

Local men face higher skin cancer incidence than women: SSM

Armando Neves

The Health Bureau (SSM) held a press conference yesterday on skin cancer at the bureau's Public Health Emergency Personnel Residence Hall on Guia Hill, pointing out that local men face a higher skin cancer incidence than women.

Wong Chi Leong, deputy head of the Health Promotion Division of the bureau's Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (CDC), said in a speech that, according to the 2024 Annual Report of the Macao Cancer Registry, skin cancer ranked seventh in terms of new cases, with a total of 94 cases and four deaths recorded that year.

Over the past decade, the incidence has shown an upward trend, with men recording a higher rate than women, Wong said, adding that this may be related to lower awareness of sun protection and increased ultraviolet (UV) radiation due to global warming.

According to Wong, skin cancer is mainly linked to long-term exposure to UV radiation. The public is urged to follow the "ABC" sun-protection principles: Avoid – stay out of the sun during peak hours (10:00 to 16:00), when



Health Bureau (SSM) Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (CDC) Health Promotion Division Deputy Head Wong Chi Leong (centre), SSM's Porto Interior Health Centre Medical Assistant Kuok Wai Seng (right) and the public Conde de São Januário Hospital Centre (CHCSJ) Dermatologist Cheong Si Leong look on during yesterday's press conference at the SSM Health Emergency Personnel Residence Hall on Guia Hill.

– Photo: Armando Neves

UV radiation is strongest; Block – use physical barriers such as long-sleeved clothing, sunglasses and a wide-brimmed hat; Cream – apply sunscreen, reapplying it every two hours.

Wong also clarified two common misconceptions, noting

that children have thinner skin and that UV damage accumulates over a lifetime, and that on cloudy days, up to 80 per cent of UV rays can still penetrate clouds, making sun protection essential.

Kuok Wai Seng, a medical assistant at the bureau Porto Interior

Health Centre, said that skin cancer often develops early on areas frequently exposed to the sun, such as the head, face, neck and limbs. Melanoma can be identified using the "ABCDE" rule: Asymmetric shape, irregular Border, Colour variation, Diameter larger than 6 mm,

and Evolving changes over time, Kuok said, adding that medical attention should be sought promptly if any suspicious lesions are found.

Cheong Si Leong, a dermatologist at the public Conde de São Januário Hospital Centre (CHCSJ), noted that surgical removal is the mainstay of treatment for skin cancer. Basal cell carcinoma and early-stage squamous cell carcinoma have an extremely high cure rate. Melanoma, on the other hand, is the most aggressive form and can metastasise in advanced stages, requiring a combination of targeted therapy and immunotherapy, Cheong said. He emphasised that regular follow-up appointments and sun protection are essential for preventing recurrence.

Wong also said that the Health Bureau, in collaboration with community associations, will set up skin cancer information booths at five locations across Macau on Saturday, from 2:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. Through quizzes and games, the booths will promote sun protection, and participants who complete the activities will receive a souvenir, according to Wong. ■

Iran says close to Hormuz plan with Oman, but reopening depends on US

TEHRAN – Iran and Oman have agreed a route for ships transiting the Strait of Hormuz and are putting the final touches on arrangements for jointly managing the waterway, Tehran's foreign ministry said yesterday.

But official sources briefing Iranian media stressed that any reopening of the strait would depend on the United States fulfilling what Tehran sees as its commitment to end its own naval blockade of Iran's ports.

Iran has seized de facto control of the strait, a strategic waterway for global energy trade, since the United States and Israel launched their war

against the country on February 28.

US President Donald Trump has repeatedly insisted Tehran is keen to do a deal to reopen the route to shipping, but Iran denies this and says it will instead make arrangements with its neighbour across the strait, Oman.

"The geographical coordinates of the route envisaged by the two sides have been agreed upon and, if certain third parties do not obstruct the process, the joint statement of the two countries, containing the main considerations and points of agreement, is also in the final review and drafting stage," Iranian

foreign ministry spokesman Esmaeil Baqaei said, according to state news agency IRNA.

According to the report, Baqaei told journalists that talks with Oman were moving forward, but that even if an understanding was reached, it would not mean that the strait had become safe for all passing vessels.

"The factors making the Strait of Hormuz insecure still exist on the part of the United States, particularly the naval blockade and other aggressive and threatening actions against Iran and its interests," he said. – AFP



A fish lantern parade is held in Chengkan Village of Huizhou District in Huangshan City, Anhui Province, on Monday. Processions of giant fish-shaped lanterns meandered through the streets of Huangshan's ancient quarters, creating a stunning spectacle at night, boosting local tourism and related industries.

– Xinhua

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The Macau Post Daily

Leftist Democrat wins stunning primary victory in crucial Michigan

A leftist insurgent Democrat defeated the party establishment's candidate to score a stunning win yesterday in the primary race for the Senate after harnessing popular discontent and anti-Israel sentiment.

– Story on p. 10

SpaceX rocket stage believed to have slammed into Moon

NEW YORK – A four-tonne piece of a SpaceX rocket was believed to have unintentionally crashed into the Moon yesterday, a collision that posed no danger to Earth but is expected to leave behind a lunar crater.

– Story on p. 11

US revokes visa of Brazilian ambassador to Washington

The US has revoked the visa of Brazil's ambassador, a US State Department official said on Tuesday, in a mounting diplomatic row just months before elections in Latin America's largest nation.

– Story on p. 12

Fostering a sense of belonging to understand cultural heritage

Interview by Rui Pastorin

As an East-West entrepôt, Macau sits on over 400 years of history, along with a rich cultural heritage. The importance of understanding or at least knowing about them cannot be understated, and for Macau's young students and future generations, that remains especially true.

"Heritage is important because it's part of them and they are part of Macau", Macanese Youth Association (AJM) President António Monteiro said during an interview with the *Post* earlier this week. He also stressed the importance of having a sense of belonging, particularly among youngsters and the future generations as the city continues to promote, recognise and emphasise its cultural heritage.

The importance of having a sense of belonging

Having a sense of belonging allows one to recognise the value and legacy of the cultural heritage that surrounds them each day. "If we don't feel this sense of belonging in Macau, I think they won't have the pride to promote this [heritage] outside Macau one day".

Therefore, Monteiro stresses the significance of bringing education and cultural heritage together. The best place to start? Schools, particularly at the primary school level, introducing cultural heritage in a light and basic way.

The primary school stage is also the most suitable as students are already able to read and write, as well as already have a sense of what certain topics are.

"If you start with schools, at least they can hear about it", Monteiro said, noting that while interest might vary among students, at least they would be introduced to the topics to gain some knowledge to share with others and even pursue the topics further down the line.

He added that a number of schools, though not all, already invite representatives from local organisations and cultural associations to introduce Macau's cultural heritage and related history to youngsters in a light and basic way.

"The problem now is they don't even know what it [cultural heritage] is. If we don't go through a cultural association or people who can pass on this knowledge, they won't know", noting examples such



Macanese Youth Association (AJM) President António Monteiro poses for a photo at the library of the International Institute of Macau (IIM) in Nape. Monteiro is also IIM's secretary-general. — Photo: Rui Pastorin

as Patuá, Macau's severely endangered Portuguese-Asian Creole. "This is only an example. Imagine the gastronomy, old traditions and festivities".

Learning about cultural heritage allows them to touch on something directly or indirectly, giving them the autonomy as to whether they want to pursue it further – whether through books, school, cultural associations or further studies. "But at least they started with something basic", being part of building a solid foundation.

Monteiro added that it is a gradual process that he was glad to see starting, perhaps later opening discussion to see and fill in gaps that might exist.

It is, all in all, a joint effort between the Cultural Affairs Bureau (IC), the Education and Youth Affairs Bureau (DSEDJ) and the relevant associations, moving forward step by step, with hopes for finding a way to further integrate it within schools in the future, he said.

Ways to foster interest

With this in mind, fostering interest and introducing youngsters to the subject can be done in a fun, light and engaging way, all with the aim of allowing the younger generation to attain a rich knowledge for the future.

Aside from reading books, continuing talks at schools, and following the materials using the established official narratives available, videos can also be used, along with continuing or arranging more field trips to museums and heritage sites.

Games that allow students to play around with heritage knowledge, projects, and competitions in photography or videography that also help them understand what they are shooting can also stimulate interest, Monteiro said.

Joint collaborations with related associations to promote knowledge into schools and the creative integration of technology also open up fun ways to foster interest in Macau's cultural heritage, he said, adding that, down the line, acquiring more knowledge and understanding comes with potential opportunities.

