Iranian air defence, ground control stations, and surveillance radar sites near the Strait of Hormuz”.

A US warplane also fired on and disabled a tanker in the Gulf of Oman that was attempting to transport oil from Iran in violation of a US blockade of Iranian ports, the US military said yesterday.

The violence sparked calls for de-escalation from Iranian allies Russia and China.

A spokesperson for China’s foreign ministry called on the warring parties to “stop intensifying the conflict and escalating the situation”.

‘We’ve packed our things’

Iran has insisted any deal to end the war must include a truce in Lebanon, which was drawn into the conflict when Iran-backed Hezbollah militants within its borders fired rockets at Israel on March 2.

Israel responded with a campaign of airstrikes and a ground invasion that has killed more than 3,600 people. Exchanges of fire with Hezbollah have not stopped despite a nominal truce.

Yesterday, a medical source told AFP that Israeli strikes on south Lebanon had killed 12 people.

On Tuesday, the Israeli military told the entire southern city of Tyre to evacuate, with an AFP correspondent witnessing residents fleeing and heavy traffic heading north after the warning.

An AFP correspondent in the coastal city of Sidon, further north, saw displaced people arriving from Tyre, some with belongings strapped to the roofs of their cars.

On Wednesday, a strike hit the centre of Sidon, with an AFP correspondent seeing a car burning and emergency personnel heading to the scene after hearing a blast.

“We’ve packed our things, and we’re leaving,” Tyre resident Elias Barbour told AFP.

“What have we done wrong? What are we supposed to do?” – AFP

Surging US consumer inflation hits 3-year high in key challenge for Trump

Asad Hashim

WASHINGTON, DC – US consumer inflation surged to a fresh three-year high in May, with soaring energy prices caused by US President Donald Trump’s Iran war posing a key challenge to Republicans ahead of midterm elections.

The consumer price index (CPI) rose 4.2 percent year-on-year, up from April’s 3.8 percent figure, the US Bureau of Labor Statistics said yesterday.

It was the highest reading since April 2023, according to official data, but in line with analyst expectations.

The US-Israel war against Iran, launched in late February, has sent energy prices skyrocketing after Tehran retaliated by virtually closing the vital Strait of Hormuz, through which roughly a fifth of global oil and gas normally pass.

Trump is scrambling to reassure Americans that he can stay on top of price rises, which he says will end with the war against Iran.

But asked by reporters if he was concerned by the figures, Trump said yesterday, “No, I love it, the numbers were great.” He predicted inflation would “come down like a rock” after the conflict.

Economists have disputed that claim, with oil prices expected to take months to return to pre-war levels, depending on when hostilities end.

Soaring costs are a key issue for voters as they head to midterm elections in November, when Trump’s Republican Party will be aiming to maintain their control of both houses of Congress.

Should Democratic lawmakers retake one or both houses, it will limit Trump’s ability to bulldoze policies through Congress as he has done throughout his second term.

Possible peak

May’s consumer inflation data showed energy prices had risen 23.5 percent over the same time last year, with gasoline rising by 40.5 percent.

Grocery prices also rose significantly for the second month in a row, up 2.7 percent over a year ago.

Other prices to increase over the month included medical care, personal care, airline fares and recreation.

Americans have been dealing with years of higher-than-expected prices, with inflation continuing to remain elevated long after the pandemic.

Prices have been fuelled by repeated shocks, including the Ukraine war, Trump’s tariffs and now the war on Iran.

Analysts, however, said that gasoline prices at the pump have recently stabilised, potentially indicating a favourable outlook for overall inflation.

“Higher energy prices again pushed up inflation last month, but we estimate that inflation has peaked and will trend lower in the second half of the year,” said Kathy Bostjancic, chief economist at Nationwide.

She added that this was assuming there was a “near-term resolution with Iran to reopen the Strait of Hormuz.”

Core CPI inflation, which excludes volatile food and energy prices, came in at 2.9 percent in May, up from 2.8 percent the month before.

“For now, there appears to be little passthrough of higher energy cost onto core inflation, outside of airfare,” said Gregory Daco, chief economist at EY-Parthenon.

‘No position to cut rates’

The US Federal Reserve has a long-term two-percent target for inflation, and the central bank’s key interest rate-setting committee will meet next week.

It will be new chairman Kevin Warsh’s first meeting since taking office last month, and he will be under pressure from Trump to reduce interest rates.

Markets, however, expect the Fed to keep rates steady at this meeting, but are now pricing in rate hikes for later in the year, spooking equity investors.

Before the Iran war, markets had priced in rate cuts for later in the year, with expectations that inflation fueled by Trump’s tariff policy would begin to fade.

The war, however, has complicated the outlook, with more Fed policymakers saying they were concerned about rising inflation, which the central bank would typically address by raising rates.

The Fed’s preferred inflation gauge, the Personal Consumption Expenditures (PCE) prices index, also hit a three-year high in its last reading.

“The Fed will be in no position to cut rates if this continues,” said Chris Zaccarelli, chief investment officer for Northlight Asset Management.

– AFP

Struggling German auto supplier Bosch pivots to robots

BERLIN – German industrial giant Bosch said yesterday it will step up efforts in the field of humanoid robotics, as its traditional auto parts business comes under increasing pressure.

The world’s biggest auto supplier, Bosch makes everything from braking systems to sensors, but has suffered as European carmakers battle fierce overseas competition and weak demand.

However, the rise of humanoid robots, powered with generative AI models and capable of performing complex tasks, offers an opening for the group, chief executive Stefan Hartung said.

“With the advent of humanoid robotics, the demand for Bosch components and solutions is increasing,” he said in a statement.

The market for specialised MEMS (micro-electro-mechanical systems) sensors is expected to grow to over US\$19.2 billion by 2030 and hit an annual growth rate of four percent, according a study by consultancy Yole Group, which was presented by Bosch.

Bosch is a key producer of the tiny sensors, which are crucial in robotics.

At an event in Berlin, Hartung stressed the importance of the components in improving the dexterity of robots.

These sensors determine whether the robot “should

tighten its grip or not, whether it is dealing with a sturdy object, or whether it needs to act delicately because it is an egg,” he said.

“Humans have four million touch sensors. If we were to build robots equipped with as many sensors, four years of global sensor production would barely be enough to equip 12,500 robots,” he added.

The focus on automation is also meant to boost the competitiveness of Bosch’s German factories and plug shortages of skilled labour.