Understanding leads to opportunities

When students understand or know more about the city that they live in, there's a "big benefit", Monteiro said, among which is being equipped to properly introduce or talk about Macau and its rich history and heritage to those visiting or wanting to learn more about the city. "If they have this knowledge, they will not promote the wrong message".

Building on this point, it extends to economic diversification and even their potential careers, according to Monteiro. Concerning youngsters' future career ladder, students can later pursue positions in related government entities, and become knowledgeable specialists or ambassadors. For the entrepreneurial route, they will have the knowledge to develop representative products, taking deeper aspects beyond what one normally might use as inspiration.

It doesn't stop there, with Monteiro adding that it can also be useful when considering the opportunity to produce movies in Macau, opening international opportunities for local talent along with local production.

"It's very important to learn about heritage. If you don't have a sense of belonging, you won't know or understand who you are. If you have a sense of belonging, I think you can be more assured with what you are promoting to others. If not, people will get the wrong message about Macau". ■

PJ warn against MPay 'QR code registration' scam

Armindo Neves

The Judiciary Police (PJ) warned yesterday that scammers have been found sending QR codes from unknown sources to victims in order to steal their MPay account details.

According to a statement, the Judiciary Police have discovered that scammers have recently set up fake Facebook pages offering "air-conditioning cleaning services" to attract enquiries from members of the public.

When people make contact, the statement said, the scammers send a QR code of unknown origin on the pretext of "booking registration". Once scanned, the victim is redirected to a fake MPay phishing website, which prompts them to enter sensitive information such as their MPay account number, login password and payment PIN.

After obtaining these details,

the scammers immediately use the victim's MPay account to make purchases on other platforms, resulting in financial losses, according to the statement.

The Judiciary Police reminded the public to exercise caution when shopping online and never to scan QR codes from unknown sources – before making any transaction, always verify the authenticity of the offer through the merchant's official channels or physical stores whenever possible. Besides, legitimate businesses will not ask you to provide complete payment platform account details, passwords or one-time verification codes through unfamiliar links or QR codes, the statement underlined.

If you have any doubts, you can use the PJ's Anti-Fraud Programme to check the risk level, or call the anti-fraud hotline on 8800 7777 or the emergency hotline on 993 for assistance. ■

BEWARE OF ONLINE SHOPPING "QR CODE REGISTRATION" SCAMS TO PREVENT MPay ACCOUNT THEFT



This infographic provided by the Judiciary Police (PJ) yesterday warns residents to be wary of an MPay code registration scam.

IAM urges public to avoid 'Bonne Maman' jam over glass risk

Khalel Vallo

A statement by the Municipal Affairs Bureau (IAM) yesterday urged consumers to stop eating a batch of Bonne Maman strawberry jam that may contain glass fragments, following food safety alerts issued by authorities in Hong Kong and France.

According to the bureau, the affected product is Bonne Maman "CONFITURES de fraises en mini pots verre de 30g" ("Strawberry jam in mini 30-gram glass jars"). The product has a net weight of 30 grams, a barcode of 3045320070361, batch numbers K154 and K155, and a best-before date of 30 June 2028, the statement said. It added that it became aware of the issue after the Centre for Food Safety in Hong Kong and France's Rappel Conso issued alerts that the jars may contain glass foreign matter.

The bureau urged food businesses that stock the affected batches to immediately stop supplying and selling the product.

Consumers who have purchased the affected batches,



This image provided by the Municipal Affairs Bureau (IAM) yesterday shows the affected product – Bonne Maman "CONFITURES de fraises en mini pots verre de 30 g" strawberry jam.

including through online shopping or personal shoppers, were also urged by the bureau to stop consuming the product immediately. It further pointed out that businesses in possession of the affected products should contact the bureau's Department of Food Safety by calling 2833 8181.

The bureau said it will continue to monitor the incident and take follow-up measures to prevent the affected products from circulating in the local market. ■

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Source: SMG

USJ hosts student community service summit



Romina Eloisa Abuan, coordinator of the Uniservitate Asia and Oceania Regional Hub at De La Salle University (left), and University of Saint Joseph's (USJ) Department of Psychology Associate Professor Vitor Teixeira address yesterday's "Service-Learning Student Summit 2026" at the private university in Ilha Verde. — Photos: Khalel Vallo

Khalel Vallo

The private University of Saint Joseph (USJ) hosted the four-day "Service-Learning Student Summit 2026", bringing together students from across Asia and Oceania to showcase community projects, alongside the presentation of the Uniservitate Awards 2026, which took place yesterday, recognising outstanding service-learning initiatives.

Organised by USJ and the Philippines's De La Salle University, the summit was held under the theme "Reciprocal Convergence: Empowering the Asia and Oceania Region's Collective Action through Service-Learning".

The event highlighted how academic knowledge can be applied to address community needs through student-led service-learning projects. The programme featured the Uniservitate* Awards 2026 ceremony, recognising exemplary service-learning initiatives at Catholic higher education institutions across the Asia and Oceania region.

According to a recent USJ statement, first-place awardees will travel to Rome in October to attend the VII Global Symposium, which includes a general audience with Pope Leo XIV.

Addressing the ceremony yesterday, Maria Rosa Tapia, Uniservitate Programme coordinator, described service-learning as a process that transforms both communities and students. "This is the miracle of service learning. Your knowledge finds its purpose. Your service becomes encounter. Your encounter becomes transformation", she said, adding that the awards recognise students who choose to work alongside communities rather than for them, encouraging institutions across the world to unite through service and solidarity.

Meanwhile, Romina Eloisa Abuan, coordinator of the Uniservitate Asia and Oceania Regional Hub at De La Salle University, said that the awards are "unique" because they specifically recognise service-learning in Catholic higher education. She added that applicants undergo a two-stage evaluation process involving eligibility screening, independent assessments by three faculty evaluators and final interviews before winners were selected. Abuan said that submissions were received from Australia, India, the Philippines, China's Taiwan region and the Macao Special Administrative Region (MSAR), demonstrating the diversity of service-learning initiatives across the region, adding that the awards aim not only to recognise excellence but also to encourage universities to strengthen service-learning programmes and share successful practices with other institutions.

Moreover, USJ's Department of Psychology Associate Professor Vitor Teixeira, one of the award evaluators, reflected on his experience reviewing the projects. Initially sceptical about whether some projects truly reflected their reported achievements, Teixeira said attending the summit and meeting participants changed his perspective. He encouraged participants to become ambassadors for service-learning when they return to their universities. "You students, when you go back to your universities, you are our ambassadors, to make also service learning be part of your programmes".

The summit concluded with participants speaking about their experiences in their community projects and discussing ways to strengthen service-learning across higher education institutions in Asia and Oceania, with organisers expressing hopes that the regional network will continue to expand ahead of the next Uniservitate Awards cycle in 2028. ■

**Uniservitate is a coined portmanteau word formed by combining "uni" (from university) and "servitate" (derived from service/servare) to sound like Latin phonetics and reflect the universal mission of the Catholic Church.* — Gemini

Submissions open for IAM's 'World Animal Day' photo contest

Rui Pastorin

The Macau Municipal Affairs Bureau (IAM) has launched a photography contest ahead of "World Animal Day" on October 4, with submissions open until September 11.

The contest is organised in conjunction with the "Everyone Stray Dogs Macau Volunteer Group" and The Photographic Society of Macao.

According to a statement from the bureau yesterday, entries must revolve around "the interaction between humans and animals and convey the concept of protection and love for animals", with one photo in colour, which has never been published, awarded or under copyright restrictions, accepted per applicant.

A gift pack worth 3,000 patacas is up for grabs for the first prize winner, while those in second and third place stand to receive gift packs worth 2,000 and 1,000 patacas respectively, the statement said. Seven merit awards featuring 500 pataca shopping vouchers will also be available.

Winners will be announced via the "Macao Animal Health Control Website" of IAM and the Facebook and Instagram pages of "Pet Preparatory Class" in late September, as well as via SMS. One can find more competition and submission details and the application form on www.iam.gov.mo/canilto. ■

This poster provided by the Municipal Affairs Bureau (IAM) yesterday promotes the "Animal Protection and Healthy Companionship" photography contest.



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***Should there be any disputes, the organisers reserve the right of final decision.



Beyond spectacle: how Big Mouse uses theatre to spark youth critical thinking

Interview by William Chan

In Macau's performing arts landscape, children's and youth theatre has often been associated with light-hearted entertainment or conventional storytelling.