Bosch, also known for making a wide range of industrial equipment and household appliances, struck a deal with German robotics firm Neura in January to gather data on factory work.

Under the partnership, several thousand workers in some of Bosch’s 350 facilities worldwide will wear sensor suits to glean training data for Neura robots.

Neura said yesterday it had raised up to US\$1.4 billion in fresh fundraising from backers including Bosch, chip giant Nvidia, Amazon and crypto group Tether.

The funding will be used to accelerate Neura’s activities, ranging from the deployment of robots to the rollout of “gyms” for clients to train bots, and the development of the company’s physical AI systems. – AFP

Belfast girds for more violence after stabbing suspect held

Peter Murphy and Peter Hutchison

BELFAST – Belfast steeled itself Wednesday for a second night of violence directed at immigrants in Northern Ireland, unrest that authorities say is being stoked by far-right activists on social media.

Several schools closed and businesses shut early after a Sudanese man appeared in court over a brutal knife attack that triggered Tuesday evening's unrest in the British province's capital.

Police were bolstering their presence after masked rioters torched vehicles and buildings, forcing families to flee their homes, in scenes that UK Prime Minister Keir Starmer branded "shocking and completely unacceptable".

The violence, which spread to Scotland, comes as tensions in the UK are already high. There were skirmishes in southern England last week over the police handling of the murder of a white student by a British Sikh man.

Anselme Shima, originally from the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and who has lived in Northern Ireland since 2013, called the situation "terrifying".

"I have two children at home and this morning I am wondering, 'Can I send them to school?'" the 48-year-old told AFP Wednesday.

Calls for more protests circulated yesterday.

Northern Ireland police chief Jon Butcher said the force was looking to add a further 200 officers to the streets, while local transport authorities cancelled bus and train services for yesterday evening (local time).

Butcher said police had to take a baby as young as two months



A man sweeps the street next to a burnt-out city bus after anti-immigrant demonstrations turned violent the night before, burning vehicles and homes, in eastern Belfast, Northern Ireland, yesterday. – AFP

old and its family to safety during Tuesday's disorder, which he branded "a huge act of self-harm by mindless idiots", many of whom appeared to be young men.

The violence followed widespread condemnation of a stabbing allegedly committed by Hadi Alodid, 30, a refugee originally from Sudan, on a man in his 40s who a court heard lost an eye in the attack.

'Bad faith actors'

Alodid made a brief appearance at Belfast Magistrates' Court charged with attempted murder. He was also charged with possession of a bladed article in public and threats to kill.

He was remanded in custody by a judge, who adjourned the case to July 8.

In a statement released shortly afterwards on the Facebook page of a local politician, the victim's family appealed for calm.

"We do not want this terrible tragedy to be used to divide people or fuel hostility," they said.

Northern Ireland police said three people had been arrested over the disorder, including a 39-year-old man who has already been charged. The victim remains in hospital "with serious injuries", the force added.

In the Scottish city of Glasgow, there were also three arrests as two police officers and three members of

the public were injured, Scotland's police force said.

Footage of the Belfast stabbing – which showed several people intervening, one wielding a hurling stick – sparked widespread condemnation. Despite pleas from authorities not to share the video, it went viral on social media.

Numerous social media accounts linked to so-called "patriots" shared the footage, urging people to "protest against mass immigration into their communities".

The chairwoman of Britain's ruling Labour party, Anna Turley, said online platforms were "playing a role in driving" the unrest. She suggested X owner Elon Musk was one of the "bad faith actors"

inflaming tensions.

Musk had retweeted a post by anti-immigration activist Stephen Yaxley-Lennon – also known as Tommy Robinson – adding: "Only by protesting REPEATEDLY and LOUDLY will there be any change!!".

He also retweeted a post by Rupert Lowe, leader of Restore Britain, a fringe hard-right party, saying "millions must go".

Musk "has a responsibility, everyone in public and civil life has a responsibility to call for calm and not to stoke grievance or hatred... that puts vulnerable people and our communities at risk," Turley said.

Britain's media watchdog Ofcom said it had written to online service providers about "the increased risk of their platforms being used to stir up hatred, provoke violence and commit other offences under UK law".

Alodid is a Sudanese refugee with a residence permit valid until 2028, according to the UK interior ministry.

Butcher said he had arrived in the UK in 2023 via Paris and Dublin and "was not known" to police.

Immigration is a hot-button issue in Britain, and has helped fuel the rise of the hard-right Reform UK party, led by Nigel Farage.

The country frequently sees anti-immigration protests. Demonstrators clashed with police in Southampton on June 2 amid outrage over the murder of 18-year-old Henry Nowak in December.

He was handcuffed by police as he lay dying after his murderer, British Sikh Vickrum Digwa, falsely accused Nowak of racially abusing him.

– AFP

World's largest whale graveyard discovered by Chinese sub

Daniel Lawler

PARIS – The world's largest whale graveyard has been discovered at the bottom of the Indian Ocean by Chinese scientists, who found that the vast expanse of both new and ancient carcasses supports huge communities of deep-sea life.

It is also the deepest and oldest known whale graveyard on Earth, according to research published in the journal *Nature* yesterday, with some fossils dating back 5.3 million years.

From inside a small submersible, the Chinese researchers saw many strange animals – many believed to be new to science – living off the whale carcasses.

A new, though extinct, species of whale was also identified among the nearly 500 skeletons found up to 7,000 metres deep along a 1,200 kilometre corridor of bones in the Indian Ocean west of Australia.

Lead study author Peng Xiaotong of the Chinese Academy of Sciences told AFP that the

researchers were "astonished" when the scale of their discovery became clear.

It was known that when whales die and drop to the seafloor, their sunken bodies – called "whale falls" – provide a source of food to deep-sea creatures.

"But discovering a necropolis of this scale was completely unexpected: the size of distribution, the depth and the age range were far beyond anything we had imagined," Peng said.

The whales were believed to have died in such numbers in this particular area because it is a popular foraging habitat – and has a V-shaped trench that funnels carcasses to the seafloor.

'Truly incredible experience'

For the discovery, the Fendouzhe submersible carried out 32 dives in 2023 – though what it found was only revealed in *Nature* yesterday.

The sub took up to three people on the dives, collecting the fossil

samples using robotic arms.

Study co-author Zhou Peng said witnessing the whale graveyard "was a truly incredible experience".

"The vibrant ecosystems we saw offered a completely different perspective on this otherwise dark and cold ocean floor."

Among the animals they discovered living off the carcasses were jellyfish, brittle stars, bone-boring worms and molluscs called bivalves.

Most of the 485 fossils the scientists catalogued were from different species of beaked whales.

Extrapolating from the number of bones they found, the scientists estimated there could be more than 10 million carcasses across the area, which is called the Diamantina Zone.

The soft tissue and lipids inside that many carcasses "translates to roughly 6.7 million tonnes of sequestered carbon," Peng said.

This provides an immense source of sustenance for animals, similar to how hydrothermal vents

create their own ecosystems on the ocean floor.

Some of the animals seen by the scientists also live in hydrothermal vents and cold seeps, suggesting whale carcasses could help connect these deep-sea communities.

While this is by far the largest whale graveyard yet found, fossils found during trawling suggest there could be others off South Africa, the Iberian peninsula and the Crozet islands, said the study.

'More blockbusters to come'?

University of Hawaii oceanographer Craig Smith, who discovered the first whale fall in 1987 but was not involved in the new research, told AFP it was "extremely exciting".

"The vast number of fossil whale falls documented, including a new species of beaked whale, is truly amazing and is of major importance to understanding whale evolution and whale distributions over geologic time," he said.

Whale fall researcher Amy Baco-Taylor at Florida State University told AFP the "remarkable discovery" would "likely provide many new insights".

This includes for the animals living in these "chemosynthetic" communities, whose numbers had been thought to have been drastically reduced by human whaling, she added.

US palaeontologist Stephen Godfrey compared the "truly unique discovery" to past major underwater finds, such as when scientists first identified hydrothermal vents teeming with life on the ocean floor in 1977.

He called for future submersible voyages to find more whale graveyards across the world.

This discovery "reminded me of a trailer for the first in a series of epic movies", Godfrey commented in a linked *Nature* paper.

"I hope that there will be many more of these blockbusters to come."

– AFP

Peru's election chief says election count could take 2 weeks

Luis Jaime Cisneros

LIMA – The head of Peru's election authority has told AFP that the results of Sunday's presidential election may not be known for a fortnight, dashing hopes of a quick resolution to the ultra-tight race.

Bernardo Pachas said on Tuesday that "it could take anywhere from two weeks to the end of the month" to know whether conservative Keiko Fujimori or leftist Roberto Sánchez had won.

With about 18 million ballots counted, Sánchez was ahead by just 20,000 votes and the race was still much too close to call.

About four percent of voting places have yet to report, including centres in Lima, the Amazon and overseas.

Many voters had hoped the election would draw a line under years of political chaos that has seen a string of presidents jailed, deposed and impeached.

Whoever is elected will be the ninth president in a decade.

But the tight result shows the Andean nation remains deeply divided between the populous coast and the more rural, Indigenous south.

Fujimori, 51, has already tried and failed to reach the presidency three times.

But she now hopes to ride a wave of support for right-wing candidates who have won recent elections in Bolivia, Chile and Ecuador with a tough-on-crime message.



Pedestrians walk past newspaper front pages displayed at a newsstand in the Peruvian capital Lima on Monday, the day after the runoff election. – AFP

She is the daughter of the late president Alberto Fujimori, who had been jailed for human rights violations.

Sánchez, a 57-year-old former psychologist, surged late in the race to reach the runoff.

He has moderated his early calls for "radical change" and told AFP he wants a "respectful" relationship with US President Donald Trump.

Both campaigns believe they can still win and, for now, neither candidate has claimed fraud.

"We are going to wait very cautiously" Fujimori said on Tuesday, "I think it is far too early to declare a winner, I must wait."

EU election observers said the vote took place in a "calm and orderly" manner.

Chief EU observer Annalisa Corrado urged candidates to "wait patiently for the official proclamation of the results."

"The result of the June 7 presidential election has led us to a statistical tie."

The first-round presidential election result took more than 30 days to complete.

Before declaring a winner, election officials will have to examine results from districts where the tally has been challenged – representing about 400,000 votes.

Neither Sánchez nor Fujimori will have a legislative majority and whoever wins must build alliances to complete their term, according to analyst Jeffrey Radzinsky.

– AFP

Court outlaws Colombian hard-right candidate's campaign slogan

BOGOTÁ – A Bogotá court on Tuesday blocked right-wing presidential candidate Abelardo de la Espriella from using his own slogan and any other national Colombian symbol in his campaign.

The ruling follows another judgement that banned the millionaire lawyer from using the South American country's football jersey for political gain.

The 47-year-old candidate garnered 43.7 percent of votes in the first election round in May and will face leftist Senator Iván Cepeda, who won 40.9 percent, in a June 21 runoff.

Tuesday's court ruling ordered the "removal of all political propaganda" containing the Colombian flag from Espriella's presidential campaign, as well as his characteristic military salute, the slogan "firm for the homeland" and the party name "defenders of the homeland."

The court gave the candidate 24 hours to heed the ruling.

"They must be so terrified that they basically want to ban our entire

campaign," Espriella posted on X. "Keep trying. STAND FIRM FOR THE HOMELAND!"

The presidential hopeful also defied another court ruling last week which banned him from campaigning with a Colombian football jersey after Cepeda accused him of "stealing" and appropriating the garment, just as Brazil's former far-right president Jair Bolsonaro did with his country's kit.

Colombia is choosing a successor to its first-ever leftist President Gustavo Petro as the country endures its worst wave of violence in a decade.

Endorsed by US President Donald Trump and calling himself "The Tiger," Espriella has vowed to crack down on crime.

He previously made a fortune representing drug-trafficking paramilitaries, fraudsters and soccer stars.

Cepeda meanwhile favours pursuing Petro's "total peace" strategy by negotiating with armed groups.

– AFP



Colombia's presidential candidate Abelardo de la Espriella of the rightwing Defensores de la Patria ("Defenders of the Fatherland") movement gestures as he speaks to supporters behind bulletproof glass during a campaign rally in Cartagena on Tuesday. Colombia will hold the runoff presidential election on June 21. – AFP

At Guantánamo, Pentagon chief warns Cuba not to acquire weapons that threaten US

MIAMI – US Defence Secretary Pete Hegseth visited the US military base at Guantánamo Bay yesterday, warning the communist-ruled island of Cuba against acquiring weapons that could threaten the United States.