However, the Big Mouse Kids Drama Group (Big Mouse) is reshaping that narrative through structured training, physical theatre, and thought-provoking allegories. Through a series of summer productions and artistic exchanges, the troupe is encouraging young performers to observe the world critically and process complex social themes through the arts.

In an exclusive interview, Big Mouse Captain Mabina Choi Leng Chi – a theatre researcher, actress, and educator – told the *Post* how the group's recent trilogy of productions uses physical expression, literary adaptations, and student-driven creation to empower youth both on and off the stage.



This undated file photo shows Mabina Choi posing.

Hey, Come On Out!: global collaboration & environmental allegory

Headlining Big Mouse's summer season is the world premiere of *Hey, Come On Out!*, showcasing this Saturday and Sunday (August 8, 9) in Macau at Theatre Farmers on Rua de Francisco Xavier Pereira, followed by an August 15 performance at the Hengqin Art and Cultural Centre. Adapted from Japanese literature by Daisuke Sagawa and directed by core artists from Japan's acclaimed Theatre Moments, the physical and object driven theatre piece delves into human nature and environmental dilemmas.

The story opens in the aftermath of a typhoon, where a village discovers a mysterious, bottomless hole. As villagers and officials realise that anything thrown into the hole disappears without a trace, they begin dumping confidential documents, waste, and burdens inside, celebrating the apparent end of their troubles.

Originally envisioned for older youths before cast adjustments brought in younger student performers, the production blends innocent performances with dark, reflective satire.

"Instead of relying on heavy sets or preachy scripts, the ensemble uses everyday objects and body movement to build a sci-fi universe," Choi noted. "When audiences watch children perform a story about avoiding real-world consequences, it creates a powerful contrast. Different age groups walk away with distinct insights – whether reflecting on personal worries or examining societal negligence."

Monster: physicality, desire, resisting groupthink

Addressing deeper psychological themes, Big Mouse revived its physical drama *Monster*. Set in a rural village unsettled by a mysterious creature, the play traces how initial terror turns into obsessive fascination when the monster emits an intoxicating fragrance. Only one young man, Norbu, sees through the illusion and attempts to destroy the threat.

Through expressive choreography and movement-driven staging, Choi noted that *Monster* serves as a sharp critique of groupthink, temptation, and the social isolation that comes with independent thought.

"In today's media environment, young people are constantly exposed to external temptations and peer pressure," Choi explained. "We don't focus on superficial themes like 'following your dreams.' During our intensive summer rehearsal process – where phone use is strictly set aside – students learn critical thinking, teamwork, and resilience through feedback. They learn to observe the world with a clearer lens."

Following its local run, the production was selected for festival showcases in Belgium on August 24, demonstrating the troupe's artistic viability beyond Macau.

Stars' Choice: nurturing authentic youth narratives

Complementing these intensive productions was Stars' Choice held last month, a curriculum-based show where students across different age groups devised short, original pieces based on picture books and personal stories.

Designed to build creative confidence and team collaboration, Stars' Choice allowed younger participants to explore themes of fear, emotional regulation, and personal growth at an age-appropriate pace.



Big Mouse performs "When Superpowers play" as part of the Stars' Choice programme last month at the Macao Cultural Centre. – Photos provided by Big Mouse



Big Mouse performs *Monster* last year at Theatre Farmers on Rua de Francisco Xavier Pereira.

Looking ahead, Choi said that Big Mouse is rolling out a comprehensive two-year educational drama initiative funded by local arts grants. Incorporating advisors and lecturers from Beijing, Hong Kong, and the Taiwan region, the project will train local actors to devise interactive touring productions focused on intangible cultural heritage, traditional values, and youth identity for schools and communities across Macau.

"Theatre provides young people with a platform to be heard and validated," Choi said. "By guiding them step-by-step through different theatrical forms, we aren't just teaching acting – we are helping them build the critical tools needed to navigate the world around them."

To purchase tickets for *Hey, Come On Out!*, scan the poster's QR code.



Pork Chop Bun among 28 new intangible heritage items

Tony Wong

The government has added 28 more items to its inventory of intangible cultural heritage, one of which is Preparation of Pork Chop Buns, according to a notice published by the Cultural Affairs Bureau (IC) in the Official Gazette (BO) yesterday.

After adding the 28 items, the inventory now has 98 items of Macau's intangible cultural heritage.

The Cultural Heritage Protection Law defines cultural heritage as comprising intangible cultural heritage and tangible cultural heritage that consists of classified immovable properties, i.e., cultural heritage construction structures, and movable properties.

According to the law, which came into force in March 2014, the Cultural Affairs Bureau is required to draw up an inventory of intangible cultural heritage with the aim of ensuring the protection of Macau's various items of intangible cultural heritage. The bureau is also required to update the inventory, i.e., adding items, in compliance with the findings of its latest surveys and research studies.

According to its themed website on Macau's cultural heritage, the bureau first put 15 items of intangible cultural heritage into the inventory in 2017, before adding 55 more in 2020, raising the number of items to 70. Following the inclusion of the 28 additional items published yesterday, the inventory now comprises 98 items.

Preparation of Pork Chop Buns is one of the 28 newly added intangible cultural heritage items. In Cantonese, a pork chop bun is called 豬扒包 ("jyu pa baau").

In addition to its notice published in the gazette, the bureau also issued a statement yesterday on the matter. The bureau has also updated its themed website on cultural heritage, adding details on the 28 new items, but only available in Chinese. Details on the first 70 items are available Chinese, Portuguese and English.

28 items

According to yesterday's announcements, the 28 new items comprise 1) Macanese Songs, 2) Guangdong Classical Music, 3) Nanyin Music of the Minnan Community, 4) Fishermen's Knowledge and Practices Related to Nature and the Universe, 5) Hung Martial Arts, 6) Pak Mei Martial Arts, 7) Orthopaedics (Tit Ta), 8) Acupuncture and Moxibustion, 9) All Souls' Day, 10) Devotion and Procession of Our Lady of



This photo taken yesterday shows a pork chop bun served in the Tai Lei Loi Kei restaurant on Travessa do Roquete, a short alley near Largo do Senado, the city's main square. Launched in Taipa in 1968, the restaurant, with pork chop bun as one of its top favourites, now has three outlets: two in Taipa Village and one on Travessa do Roquete.

– Photo: Tony Wong

Remedies, 11) Macanese Fat Tea, 12) Meal Customs of Yum Cha, 13) Belief and Customs of Va To*, 14) Festival of the Myanmar-Chinese Water Splashing, 15) Preparation of Siu Mei Barbecue, 16) Preparation of Glutinous Rice Cakes, 17) Preparation of Peanut Candy, 18) Preparation of Traditional Western-Style Pastries, 19) Preparation of Burmese Noodles, 20) Preparation of Indonesia Sweets and Pastries, 21) Preparation of Hakka-Style Steamed Glutinous Rice Cakes, 22) Preparation of Chaozhou-Style Pancakes, 23) Preparation of Pork Chop Buns, 24) Milk Tea Brewing, 25) Decorative Paper Art of Batê-Saia**, 26) Gold and Silver Jewellery Techniques, 27) Floral Panel Assembly, and 28) Art and Techniques of Making Miniature Wooden Boats.

Pork chop buns' cultural value

According to the bureau's themed website on cultural heritage, Macau's craft of making pork chop buns originated in the mid-20th century in Taipa Village. As an area where Chinese and Portuguese/Macanese communities lived side by side, the district

experienced frequent exchanges between Chinese and Western culinary cultures. Local "cha chaan tengs" (traditional Hong Kong and Macau-style cafés) drew upon the production method of Portuguese "relief bread" popular amongst locals, alongside Portuguese spice-marinating techniques. Combining these with Chinese culinary preferences, they experimented with inserting a pork chop into a bread roll, gradually forming a preparation craft with distinct local characteristics.

Currently, according to the website, the craft of making pork chop buns relies primarily on local heritage cha chaan tengs and family transmission via word of mouth and daily practice, with no systematic training mechanism established as yet. Macau currently has over a dozen long-standing establishments serving traditional pork chop buns, with around 50 to 100 practitioners possessing these traditional craft skills. However, traditional methods demand significant manual labour and time, involving complex and physically demanding steps. As senior masters age, the intergenerational transmission of the craft faces pressure,

highlighting the need for further protection and preservation measures.

Inventory vs statutory protection list

The items listed in the Cultural Affairs Bureau's Inventory of Intangible Cultural Heritage indicate their official status as being required to be protected as the first step. In addition, according to the Cultural Heritage Protection Law, the government is also required to decide whether to classify certain intangible cultural heritage items that are already in the inventory as statutorily protected ones, officially known as List of Intangible Cultural Heritage.

According to the law, items listed in the List of Intangible Cultural Heritage indicate that they are of significant cultural value to Macau. Items newly classified in the statutorily protected List of Intangible Cultural Heritage must be published in an executive order signed by the secretary for social affairs and culture in the gazette to take legal effect, demonstrating a higher legal status than items newly listed in the Inventory of Intangible Cultural Heritage, which are merely required to be published in a notice by the Cultural Affairs Bureau in the gazette.

According to the law, the government is required to consult the public about its proposal to list certain intangible cultural heritage items as statutorily protected ones.

Macau currently has 24 items in the statutorily protected List of Intangible Cultural Heritage, comprising 12 items listed in December 2019 and 12 items listed in October last year. ■

* *Va To (華佗, Hua Tuo, c. 140–208 CE) was a legendary physician of the late Eastern Han dynasty. Revered in Chinese history as the pioneer of traditional surgery, the inventor of Mafeisan (an early herbal anaesthetic), and the creator of the Five-Animal Exercises (Wu Qin Xi), Va To was posthumously deified as Va To Sin Si (華佗先師 / Immortal Master Va To) or the "Divine Physician" (Sam Yi / 神醫). – Gemini, MPD*

** *Batê-Saia ("skirt-pleating" or "skirt-ruffling" in the local Patuá Creole) is a traditional Macanese decorative paper-cutting art native to Macau. It forms an integral part of the territory's Luso-Asian intangible cultural heritage, bridging European paper-lace traditions with Chinese paper-cutting techniques. – Gemini, MPD*

Firefighters remove hornets' nest from external wall of Transport Bureau

Tony Wong

A hornets' nest was found on the external wall of the 21st floor of the Transport Bureau Building yesterday afternoon, and firefighters carried out an operation to hose it down, lasting 1.5 hours, according to a statement by the Fire Services Bureau (CB) yesterday.

No one was injured in the incident.

In addition to the Transport Bureau, the building also houses the Lands and Urban Construction Bureau (DSSCU).

The Transport Bureau Building is located opposite the headquarters of local power utility CEM on Estrada de D. Maria II (馬交石炮台馬路).

The Fire Services Bureau (CB) received reports at around 3:15 p.m. about the hornets' nest. Firefighters extended the aerial ladder and used a high-powered water jet to take down the nest eventually.

The operation was carried out in a section of Estrada da Bela Vista (新雅馬路), where the entrance and exit of a public carpark, which occupies the first to fourth floor of the Transport Bureau Building, is located.

The operation was carried out until 4:45 p.m., during which this section of Estrada da Bela Vista was closed to traffic.

The nest measured 15 x 10 centimetres. ■

Firefighters hose down a hornets' nest on the external wall of the Transport Bureau Building yesterday afternoon. – Photo courtesy of TDM



China empowers Global South nations through AI technology

Analysis

BEIJING – Launched from the waters off east China's Shandong Province yesterday, a rocket successfully placed two AI-powered satellites into orbits. Delivering intelligent remote sensing services to Uzbekistan and Indonesia, this mission represents new progress in China's efforts to empower the Global South through AI.

One satellite will collaborate with Uzbekistan to conduct full-cycle monitoring of the landlocked country's cotton industry, while the other will safeguard Indonesia's agricultural production by precisely tracking crop growth and assessing disaster risks, according to the satellites' developer Star.ai Spatio-temporal Intelligence Technology Co., Ltd.

"We engage in deep cooperation with these two countries, spanning agriculture, meteorology and mineral exploration," said Song Bingchen, Star.ai's co-founder.

Powered by AI algorithms, these satellites can implement computing tasks directly in space. "In disaster early warning, our smart satellites can provide specific decision-making guidance within minutes, a massive efficiency leap compared to traditional satellites that take hours to assess a situation," said Song.

In recent years, China has seen its intelligent technology increasingly being deployed across the region, in sectors like disaster mitigation and agriculture, helping to bridge the digital and intelligence divide.

Last month, a research team from Fudan University saw its China-Africa AI disaster early warning and mitigation programme officially selected for the United Nations' International Decade of Sciences for Sustainable Development.

"China is among the world leaders in comprehensive aerospace and AI technologies, whereas Africa is highly vulnerable to frequent natural disasters, but lacks robust disaster prevention and mitigation capabilities," said Zhang Yuning, a member of Fudan's project team.

"Leveraging China's aerospace and AI technologies to provide Africa with early disaster warnings and post-disaster information support can effectively assist African nations and the African Union in their disaster prevention and mitigation efforts," added Zhang.

This inclusive AI cooperation achieved an institutional milestone just ahead of the 2026 World AI Conference (WAIC) held in mid-July. Twenty-nine countries signed an agreement to establish the World Artificial Intelligence Cooperation Organization (WAICO), an independent intergovernmental body headquartered in Shanghai, constituting a major move by China to answer the call of the Global South and unite the international community together to build a just and equitable system for global AI governance.

Also at WAIC, the National Development and Reform Commission unveiled a collection of case studies showing how China's AI technology is benefiting the world.

Included in the studies is the case of China's MAZU meteorological model, which has been empowering

Djibouti's local dockworkers to navigate unpredictable extreme weather in the coastal country of northeast Africa, without having to simply rely on luck.

"This is the kind of technological support we've long been hoping for," said a technician at Djibouti's National Meteorological Agency. "It has given us forecasting references we never had before, especially in tracking extreme weather incidents such as heat waves and heavy rain."

MAZU, which literally means "Sea Goddess" in the Minnan culture of China, is the world's first national-level action plan in response to the United Nations' Early Warnings for All initiative. Since 2024, meteorological agencies in more than 40 countries have accessed MAZU through the cloud.

The casebook shows a Chinese smart robotics firm is driving a smart manufacturing revolution in Malaysia's labor-intensive natural rubber industry by providing customized AI and robotic solutions. Enabled by small-model AI algorithms and high-precision servo drive control system, an upgraded production line went into operation in January 2025, achieving a 20 to 30 percent reduction in labor costs.

"Overall factory management efficiency has improved dramatically. The production capacity and product quality of the entire line have taken a qualitative leap," Er Hock Lai, chairman of Seng Fong Holdings Berhad, was cited as saying.

By leveraging an AI-driven platform co-developed by China and Brazil, local farmers can now manage a complete farming cycle and monitor real-time environmental conditions with just a few clicks. This digital transformation has driven a notable 6-to-10 percent increase in crop yields.

In another case, China's cooperation with Global South countries also extends to the frontier sciences.

A Chinese team developed an AI-powered screening platform, which can rapidly analyze massive genomic datasets to identify novel antimicrobial peptides and lead compounds. Sherien Magdy, a researcher from Egypt's National Research Centre used the AI platform to rapidly screen more than 30 promising antibiotic lead compound candidates and food antimicrobial agents lead compound candidates.

"Work on the screening and validation of drug lead compounds that used to take two years can now be completed in a few months," she said.

In 2025, the Chinese and Egyptian research teams jointly conducted an expedition along the Red Sea coast, collecting sediment samples from mangrove ecosystems. Using the intelligent marine drug screening and prediction platform, they subsequently completed genome sequencing and metabolic potential analysis of more than 50 microbial strains.

"What we are sharing is not just technology, but also innovative concepts and new cooperation models," said Wang Hong, head of the marine drug team at Zhejiang University of Technology.

— Xinhua

China's AI-driven MAZU platform boosts Africa's weather forecasting amid climate change

Analysis

ADDIS ABABA – The multi-hazard, alert, zero-gap and universal (MAZU) platform, an artificial intelligence (AI)-driven meteorological early warning solution developed by China, has strengthened weather forecasting capabilities in African countries facing some of the most severe impacts of climate change.

EMPOWER PORT OPERATION

At a dock in Djibouti, stevedore Mohammed Ali used to face the daily grind of working amid unpredictable weather. High temperatures, sudden gusts, or torrential rains would hit without warning, causing work disruptions, equipment damage and even endangering workers' lives.

In July 2025, the China Meteorological Administration (CMA) donated MAZU-Urban to Djibouti, which became the first version of MAZU deployed in the country.

Through extensive fieldwork, Chinese experts gained an understanding of the needs of Djibouti's cities, ports and airports. They even tailored a port-specific module to address delays in issuing warnings.

With the system, extreme weather events can now be forecast in tiers up to 24 hours in advance, and alerts can be sent directly to port management staff and frontline workers.

MAZU impressed Mohamed Ismail Nour, director general of the Djibouti National Meteorological Agency, with its accurate forecasting and effectiveness in disaster prevention and reduction. "The Chinese side also helped train our staff, and they are working closely together," he said.