Washington has ramped up pressure against the Cuba with sanctions and a crippling oil blockade, and President Donald Trump has repeatedly signalled that the Cuban government could be the next after Venezuela to fall to US pressure.

"It would be unwise for the government of Cuba to try to procure or get access to the types of weapons that could reach this base or the American homeland," Hegseth said in remarks to US troops at the base.

"They would be inviting the kind of confrontation not only do they not want, but they could not stand," said Hegseth, dressed in a green T-shirt and black shorts for physical fitness training with US forces.

"What happens with the future of Cuba is in the hands of... the president of the United States and the leadership of Cuba," he said.

US media outlet Axios reported

last month that Cuba had obtained more than 300 military drones and recently began discussing plans to use them to attack the Guantánamo base, US military vessels and possibly even Florida.

Cuba has been acquiring attack drones from Russia and Iran since 2023 and is seeking to buy more, US officials told Axios.

Havana slammed the report, with Cuban Foreign Minister Bruno Rodríguez accusing the United States of baselessly plotting for its next war.

Official visits

In addition to Guantánamo, Hegseth also travelled yesterday to Tampa, Florida, where US Central Command (CENTCOM) is headquartered. CENTCOM oversees US forces in the Middle East, including operations against Iran.

The trip to Guantánamo is the second by Hegseth as Pentagon chief, after another early last year, and is the latest in a series of visits to the island by top US officials.

Late last month, the top US general overseeing operations in Latin America visited Guantánamo, where he met with Cuban military leaders.

The US military said at the time that the meeting by General Francis Donovan was "a brief exchange on operational security matters."

"Gen. Donovan also led a perimeter security assessment of the naval base and discussed force protection, safety of service members and their families, and operational readiness with base officials," US Southern Command added.

Two weeks earlier, CIA Director John Ratcliffe visited Havana and met with Cuban officials.

Guantánamo Bay, 700 kilometers southeast of Miami, on the southeastern coast of Cuba, is the site of a notorious facility for prisoners detained after the September 11, 2001 attacks.

The prison has been used to indefinitely hold detainees seized during the wars and other operations that followed the attacks.

Conditions there have prompted outcry from rights groups, and UN experts have condemned it as a site of "unparalleled notoriety."

Trump has also sought to use the base as a holding centre for migrants who are being deported from the United States.

– AFP

Colombian police arrest man suspected of killing journalist

BOGOTÁ – Colombian police on Tuesday arrested the alleged killer of a journalist, the second media worker to be killed in the country this month.

The suspect known as "Demonio" allegedly shot journalist Cristian Herrera dead from a motorcycle in the city of Cúcuta, which borders Venezuela, on Saturday.

"This individual is believed to be linked to activities related to homicides and thefts," a police statement read.

Two more individuals suspected of coordinating the crime were arrested, and all three belong to the same criminal organisation, according to police.

Herrera worked for the Foundation for Press Freedom (FLIP) and investigated impunity, organised crime and corruption.

FLIP had recorded 17 attacks

against him since 2014, as well as constant threats.

The journalist's loved ones, dressed in white to signify peace, mourned him at a funeral on Monday.

Colombia is one of the most dangerous countries in the region to be a journalist, according to media watchdog Reporters Without Borders (RSF).

At least 170 reporters have been killed in the country since 1977, FLIP data shows.

The worst wave of violence in a decade is engulfing the South American nation as it prepares to select a new president in a second round of voting on June 21.

Last month, guerrilla fighters murdered another journalist, Mateo Pérez, while he was reporting in the northwestern Antioquia region, which is plagued by illegal mining often run by armed groups.

– AFP

Both games will be played in Mexico.



Group A Venue: Mexico City Stadium



Mexico



South Africa

Tomorrow 3:00 a.m. Macau time

Group A Venue: Estadio Guadalajara



South Korea



Czechia

Tomorrow 10:00 a.m. Macau time

Infantino faces questions on eve of World Cup

Rob Woollard

MEXICO CITY — FIFA President Gianni Infantino was set to face the media on the eve of the World Cup last night, as off-field distractions dogged the build-up to the tournament.

Infantino is likely to face tough questions about sky-high ticket prices and an immigration crackdown that has seen a top referee, fans and team officials barred from co-hosts the United States.

The head of world football's governing body will give a rare press conference in Mexico City, where co-hosts Mexico play South Africa today in the opening match at the Estadio Azteca.

The 2026 men's World Cup has been expanded to 48 teams and is the biggest and most ambitious in the event's history, with matches also taking place in Canada.

But the refusal of US immigration authorities to allow Somali referee Omar Artan, one of Africa's leading match officials, into the country underlined fears that Donald Trump's immigration policy could leave deep scars on the football extravaganza.

Artan said the "biggest dream of my life" had been ripped away after he was turned back at the US border.

"I am very, very disappointed," Artan told *The New York Times*.

"I'm just simply a referee who's trying to live his dream, the biggest dream of my life, to come to the World Cup."

Artan, who was named the 2025 men's referee of the year by the Confederation of African Football, would have been the first Somali to officiate at a World Cup.

He said he was subjected to an 11-hour interview with border officials at Miami International Airport and then detained for several further hours in a holding cell before being put on a flight back to Turkey.

"I had the right papers and everything. I had the right visa," he added - an assertion confirmed to AFP by a Somali government advisor.

A US State Department official alleged to AFP that the referee was "associated with suspected members of terrorist organisations", therefore "making

the traveller ineligible for admission to the United States".

Artan returned to a hero's welcome in Mogadishu and vowed to take part in the next tournament in 2030.

"I will be at the next World Cup and will continue to make Somalia proud... Despite what has happened to me, I am not discouraged," Artan told more than 100 supporters and journalists at Mogadishu's main airport.

Meanwhile, concerns were rising that the curtainraiser in Mexico City could be disrupted by social unrest.

Protesters Tuesday blocked an avenue leading to the Estadio Azteca although lines of police prevented the demonstrators from reaching the stadium.

Thousands took part in the demonstration following a week of action that Mexican President Claudia Sheinbaum has called a "provocation."

Sheinbaum has said that the opening match was "guaranteed," though the left-leaning leader again ruled out using police to repress the demonstrations.

Messi sparkles on return

On the pitch, Argentina's superstar Lionel Messi scored moments after coming off the bench on Tuesday to dispel any injury doubts and help the holders win their final warm-up game.