In July, during the 2026 World Artificial Intelligence Conference (WAIC) and High-Level Meeting on Global AI Governance in Shanghai, an upgraded version of MAZU was officially handed over to the Djiboutian side with the presence of Nour.

With the forecast resolution improved from 9 km to 3 km, the platform provides forecasts up to three days in advance and updates them every six hours. It also integrates phased-array radar, AI-powered forecasting models and meteorological satellites for weather monitoring and early warning.

DATA, EXPERTISE EXCHANGE

The MAZU system is helping climate-vulnerable communities in more than 40 countries strengthen their resilience, while customized versions have been deployed in several countries, including Djibouti and Ethiopia.

Asaminew Teshome, deputy director general of the Ethiopian Meteorological Institute (EMI), highlighted the growing partnership with the CMA and other Chinese partners to integrate cutting-edge technologies into Ethiopia's national weather systems.

During an interview with Xinhua, he identified a lack of stakeholder coordination in data exchange as a key challenge.

The MAZU system fills gaps in data exchange mechanisms by integrating different satellite products with local meteorological stations. It then generates more tailored and downscaled weather and climate information, he said.

According to the official, the CMA has finalized the configuration and installation of the MAZU system and deployed it at EMI. Following comprehensive technical training provided by visiting Chinese scientists, Ethiopian specialists are now equipped to manage the platform.

"It is the first of its kind in Africa, and our institute has already successfully secured the MAZU system. We are now starting to operationalize the MAZU system to generate nowcasting and short-range forecasts," he said, adding that they also plan to share this enhanced operational expertise and technical knowledge with other African national meteorological and hydrological service institutions.

EARLY WARNING FOR ALL

As a continent vulnerable to climate change, Africa is expected to face yet another El Niño event, the strongest since 1950, according to the African Union.

The anticipated El Nino is estimated to inflict a combined economic loss of US\$10 billion to US\$20 billion on African countries, while adaptation financing needs could reach as much as US\$100 billion.

"Early warning systems are the most cost-effective protection against climate disaster," United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres said while addressing the WAIC in July. "Where coverage is comprehensive, disaster deaths are at least six times lower. Yet one-third remain unprotected."

He lauded China's role in helping dozens of countries strengthen early warning systems through its platforms, satellites and AI models.

"These tools are built with other developing countries as partners, drawing on local data, so nations can issue their own warnings. This is the model the world needs, with technology transfer, joint research and local capacities helping countries protect their people," Guterres added. — Xinhua



Tourists from Jamaica interact with humanoid robots at a robot shop in Shenzhen's Longgang District on Tuesday. With the deep application of the achievements of emerging industries, many inbound foreign tourists choose science and technology tours as the theme of their visit to the Chinese cities. In Shenzhen, foreign tourists are attracted by AI applications and technology scenarios in daily life, such as AI glasses, smart robots and unmanned delivery service. — Xinhua

China rolls out countermeasures against US restrictive measures

BEIJING — China has implemented a series of countermeasures in response to recent restrictive measures taken against China by the US Federal Communications Commission (FCC) and the US Department of Homeland Security, a Ministry of Commerce (MOC) spokesperson said yesterday.

The US restrictive measures seriously violated the important consensus reached by the two heads of state and severely infringed upon China's legitimate rights and interests, leaving China no choice but to respond, the spokesperson noted.

China's countermeasures includes a national security investigation into certain imported office equipment with printing and copying functions, tighter export controls on drone-related dual-use items to the United States, measures against Compliance Testing LLC and six other US entities, and suspension of US-based certification bodies' authorization to conduct follow-up factory inspections under the China Compulsory Certification (CCC) system, said the spokesperson.

Among the measures, the ministry launched China's first national security investigation into foreign trade, targeting imported

office equipment with printing and copying functions that features foreign system software.

Preliminary information indicates that such imported office equipment may affect national security interests in foreign trade.

Foreign system software refers to driver software and embedded software developed, tested or maintained by foreign individuals or entities.

The investigation will examine the importation of products under probe; the impact of imported products, technologies or services on national security interests; domestic demand in relevant sectors and the extent of reliance on foreign goods, technologies or services; the state of development of relevant domestic industries and the impact of imports on them; and the capacity and level of such industries to meet domestic demand and serve national security interests.

It will also examine the impact of relevant foreign government policies and measures on China's national security interests, as well as any other matters affecting national security interests in foreign trade, the ministry said.

In addition, exports of drones, their key components, and related

technologies that are included in the country's dual-use export control list will be subject to rigorous case-by-case review when destined for the United States, the ministry said. Such exports will not be eligible for license facilitation measures.

Also yesterday, China included US firm Compliance Testing LLC on its countermeasure list. The company assisted and supported the FCC in taking measures that endanger China's sovereignty, security and development interests.

Effective yesterday, the ministry also imposed countermeasures against six US entities that assisted and supported the United States' unlawful Xinjiang-related sanctions against Chinese companies.

The six entities are Applied DNA Sciences, Inc., Stratum Reservoir, LLC., Altana Technologies, Inc., Responsible Business Alliance, Verite Group, Inc. and Human Rights in China.

Organizations and individuals within China are prohibited from engaging in any transactions, cooperation or other related activities with Compliance Testing LLC or any of the six entities.

Separately, China's National Certification and Accreditation Administration said it has decided

to suspend the authorization of US-based certification bodies to conduct follow-up factory inspections for products certified under the CCC system. The decision takes effect immediately.

The CCC system is part of China's market access system, with goals including safeguarding national security and preventing market fraud. It is administered by the State Administration for Market Regulation and implemented by third-party certification bodies.

Currently, the CCC catalog contains 106 types of products across 17 product categories, covering key areas of foreign trade and people's livelihoods.

Since the meeting between the two heads of state in Busan, the FCC has repeatedly overstretched the concept of national security and introduced restrictive measures against China covering telecom operations, testing laboratories, drones, consumer routers, submarine cables and other fields, disregarding strong opposition from China and robust calls from industry in both China and the United States.

More recently, it has imposed import restrictions on advanced robotic devices and power inverters, the commerce ministry spokesperson said.

In particular, despite China's

repeated representations, the US Department of Homeland Security added more than 40 Chinese entities to the so-called "Uyghur Forced Labor Prevention Act Entity List" on July 31, one day after a video call between the Chinese and US lead persons for economic and trade affairs. China voiced strong dissatisfaction with and firm opposition to the move, the spokesperson added.

The spokesperson stressed that China's countermeasures are generally restrained, and that China cherishes the hard-won stability in bilateral trade and economic ties.

"We hope the US side will work in the same direction with China," the spokesperson said, adding that China demands that the United States should immediately revoke the relevant measures, stop its wrongful acts, and return to the proper track of friendly consultation and cooperation to resolve differences, so as to jointly maintain a constructive bilateral relationship of strategic stability.

If the United States insists on introducing new restrictive measures against China, China will take further countermeasures in response, the spokesperson concluded. — Xinhua



A staff member trains a robot to sort items at Maniformer, a physical AI data service platform, in Shanghai, yesterday. In Shanghai's tech companies like AGIBOT and Maniformer, embodied intelligence robots are trained in household, retail, sorting, production and other real-world scenarios, to advance their AI capabilities for real-life use. — Xinhua

Beijing designated as UNESCO-UIA World Capital of Architecture 2029

PARIS — Beijing has been designated as the UNESCO-UIA (International Union of Architects) World Capital of Architecture 2029, UNESCO announced yesterday.

The designation followed the recommendation of the Joint Committee for the World Capital of Architecture.

Established jointly by UNESCO and UIA, the World Capital of Architecture program highlights the transformative role of architecture, urban planning, culture and heritage in advancing sustainable urban development. Every three years, UNESCO designates the host city of the UIA World Congress as the UNESCO-UIA World Capital of Architecture.

According to UNESCO, Beijing was selected for its "exceptional ability to bring together one of the world's richest architectural heritages

with a forward-looking vision of sustainable urban development."

"Its historic urban fabric, successful regeneration projects and vibrant architectural culture demonstrate how heritage, innovation and community life can reinforce one another in shaping resilient and livable cities," UNESCO said in a press release.

Looking ahead to Beijing 2029, UNESCO Director-General Khaled El-Enany expressed confidence in the press release that the city's extraordinary architectural heritage, dynamic urban transformation and forward-looking vision would inspire new international dialogue on the power of architecture.

Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, became the first city to be designated the UNESCO-UIA World Capital of Architecture in 2020, followed by Copenhagen and Barcelona. — Xinhua

China firmly opposes US abusing state power to go after Chinese businesses: FM spokesperson

BEIJING — China firmly opposes the US overstressing the concept of national security, and abusing state power to go after Chinese businesses, a foreign ministry spokesperson said yesterday.

Foreign ministry spokesperson Lin Jian made the remarks when asked to comment on the reports

that the United States is drafting a ban on imports of new Chinese optical transceivers, and is also preparing price floors and tariffs on polysilicon and related products.

"Protectionism will not make the US more competitive," Lin said, adding that the US move seriously disrupts normal trade

and economic exchanges between Chinese and US businesses, and is not in the interest of US businesses and consumers or anyone else for that matter.

"China will continue firmly protecting our businesses' legitimate and lawful rights and interests," Lin stressed. — Xinhua

Shenzhou-21 crew makes first public appearance after record 210-day space mission

BEIJING — The three astronauts from China's Shenzhou-21 crewed mission met the press in Beijing yesterday, their first public appearance after returning to Earth in May this year.

Astronauts Zhang Lu, Wu Fei and Zhang Hongzhang are in good physical and mental condition, with muscle strength, endurance and cardiovascular fitness largely restored to pre-flight levels, as it was announced at the briefing. They have now entered a recovery observation phase and will resume regular training following a final health assessment.

The Shenzhou-21 crew spent 210 days in orbit, from their launch on October 31, 2025, to their return on May 29, 2026, setting a new record for the longest single crew stay by Chinese astronauts.

During their mission, they completed three spacewalks and conducted extensive space science experiments, notably witnessing and participating in the first-ever in-orbit emergency rescue

operation in the history of China's manned space program.

"The emergency response system of China's manned space program withstood a real-world test during our stay," said Zhang Lu, the mission commander. "From handling a spacecraft impact by space debris, adjusting our orbital schedule and switching return vehicles, to executing an emergency launch, the entire system operated seamlessly to ensure our safety."

Zhang said he was most impressed by China's space sector's calm confidence, scientific rigor and unwavering teamwork.

Zhang has completed seven spacewalks across two missions, namely Shenzhou-15 and Shenzhou-21, making him the most experienced spacewalker in China's history.

Wu Fei, who previously contributed to the development of the Tianhe core module and the Wentian lab module, said operating equipment in orbit that

he had once tested on the ground gave him a sense of familiarity. "All the experience accumulated from my ground work translated into the confidence and composure I needed for precise operations and sound judgments in space," Wu said.

Payload specialist Zhang Hongzhang shared several scientific breakthroughs achieved during the mission, including China's first successful aeroponic cultivation of cherry tomatoes and wheat in orbit, the first closed-loop breeding of mice in space, and the validation of key technologies for efficient spectral and water-fertilizer utilization.

Beyond their demanding research schedule, the crew cultivated more than ten types of crops, including wheat, sunflowers, tomatoes, sweet potatoes and mint, which not only helped refine in-orbit planting techniques but also brought joy to their intensive space life.

— AFP

S Korean police raid Starbucks HQ over 'Tank Day' fiasco

SEOUL – South Korean police raided the Starbucks national headquarters yesterday, the chain's local operator told AFP, following allegations an advertising campaign defamed activists slain in 1980 pro-democracy protests.

Starbucks Korea caused an uproar this year when it launched a "Tank Day" promotion on May 18, touting a new line of capacious tumblers for its coffee beverages.

The date marked the anniversary of the 1980 Gwangju pro-democracy uprising, when at least 165 civilians were killed as a military dictatorship rolled tanks out onto the streets.

The chain was accused of trivialising the nation's landmark protest movement and insulting the dead, remembered as martyrs by many South Koreans.

A civic group and bereaved families filed a complaint accusing members of the Shinsegae Group, which operates Starbucks Korea, of defaming and insulting the

victims and relatives.

"The Seoul police raided the headquarters of Starbucks Korea this morning as part of the ongoing investigation," a Shinsegae Group spokesman told AFP, declining to provide further details.

Seoul police said an investigation into the firm was ongoing, but also declined to provide further information about the case.

The complaint named Shinsegae Group chairman Chung Yong-jin and Son Jung-hyun - the former CEO of Starbucks Korea, who resigned over the furore.

The advertising fiasco also alluded to phrases which officials at the time used to dismiss allegations they had tortured a student activist to death.

Public apology

South Korea is the third-largest market for the coffee giant, behind the United States where it was founded, and China.

The controversy prompted a

public apology and the one-off early closure of the chain's more than 2,000 stores nationwide for staff education in June.

The Shinsegae Group has previously said its own internal investigation found no evidence of intentional wrongdoing.

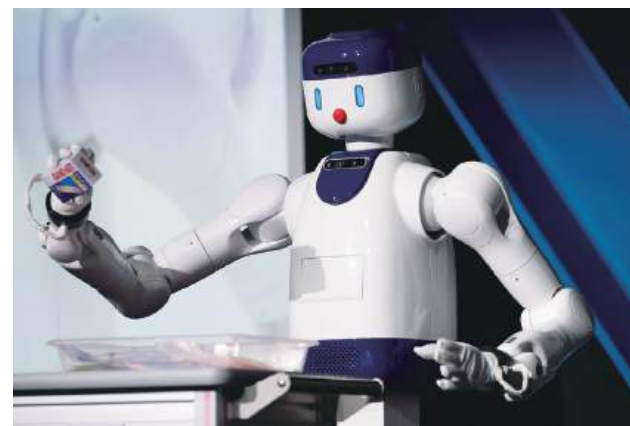
But it admitted its audit suffered from limitations, such as the executive in charge of planning the campaign refusing to surrender their mobile phone.

Police investigators are hunting for evidence which was not included in the company's own investigation, according to the Yonhap News Agency and national broadcaster KBS.

The so-called Tank Day controversy led to a "sharp decline in sales" in the early days of the scandal, according to the Shinsegae Group.

Starbucks' estimated credit and debit card payment volume fell 17 percent from May to June, according to local data platform firm IGAWorks.

— AFP



Zeals semi-domestic compact humanoid "D1" helper robot picks up a box of Band-Aids on the stage during a press preview at Shibuya Scramble Hall in Tokyo yesterday.

— AFP

Man arrested after cyclists struck, dog killed in NZ's Auckland

WELLINGTON – A 49-year-old man was arrested after he allegedly stole a vehicle, struck and wounded three cyclists, and fatally attacked a dog during a series of violent incidents yesterday morning in New Zealand's largest city of Auckland, police said.

One of the injured cyclists was in a critical condition after the attacks in the suburb of Epsom, and charges were still being determined, police added.

According to Acting Detective Inspector Craig Bolton, police were called to reports of a serious assault at about 7:00 a.m. local time. The man allegedly assaulted a woman, causing bruising to her face, head and upper body, before stealing the vehicle of a passerby who had stopped to help her.

Police said the suspect then drove the stolen vehicle into several other vehicles before striking three cyclists. After the vehicle crashed, he approached a woman walking her dogs and violently killed one of the dogs at the scene.

The ambulance service said three cyclists were taken to hospital, including one in critical condition, one with serious injuries and one with moderate injuries. Two other people were treated at the scene, Radio New Zealand reported.

Deputy Prime Minister David Seymour told Radio New Zealand that the incident was not believed to be a "premeditated terror-type attack" and it involved a person known to police for mental health illness.

— Xinhua

Malaysia says will not repatriate Myanmar refugees if lives are at risk

KUALA LUMPUR – Malaysia will not send 5,000 refugees back to Myanmar if authorities conclude their lives would be at risk, a government spokesman said yesterday, while preparations continued for the potential repatriation.

Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim announced last week that Myanmar had agreed to take back 5,000 members of the persecuted Rohingya minority, in a rare repatriation push that has prompted concern from rights groups.

Communications Minister Fahmi Fadzil, without specifying the refugees' ethnicity, told a news briefing that "Malaysia, as a responsible country, will not send them back if they would either be persecuted or their lives would be threatened".

"The junta government in Myanmar is ready to receive them, but we will examine what the criteria are. And if appropriate, we will implement" the repatriation plan, he said.

"We cannot send them back if

their lives are threatened. So there are several matters that are being looked into by the foreign ministry."

Myanmar authorities have made no public comment on the plan.

Malaysia hosts more than 215,000 refugees and asylum seekers registered with the UN refugee agency, including more than 126,000 Rohingya from Myanmar, the country's largest refugee community.

The repatriation plan was announced after Malaysian authorities last week detained more than 100 Rohingya who had gathered outside the UN refugee agency's office in Kuala Lumpur.