The 38-year-old Messi had not featured for Argentina in the build-up to their title defence after injuring a hamstring playing for Inter Miami in late May.

He was introduced as a substitute with 20 minutes left to huge acclaim from a capacity 88,000 crowd against Iceland in Auburn, Alabama, and his clever through ball played in Lautaro Martinez, who was fouled in the box.

Messi, who drove Argentina to their third World Cup crown in Qatar four years ago and is set to feature in his sixth World Cup, lashed in the penalty to help the reigning champions ease to a 3-0 win.

Argentina's first match is on June 16, against Algeria in Kansas City.

Along with Spain, France and England, Argentina are among the favourites to win the title. — AFP

Scotland First Minister vows to help fans refused entry for World Cup in US

LONDON — Scotland's First Minister has vowed to do "all I can to help" after some Scottish football fans were reportedly denied entry into the United States for the World Cup.

John Swinney said he had contacted US officials in a bid to aid supporters who had their Electronic System of Travel Authorisation (ESTA) permit revoked with less than a week to go before Scotland play their World Cup opener against Haiti in Boston.

An ESTA is usually required for British citizens without a visa going to the US for up to 90 days.

Some members of the Tartan Army, the collective name given to Scotland supporters, reported having their ESTAs revoked at the last minute, leading to some fans seeking emergency appointments with the US Embassy in London.

"I am aware that the United

States Embassy has issued advice to individuals affected by ESTA refusals, indicating that they may apply for a visa through the FIFA (football global governing body) pass system and I have asked officials to convey our hope that they can resolve this so that Scotland's fans do not miss out," Swinney told the Scottish Parliament on Tuesday.

"I have asked for specific representations and engagement to be taken forward with the Consul General of the United States in Scotland - that has been undertaken and we will do all that we can to help out to resolve these issues."

Last week, the BBC reported acting assistant secretary of Homeland Security Lauren Bis as saying the US government's tightening of ESTAs is because "the Trump administration is enforcing immigration laws".

"Under the Visa Waiver Programme, all ESTA applications are continuously vetted against law enforcement and security databases," she said. "Travellers must provide complete and truthful information, including all criminal history."

Bis said the "failure to disclose arrests or convictions constitutes misrepresentation" and could lead to "ESTA denial, revocation, or a permanent bar from entering the United States".

FIFA announced Monday award-winning Somali referee Omar Artan has been dropped from officiating at the World Cup after being barred from entering the United States.

Somalia is one of several countries on a travel ban list introduced by President Donald Trump's administration as part of a broader immigration crackdown. — AFP



Fans of Ecuador celebrate qualification for the intercontinental playoffs for the 2027 FIFA Women's World Cup at the end of the CONMEBOL Nations League Women against Argentina at the Olimpico Atahualpa stadium in Quito, Ecuador on Tuesday. — AFP

Dutch legend Ruud Gullit calls on to Infantino resign over World Cup immigration chaos

NEW YORK — Dutch football legend Ruud Gullit published an open letter yesterday, a day before the start of the World Cup, calling on FIFA President Gianni Infantino to resign amid growing controversy surrounding US immigration policies.

Recent days have seen a series of incidents involving teams and officials traveling to the tournament, with Iran's national team forced to move its training camp to Mexico and several support staff denied visas.

Somali referee Omar Artan was reportedly refused entry into the United States, Iraqi striker Aymen Hussein was held for seven hours at Chicago airport, and team photographer Talah Salah was denied entry to the country.

The Senegal and Uzbekistan squads were also subjected to extensive searches upon arrival in the United States, while uncertainty remains over whether fans and journalists from countries affected by US travel bans will be able to attend the tournament.

"I have stayed quiet for a long time because I wanted to judge this

World Cup on football matters. But the deeper we get into the preparations, the more it becomes clear that football is no longer the main story. For that reason, I believe Gianni Infantino should seriously consider stepping down as FIFA President," wrote Gullit, who earned 66 caps for the Netherlands and is widely regarded as one of the game's greatest players.

"A World Cup should unite people. Instead, this tournament is becoming a symbol of division, political disputes, travel restrictions, and administrative failures."

"We are hearing reports that Iranian supporters have had their ticket allocations withdrawn. We have seen the case of Somali referee Omar Artan, selected by FIFA on merit to officiate at the highest level, yet reportedly denied entry into the host country. These are not minor issues. They strike at the heart of what the World Cup is supposed to represent," he continued.

Gullit said FIFA could not speak about football as a universal game "while qualified supporters,

officials, and participants face barriers that appear unrelated to football itself."

"The organisation's first responsibility is to protect the integrity and accessibility of the competition," he insisted.

He then launched a direct criticism of Infantino. "Leadership is not about appearing in photographs with politicians or celebrating commercial success. Leadership is about taking responsibility when things go wrong. That is why I believe Mr Infantino must ask himself whether he is still the right person to lead world football."

"The football world deserves answers, accountability, and leadership. If those cannot be provided under the current administration, then perhaps the time has come for new leadership at FIFA," he added.

Gullit concluded by saying the World Cup "belongs to the world, not to governments, political interests, or football administrators. It belongs to the players, the referees, and the supporters."

— Xinhua

Top seeded Chinese duos into mixed doubles 2nd round at Australian Badminton Open

Badminton

SYDNEY – Top Chinese mixed doubles pairs Feng Yanzhe/Huang Dongping and Guo Xinwa/Chen Fanghui each won their first-round matches at the Australian Badminton Open here yesterday.

Feng and Huang, the world No. 1 in mixed doubles, defeated South Korea's Kim Joon-young and Lee Yu-lim 21-19, 21-12 to advance to the second round at the State Sports Center in Sydney's Olympic Park.

Later yesterday, the world No. 7 pair of Guo and Chen, who are second seeds in Sydney, also won in two games, beating India's Mohit Jaglan and Lakshita Jaglan 21-6, 21-5.

In the men's doubles, second seeds Wang Chang and Liang Weikeng recorded a dominant 21-10, 21-9 win over Australia's Forrest Huang and Minh Trung Faris Truong in 21 minutes.

The victory made Wang and Liang the third Chinese pair to



Chinese Taipei's Lin Chun-Yi (right) reacts with India's Tharun Manneppalli after winning their men's singles match at the Australia Open badminton tournament in Sydney yesterday. – AFP

reach the men's doubles second round, following first-round wins on Tuesday for Chen Boyang/Liu Yi and Huang Di/Liu Yang.

In the men's singles, Hu Zhe'an defeated India's Saneeth Dayanand 21-8, 21-10 and Dong Tianyao

beat Indonesia's Anthony Sinisuka Ginting 21-15, 21-15 to advance to the round of 16, while Zhu Xuanchen was beaten in three games. In the women's singles, Han Qianxi was eliminated by India's Isharani Baruah 22-20, 10-21, 21-14. – Xinhua

Eddie Jones eyes Mourinho-like laundry stunt to escape ban

Rugby

TOKYO – Japan coach Eddie Jones joked yesterday that he was “looking for a laundry basket” to escape a four-match ban imposed by his own bosses for verbally abusing a referee.

The Japan Rugby Football Union last month slapped the 66-year-old with a suspension and cut his salary for “incidences of verbal abuse directed at local match officials” during a Japan Under-23 team tour of Australia in April.

Jones will miss Japan's Nations Championship opener against Italy in Tokyo on July 4.

The spiky Australian told reporters after naming his squad for a training camp that he was hoping to emulate football coach Jose Mourinho, who famously took an imaginative approach to get round a ban in 2005 when he was Chelsea boss.

“He went into the dressing room in a laundry basket, so I'm looking for a laundry basket,” Jones said, before adding that he was “only joking”.

Jones cut an otherwise contrite figure as he faced reporters for the first time since the JRFU announced his punishment.

He began by reading an apology, and said he had been doing “community work” coaching in Singapore to atone for his actions.

“I love the game of rugby, so I do feel very disappointed in my own behaviour that I've brought the game into this area where we have to discuss it at a press conference,” he said.

“But like everyone, we make mistakes and now it's time to move on.”

Jones was suspended from all activities for six weeks from April 24 to June 5 and was not allowed to watch games in Japan's domestic league during that time.

He missed two games pitting a Japan select team against Hong Kong in May, and is also barred from a Japan XV team game against the Māori All Blacks on June 27 in Nagoya.

He is free to coach the full Japan team at their training camp starting Saturday, but he is not allowed to set foot in the stadium for their game against Italy.

He will return to the coaching box for Japan's Nations Championship game against Ireland in Newcastle, Australia, on July 11.

Japan also face France in Tokyo on July 18 in the inaugural edition of the tournament.

Jones said that he was given the ban because of “one comment which I regret saying to the referee”.

“I apologised to the referee straight after the game,” he said.

“But it was the wrong decision and I shouldn't have done it.” – AFP

Olympic chief confident for LA Games despite World Cup ‘challenges’



L A U S A N N E – Olympic chief

Kirsty Coventry said yesterday she was confident for the successful hosting of the 2028 Summer Games in Los Angeles despite what she described as “challenges” for the World Cup.

Football's showpiece tournament, co-hosted by Canada, Mexico and the United States, kicks off today.

But the build-up to the June 11-July 19 competition has been marred by fans, a top referee and team officials being barred from the tournament.

A record 48 teams and millions of supporters are descending on the three host countries for the largest and most logistically complex World Cup ever staged.

But the refusal of US immigration authorities to allow Somali referee Omar Artan, one of Africa's leading match officials, into the country underlined fears that US President Donald Trump's immigration policy could leave deep scars on the tournament.

“We're obviously very aware and following the World Cup as it gets closer and closer to kick-off time,” said Coventry, the president of the International Olympic Committee (IOC).

“I am confident that in two

years we will be able to overcome a number of the challenges that the World Cup are facing right now.”

That, Coventry told a press conference, took “collaboration and learning”.

“The task force and everyone on the ground now are learning and we can only continue to work very closely with the OCOG (local organising committee), the USOPC (the US Olympic and Paralympic Committee), at this moment to continuously give our feedback we are receiving from stakeholders.

“Then it's our job to monitor that, to advocate for that and for athletes and their entourage to be able to ensure that they are there in the LA28 Games.”

Coventry added: “We're going to consistently work with them, we're going to consistently collaborate with them.

“As soon as we get any feedback from the Olympic movement and our stakeholders, we relay that directly to them.

“This is just a part of the process, so we have to just continue having faith in that process.

“And I do believe that we will see a successful LA 2028.”

The Los Angeles Olympics are slated for July 14-30, 2028, when President Trump will still be in power. – AFP



Philippines' Alexandra Eala returns the ball against US player Iva Jovic during their round of 16, singles match at the HSBC WTA tennis Championships at Queen's Club in west London yesterday. Jovic won the match 6-2, 6-2. – AFP

England captain Stokes dropped from 2nd Test after nightclub incident

Cricket

LONDON – England captain Ben Stokes and team-mate Gus Atkinson have been dropped from the squad for next week's second Test against New Zealand at the Oval, the England and Wales Cricket Board announced yesterday.

The pair are currently facing an ECB probe for breaking the team's midnight curfew following England's win in the first Test at Lord's.

Joe Root will step in as interim captain in Stokes's absence.

“The England & Wales Cricket Board can confirm that, given the ongoing investigation, Ben Stokes and Gus Atkinson have not been made available for selection for the Rotherham second Test against New Zealand, which starts at the Kia

Oval on Wednesday 17 June,” said an ECB statement.

“Yorkshire batter Joe Root will lead the team as interim captain.”

The ECB announced Monday they were looking into Stokes and Atkinson's involvement in a nightclub incident also involving Saracens rugby player Totoa Auvaa on Monday morning following England's 115-run win in the first Test at Lord's.

It is the latest controversy concerning the England team after the tour of Australia where the side faced allegations of a drinking culture during a 4-1 Ashes series loss.

A physical confrontation with Auvaa is understood to have led to a member of ECB security staff being struck after Stokes had enjoyed drinks with England rugby captain Maro Itoje earlier in the evening.

In addition to the ECB probe, both Stokes and Atkinson remain subject to another investigation by the independent Cricket Regulator.

But the temporary appointment of Root, England's captain for five years before Stokes took over in 2022, suggests there is a way back for the all-rounder despite reports he was ready to stand down as skipper or even quit international cricket completely.

In 2017, Stokes was involved in an incident outside a nightclub in Bristol that led to him being charged with affray.

He subsequently missed the Ashes tour of 2017/18 before he was found not guilty of the charge following a trial at Bristol Crown Court in August 2018.