The refugees were being threatened with eviction from an informal settlement in northern Penang state.

They were later released after officials confirmed they held valid UN documentation.

Malaysia's home ministry has since begun documenting and screening refugees ahead of the planned repatriation, according to

state news agency Bernama.

The news agency quoted Home Minister Saifuddin Nasution Ismail as saying 4,000 people in immigration detention identified for the process "will undergo screening and be placed at one depot instead of being spread across 19 depots, to facilitate the process".

Malaysia's main Rohingya rights group urged the government to halt the plan, saying their lives would be at risk if returned.

Malaysia, which shelters one of Southeast Asia's biggest refugee populations, is not a signatory to the 1951 Refugee Convention and does not formally recognise refugee status.

AFP fact-checkers have found that Rohingya refugees in Malaysia have been targeted by online disinformation campaigns that rights advocates say are fuelling xenophobia and intimidation.

Many of the Rohingya, a mostly Muslim group, escaped Myanmar during a brutal military crackdown in 2017.

— AFP

6.3-magnitude earthquake hits off southern Philippines: USGS

MANILA – A magnitude 6.3 earthquake struck off the southern Philippines yesterday, the United States Geological Survey said.

The quake, which hit 32 kilometres southwest of the small island of Sarangani at 12:14 p.m. [local time], according to the USGS, did not trigger a tsunami warning. There were no immediate reports of casualties or damage.

Sarangani Island rescuer Harly Sauro told AFP the quake had struck while a large number of people had gathered to receive a government subsidy.

"The shaking was quite strong. I saw people in panic. They were running and shouting," he said.

"The earthquake came while the local government was giving a financial subsidy, so there were many people at the court, but

everyone's safe," he added.

"Based on our assessment and experience, we don't think there will be casualties or damage."

The Pacific Tsunami Warning Center placed yesterday's quake at a depth of 62 kilometres.

The quake follows a powerful June 8 tremor that toppled buildings, triggered landslides and killed at least 76 people on the nearby island of Mindanao.

That earthquake, driven by a shifting of the Cotabato trench, raised the seabed by as much as two metres, exposing coral and harming marine life.

Earthquakes are a near-daily occurrence in the Philippines, which is situated on the Pacific "Ring of Fire", an arc of intense seismic activity stretching from Japan through Southeast Asia and across the Pacific basin.

— AFP



A man sits in the shade outside the Gwangmyeong Cave tourist site in Gyeonggi province yesterday.

South Korea has been sweltering in a streak of searing weather – new all-time highs were set three times over the past week alone, peaking at 42.5C on Sunday.

— AFP

Indonesia arrests 2nd Malaysian in days for drug smuggling

SURABAYA – Indonesian authorities have arrested a second Malaysian in days for allegedly smuggling methamphetamine and ecstasy into the country, a crime that carries the death penalty in the Southeast Asian nation.

A 22-year-old identified only as "DI" was detained in Surabaya, Indonesia's second-largest city, on Monday shortly after landing on a flight from Kuala Lumpur, airport security task force head Novi Manunggal said in a statement.

Acting on a tipoff, officials at the

airport found "methamphetamine and ecstasy pills attached to the suspect's body", Novi's statement said.

"DI" was found with four packs, or 990 grams, of crystal meth and four packets containing 1,089 ecstasy pills, he said.

The person has been charged with smuggling more than five grams of drugs, which in Indonesia carries a death sentence.

Authorities arrested a 39-year-old Malaysian pilot last week with more than 70,000 ecstasy tablets in his suitcase at Jakarta's Soekarno-

Hatta International Airport.

The pilot had just flown a passenger plane from Malaysia, and subsequent tests returned positive results for several illegal drugs.

Indonesia has some of the world's toughest anti-drug laws, including the death penalty for traffickers, but has maintained a moratorium on executions for several years.

The Muslim-majority country last carried out the death sentence for drug offences in 2016, when one Indonesian and three Nigerians were executed by firing squad.

— AFP

Bangladesh's ex-PM Hasina says return from exile 'duty to people'

NEW DELHI – Bangladesh's fugitive ex-prime minister Sheikh Hasina said yesterday she would return to her country in December even if it meant imprisonment, insisting "fear cannot decide" her "duty to the people".

"I may be detained, I may be sent to prison. But fear cannot decide my duty to the people," Hasina, 78, said in an audio broadcast to a packed press club in New Delhi.

"I cannot stay away while my beloved countrymen are suffering," added Hasina, who is in hiding in India.

She was speaking on the second anniversary since her iron-fisted rule was overthrown on August 5, 2024 by a student-led uprising.

Hasina fled by helicopter to India as crowds stormed her palace.

The United Nations says up to 1,400 people were killed in crackdowns as she tried to cling to power.

In November 2025, a court in Dhaka found Hasina guilty of crimes against humanity and sentenced her to be hanged.

Dhaka has formally requested Hasina's extradition, which New Delhi has said was "under examination".

Hasina said she wanted to return in December as it marks the month Bangladesh gained independence in 1971.

But her comments yesterday elicited anger in Dhaka where protesters burnt her effigy.

Her remarks echoed comments in an interview to AFP in July in which she said she wanted to return to Bangladesh by the year's end.

"I may be killed. I may be arrested. I may be sent to prison," Hasina wrote, in an email sent from hiding. "I am fully aware of my fate. Still, I want to go back because my people are calling me."

The Bangladeshi government has said it will ensure Hasina receives due legal process in all cases against her should she return.

Rights groups have long accused Hasina's former administration of abuses including the murder of rivals, suppression of opposition parties, rigged courts and one-sided elections.

Tens of thousands of people watched the address broadcast online.

Bangladeshi authorities have banned local media from airing her speech. – AFP

Indian panel warns Meta over Modi video removal

NEW DELHI – An Indian parliamentary panel called on Wednesday for Meta chief Mark Zuckerberg to apologise for the temporary removal of a video of Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

India, the world's most populous country, is Meta's largest market by users, with hundreds of millions of people using Facebook, Instagram and WhatsApp.

Modi's video, addressing students during youth-led protests July 23, was briefly removed from Meta-owned Facebook and Instagram, but was later restored.

Meta has said it was caused by technical error.

Nishikant Dubey, who heads the parliamentary committee on communications and information technology, said the panel blamed Meta.

"Deleting the prime minister's video was not the work of an intermediary, but that of a publisher," Dubey said, a lawmaker in Modi's

ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP).

"Zuckerberg will have to apologise within three days."

Joel Kaplan, chief global affairs officer at Meta, said he met with India's Information and Broadcasting Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw yesterday and apologised.

"I apologised to the minister on behalf of Meta for the error restricting PM Modi's post," Kaplan said in a statement.

India's parliamentary standing committees scrutinise government policies and can summon officials and company executives to answer questions.

However, they cannot themselves impose penalties, revoke legal protections or direct prosecutions.

Any action against an online platform would have to be taken by the government or the courts under existing law.

Dubey said that the committee had written to the interior and technology ministries demanding action.

"If he does not apologise, then all the safe harbour protections that have been provided to his social media platforms should end," Dubey told reporters.

Modi posted the vertical video, speaking directly to the camera, on July 23 – during the height of protests led by the online Cockroach Janta Party movement.

The demonstrations, which began in New Delhi, were sparked by anger over exam irregularities but grew into a wider movement over jobs, youth opportunities and what critics describe as Modi's increasingly authoritarian rule.

Modi, a keen user of X, turned to Instagram – issuing his first vertical videos to tap into the youth medium of choice.

In the video, Modi assured students that the government would implement stricter laws and harsher punishments against paper leaks.

– AFP



Mourners light candles in front of the portraits of mountaineer Nirmal Purja and his companions, who were killed in an avalanche in Pakistan, during a memorial ceremony in Kathmandu on Tuesday. Nepalis gathered in Kathmandu on Tuesday, for a candlelight vigil to remember the 10 climbers who lost their lives in an avalanche in Pakistan during the ascent of one of the world's highest mountains, as rescuers continue to tackle treacherous conditions to recover their bodies. A search team has now transported the bodies of renowned climber Nirmal Purja and three of his team members to the base camp of the mountain on which they were killed by an avalanche, the Alpine Club of Pakistan said yesterday. – AFP

Sri Lankan beauty pageant contestant fined with animal cruelty

COLOMBO – A Sri Lankan court has fined a 19-year-old beauty pageant contestant with animal cruelty after she danced on stage with an endangered python, an official said yesterday.

The snake has been released unharmed into the jungle. No further details were provided about the reptile's history.