Credit in the bank

Before yesterday's announcement,

former England captain Michael Vaughan said Stokes had sufficient cricket “credit in the bank” to avoid being sacked as skipper.

“Yes, Ben Stokes broke a curfew. Yes he made a mistake,” Vaughan wrote in the *Daily Telegraph*.

“But is that a sacking offence as England's Test captain? I do not think so.

“Stokes has a lot of credit in the bank for all he has done for England as captain and all-rounder,” said Vaughan, who insisted senior ECB officials lacked the same credit.

“A short suspension would be fine, but this is not a big enough incident over which to lose the captaincy.”

By appointing Root caretaker skipper and deciding against promoting vice-captain Harry Brook to the Test captaincy, team

chiefs England avoided a potentially embarrassing situation.

Brook, already the captain of England's white-ball teams, was fined and censured for late-night drinking and clashing with a nightclub bouncer before captaining England in a one-day international in Wellington in October - an incident that led to the midnight curfew.

Meanwhile, Jofra Archer's expected return to the squad was confirmed yesterday after the fast bowler missed the first of a three-Test series because of his Indian Premier League commitments.

The express quick could now come into the side as Atkinson's replacement, while batsman Jordan Cox will compete with James Rew and Rehan Ahmed for Stokes's place in the side. – AFP

Nick Reiner seeks trust fund money for parent murder defence

LOS ANGELES – Nick Reiner, the son of legendary US movie director Rob Reiner, is demanding access to a US\$1.5 million trust fund set up by the parents he is charged with murdering, court documents show.

A 136-page petition filed in Los Angeles says Reiner should have begun receiving the money two years ago, and his inability to access it left him unable to pay the expensive attorney who had originally represented him after his arrest over the December stabbing of his mother and father.

“Nick loved his parents, and he is devastated by their deaths,” the petition, filed on Monday, says.

“But the facts about what did and did not happen to them are not at issue in this trust litigation.”

The 32-year-old was arrested on December 14 after the bodies of his

filmmaker father and his mother, photographer Michele Singer Reiner, were discovered at their home in the upmarket Brentwood neighbourhood of Los Angeles.

Prosecutors said 79-year-old Reiner – who helmed huge hits including “When Harry Met Sally” and “A Few Good Men” – and his wife, 70, were knifed to death.

Nick Reiner is one of three children they had together. Rob Reiner also adopted a child during his first marriage.

Monday’s filing says the trust was one of three set up for their children with “unambiguous instructions” as part of an estate plan established in 1993.

According to the petition, Nick Reiner should have received half of the money when he turned 30, with the other half available to him five years later.

His attorneys say the awards are mandatory and unconditional.

“They were a commitment by Nick’s parents, in the most binding way the law of trusts allows, that these resources would belong to Nick for his use and benefit,” the petition says.

Reiner was originally represented by celebrity attorney Alan Jackson, who left the case a short time later. The petition says Reiner’s inability to access the trust money meant he could not pay the lawyer.

Reiner, who has a history of addiction, has pleaded not guilty to murder charges. He remains in jail and his case is next expected to be dealt with in September.

If convicted as charged, Reiner could face life in prison without parole, or the death penalty, although California does not typically carry out capital punishment.

In April his brother paid emotional tribute to the men’s parents, calling their deaths “almost too impossible to process.”

“We lost more than half of our family that night in the most violent way imaginable,” Jake Reiner wrote in his first detailed public remarks about the killings.



Nick Reiner appears during his arraignment in Los Angeles County Superior Court in Los Angeles, California, on February 23, 2026. Nick Reiner, the son of legendary US movie director Rob Reiner, is demanding access to a US\$1.5 million trust fund set up by the parents he is charged with murdering, court documents show. – AFP

Rob Reiner, the son of legendary comedian Carl Reiner, started his showbiz career in acting.

He won fame as the oafish son-in-law Michael “Meathead” Stivic on groundbreaking 1970s sitcom “All in the Family,” before transitioning to directing.

As a director, he struck Hollywood gold.

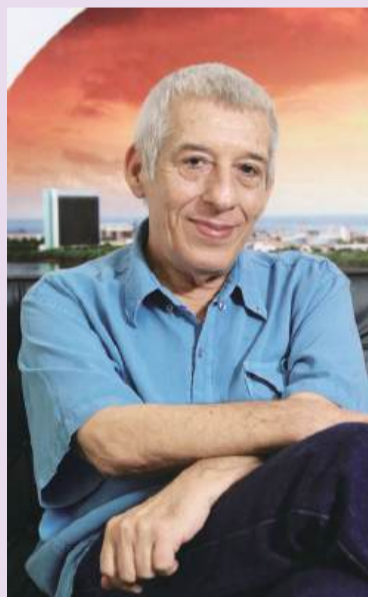
His output included classic films like 1984’s rock music mockumentary “This is Spinal Tap,” fantasy gem “The Princess Bride” from 1987, and seminal coming-of-age movie “Stand By Me.”

“A Few Good Men,” starring Tom Cruise and Jack Nicholson, earned an Oscar nomination for Best Picture. – AFP

Brazilian filmmaker Orlando Senna dies aged 86

RIO DE JANEIRO – Brazilian filmmaker Orlando Senna, closely associated with the country’s Cinema Novo movement, has died aged 86, Brazil’s Ministry of Culture said on Tuesday.

He was best known for directing “Iracema: Uma Transa Amazônica,” a drama set against the backdrop of the military dictatorship’s occupation of the Amazon, alongside Jorge Bodanzky.



Brazilian filmmaker Orlando Senna poses in this unlocated photo taken on December 8, 2009. – Photo courtesy of Porto Iracema das Artes/Wikimedia Commons

Senna dedicated his career to “defending culture as an instrument of social transformation,” the ministry said in a statement on Instagram, praising “his work, his generosity, and his dedication to Brazilian culture.”

No cause of death was provided.

Born in 1940 in Lençóis, a town in Brazil’s eastern state of Bahia, Senna devoted more than five decades to film, television and cultural management.

He worked as a director, screenwriter, writer, journalist, playwright, and cultural manager.

Between 1991 and 1994, Senna headed the International School of Film and Television of San Antonio de los Baños (EICTV) in Cuba – a key institution in the training of generations of Latin American filmmakers, founded by Colombian author José Gabriel García Márquez and Argentine filmmaker Fernando Birri.

In the 2000s, he served as the head of the National Audiovisual Secretariat, where he promoted national and regional cultural policies.

He also pioneered the creation of the public broadcaster, TV Brasil. – AFP

Bollywood’s Imtiaz Ali bets on Gen Z thirst for love

Seema Sinha

MUMBAI, India – In an era dominated by hyper-violent blockbusters and larger-than-life action spectacles, Indian filmmaker Imtiaz Ali believes young audiences are searching for something deeper – love that lasts.

The director behind cult romantic dramas such as “Jab We Met”, “Rockstar” and “Love Aaj Kal” told AFP in a recent interview that while Gen Z youth may be growing up in a world of seemingly endless choice, that has only intensified their desire for meaningful connection.

“I think young people... are more desperate to find something that they can hold on to for longer – forever perhaps,” Ali, 54, said in an interview ahead of tomorrow’s release of his latest romance, “Main Vaapas Aaunga”.

“Everything is so accessible that almost everything has no value. So, I feel this is the right time to have a story of enduring love,” he said.

The film, whose title means “I will return”, tells the story of a romance that survives nearly eight decades, inspired by real-life accounts from families affected by the 1947 partition of India and Pakistan.

Ali said the idea emerged after hearing of two men, aged 91 and 95, who travelled to the India-Pakistan border hoping to visit the villages where they had spent their childhoods before the subcontinent was divided at the end of British rule.

The sectarian bloodshed that accompanied the partition killed hundreds of thousands of people and left many families divided.

“Almost everything you will see in ‘Main Vaapas Aaunga’ is

taken from somebody’s life,” said Ali, calling the film a “collection of stories of love”.

Hit action films such as “Animal”, “Dhurandhar” and the “Pushpa” series have helped cement the dominance of violent action cinema in Bollywood.

All three films celebrate highly dominant male protagonists who project raw power, aggression and emotional intensity.

But Ali rejects the notion that audiences only want blood and gore.

“The kind of film that works... is a good film, a popular film, a film that people enjoy,” he said.

‘The music in your heart’

Ali argued that successful films are defined less by genre than by the conviction behind them.

“What makes one film a large film? It’s the heart of the maker.”

“Main Vaapas Aaunga” features Punjabi superstar Diljit Dosanjh alongside veteran actor Naseeruddin Shah, with Vedang Raina and

Sharvari Wagh portraying younger characters navigating questions of love and commitment.

Ali praised Dosanjh’s ability to bring warmth and restraint to emotionally complex scenes, particularly opposite Shah’s character who struggles with Alzheimer’s disease.

For Ali, the film’s broader message transcends romance.

“It’s about how love can be the music in your heart that keeps you alive through all tragedies,” he said. “A love that survives 78 years without meeting or even speaking to the person you love.”

Ali hopes that beneath the appetite for action, viewers still seek a deeper meaning.

In one scene, a young person “wonders whether... that kind of love was possible only in the old times”, he said.

“It is very difficult for the younger generation to find that kind of love. They are yearning for it, they seek it in films.” – AFP



Bollywood filmmaker Imtiaz Ali speaks about his upcoming film ‘Main Vaapas Aaunga’ during an interview with AFP in Mumbai late last month. – AFP

World Weather

| CHINA | ASIA-PACIFIC | WORLD | LUSOPHONE |
|------------------------|---------------------------|--------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Beijing 19°C~31°C | Manila 25°C~34°C | New York 23°C~34°C | Lisbon 17°C~32°C |
| Shanghai 21°C~34°C | Bangkok 26°C~33°C | London 14°C~16°C | Rio de Janeiro 18°C~23°C |
| Hong Kong 24°C~28°C | Tokyo 17°C~26°C | Frankfurt 12°C~20°C | Luanda 21°C~25°C |
| Taipei 22°C~27°C | Singapore 25°C~30°C | Vancouver 10°C~20°C | Maputo 15°C~27°C |
| Guangzhou 23°C~30°C | Kuala Lumpur 25°C~33°C | Paris 14°C~19°C | Dili 23°C~33°C |
| Nanjing 21°C~35°C | Jakarta 23°C~34°C | Moscow 17°C~29°C | São Tomé 24°C~32°C |
| Guilin 20°C~31°C | Seoul 15°C~26°C | Las Vegas 25°C~40°C | Praia 21°C~29°C |
| Xi’an 21°C~33°C | Sydney 13°C~20°C | Monte Carlo 18°C~25°C | Bissau 23°C~32°C |



Brighten the darkest days

A child waters flowers at a flower and plant exhibition in Kabul, Afghanistan, yesterday. – Xinhua

Very tiny tot

This photo taken in last month shows Ai Bao, a female giant panda on loan from China, and her cub in Yongin, South Korea. A female giant panda on loan from China has given birth to a cub at Everland, a theme park in Yongin, South Korea, the park said yesterday.

The cub was born at 10:53 a.m. local time on June 3 at Panda World, a giant panda habitat at Everland Zoo, weighing 171 grams. Both the cub and its mother, Ai Bao, are in good health, according to the park. The newborn is a cub of Ai Bao and her mate, Le Bao. The pair were sent to South Korea from China in 2016. – Xinhua



Who will be the winner?

This photo taken on Friday shows merchandise of Lionel Messi of Argentina and Cristiano Ronaldo of Portugal -- football teams that will participate in the FIFA World Cup 2026 - at the All Star Partner factory in Yiwu in Zhejiang Province. Stuffed "goat" (Greatest of all time) plushies donning Lionel Messi's famous Argentina no. 10 pepper a factory tabletop in eastern China, where sellers are betting on the country's lucrative fan market for a World Cup boost. – AFP



Imagine when the storm arrives!

A man looks at damage caused by rough seas ahead of the arrival of Storm Cristina in Iztapa, Guatemala on Tuesday.

The countries of Central America remain on alert over the effects of Tropical Storm Cristina, which formed on Monday in the Pacific Ocean, civil protection services reported. – AFP



All done for you!

People visit the GreenTech Amsterdam 2026 in Amsterdam, the Netherlands, yesterday. The three-day event that kicked off here Tuesday showcases the innovations in the horticulture industry. – Xinhua

Shy girl

One month old pygmy hippopotamus Broetchen (Bun) (left) and her mummy Debbie are seen in their enclosure Hippo Bay at the Zoologischer Garten zoo in Berlin yesterday. Born on May 9 'Broetchen' is the latest addition to the pygmy hippopotamus family at the Zoo in the German capital. – AFP