The wildlife department prosecuted the woman, identified as Methmi Hiranya, after her act five months ago in Colombo went viral on social media, protection officer MP Sanjeeva said.

The woman was fined 50,000 rupees (\$181), while the man who loaned the non-venomous, seven-foot (2.1 metre) reptile was fined 100,000 rupees. Both pleaded guilty.

"They were fined the maximum allowed under the law during a court hearing late last month," Sanjeeva told AFP.

"Soon after the act, the python had been released into a jungle."

Sri Lanka has strict flora and fauna laws that prohibit handling wildlife, particularly endangered animals.

However, exotic animals are often displayed at several tourist spots across the island, where keepers charge foreigners for photographs with them.

Sanjeeva said three men were prosecuted at Colombo's Galle Face promenade in recent weeks for exhibiting reptiles.

"We initially warn, but prosecute repeat offenders," Sanjeeva said.

Snake charming and domesticating monkeys for circus acts are not prohibited, he said, but cruelty to the animals would result in charges.

Sri Lanka's High Court sentenced a keeper to 15 years in prison in September for trafficking wild elephants.

A tourist guide was fined 200,000 rupees in February 2022 for taunting a wild elephant.

The man had recorded himself harassing the animal and posted the video on TikTok. – AFP

Cambodia launches 2nd Lancang-Mekong Peace Boat program

PHNOM PENH – The second edition of the Lancang-Mekong Peace Boat program was officially launched in Phnom Penh, capital of Cambodia, yesterday, aiming at strengthening regional dialogue, promoting mutual understanding, and advancing practical cooperation for the sustainable development of the Lancang-Mekong region.

Suos Yara, chairman of the Commission on Foreign Affairs, International Cooperation and Information of Cambodia's National Assembly, said the project was implemented by the Asian Vision Institute (AVI), a Phnom Penh-based independent think tank.

"I am particularly pleased to see the participants from Cambodia,

China, Laos, Myanmar, Thailand, and Vietnam on this journey together," Yara said at the launch event.

Attendees then embarked on a cruise along the Mekong River.

"Over the next seven days, this peace boat program offers a rare opportunity for learning, dialogue, cultural exchange and friendship among people from across the Mekong-Lancang region," he added.

Yara noted that the project is funded by the Lancang-Mekong Cooperation (LMC) Special Fund, which has served as a strategic compass and engine of regional growth and development.

AVI's President Chheng Kimlong said the program unites participants from all six LMC

countries across various professions, backgrounds and experiences.

"This second edition provides a dedicated platform where government officials, policymakers, researchers, scholars and young professionals can exchange ideas, learn from one another, and develop practical policy recommendations that contribute to regional peace, resilience and shared prosperity," he said.

Kimlong said that during the journey, participants will discuss critical regional themes. These include peace and security, small-state diplomacy, water resources governance, Southeast Asian foreign policy, digital diplomacy, economic integration, and disaster response. – Xinhua



Supporters of the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party chant slogans during a protest rally in Karachi yesterday demanding the release of Pakistan's former prime minister Imran Khan. – AFP

Sri Lanka bans major online gambling sites

COLOMBO - Sri Lanka has blocked access to some of the world's largest online betting sites as part of a crackdown on unauthorised gambling, the Digital Economy Ministry said yesterday.

Online gambling is legal in Sri Lanka, but operators must register with

the authorities and pay licence fees.

The government ordered local internet providers to bar access from Sri Lanka to 24 major gambling sites – although VPN software could still bypass restrictions.

Authorities also warned Sri Lankans that investing in those

sites was illegal.

The banned sites include stake.com, bet365.com, betway.com and 1xBet.com.

"All telecom service providers have been ordered to implement the ban with immediate effect," the ministry said in a statement. – AFP

Leftist Democrat wins stunning primary victory in crucial Michigan

DETROIT – A leftist insurgent Democrat defeated the party establishment's candidate to score a stunning win yesterday in the primary race for the Senate after harnessing popular discontent and anti-Israel sentiment.

Abdul El-Sayed, a former public health official, narrowly beat veteran politician Haley Stevens after a bruising race seen as a window on the Democratic Party's internal struggle to define itself in the Donald Trump era.

El-Sayed was born on October 31, 1984, in the Detroit suburb of Rochester Hills, Michigan, to Egyptian immigrant parents. He is Muslim and will now run in November's midterm election for the US Senate against Republican Mike Rogers.

In a swing state that has twice narrowly backed Trump for president, that will be one of a handful of key battles deciding whether the Democrats can claw their way to controlling the Senate.

While Democrats are bullish that they can win the House of Representatives from Republicans in November, the Senate contest



US Democratic Senate candidate from Michigan Abdul El-Sayed addresses supporters at his election night event at The Majestic Theatre in Detroit, Michigan, on Tuesday. – AFP

will be far harder.

To secure the Senate – and thereby the ability to shut down much of Trump's agenda for the rest of his term – Democrats must keep Michigan while flipping four Republican-held seats around the country.

Mainstream Democratic Party leaders had backed Stevens, thinking she was more likely to

appeal to a broader group of voters and give them the best chance to hold the Senate seat, which is being vacated by a retiring Democrat.

But El-Sayed, a former Wayne County health director backed by leftist party leaders Bernie Sanders and Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, electrified voters and overcame Stevens's vastly bigger campaign budget.

He has cast himself as a working-class fighter willing to confront corporations, party leaders and increasingly unpopular pro-Israel donors.

Stevens swiftly conceded to El-Sayed, saying she would "offer him my full support as we work to defeat Mike Rogers."

Trump quickly shot off his own message, branding El-Sayed "a Communist loser who hates Jews and Israel."

Volunteer energy

El-Sayed's allies say the campaign's volunteer energy proves progressives can build a statewide coalition without relying on Washington's traditional donor network.

The campaign also laid bare bitter divides over the United States' deep support for Israel.

Stevens defended continued military backing for the country and rejected accusations that Israel committed genocide in Gaza.

El-Sayed has called for an end to unconditional US aid, attacked the influence of the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC)

lobby group, and said Israel should not exist specifically as a Jewish state.

Pro-Israel lobby's financial power

AIPAC spending and outside advertising totaling US\$90 million – in a state with a large Arab American population and deep anger over the Gaza war – has made Michigan another national test of the pro-Israel lobby's ability to shape Democratic primaries.

The candidates traded increasingly personal attacks, with El-Sayed calling Stevens "the least capable candidate in America," while she has accused him of blaming his problems on Jewish Americans.

Congresswoman Debbie Dingell, who has remained neutral, warned that the "brutality" and "ugliness" of the campaign could make it harder for Democrats to unite afterwards.

Michigan voted narrowly for Trump in 2024, even as Democrat Elissa Slotkin edged Rogers in that year's Senate race, underscoring both the state's competitiveness and the risks of a divided party.

– AFP, MPD

Where mountain lions roam, fewer deer in the headlights

Issam Ahmed

WASHINGTON, DC – Living among apex predators could make you safer.

A new study published yesterday in *Current Biology* found that on Washington state's Olympic Peninsula, vehicle collisions with deer fall by as much as 76 percent in areas highly frequented by mountain lions.

The reason isn't because the big cats are eating enough deer to thin the herds.

Rather, it is fear that makes deer avoid roadways and developed areas while cutting back on nighttime activity – a clear example of the benefits large carnivores bring to the landscapes they share with humans, lead author Justin Suraci told AFP.

"You can put a dollar amount on how much a rancher loses when wolves kill their cows, and people are putting dollar amounts on those things," said the scientist, who works for California-based research group Conservation Science Partners.

"But if we don't put a dollar amount on the services – or at least articulate those services – they get perceived as not existing."

Cameras and collars

Earlier research modeled what would happen to deer-vehicle collisions if mountain lions recolonised the eastern United States, where they once roamed before hunting and habitat destruction left them largely confined to the West.

Another paper examined how the return of wolves to Wisconsin affected car crashes with deer.

Suraci and colleagues instead focused on the Olympic Peninsula, where mountain lions – variously known as cougars, pumas or panthers – have long been established.

Because the lions already live in a stable equilibrium with their deer and elk prey, the team could better isolate the effects of the predators on their prey's behaviour, rather than the effects of predators simply killing and consuming the herds.

They drew on data collected from 503 camera traps and 59 collared mountain lions as part of a long-term research study by Panthera, the global wild cat conservation organisation, in partnership with several Native American tribes and nations.

Where mountain lions were present, they found deer were more active by day than by night, 15 percent less likely to be in areas with a high density of roads, and 86 percent more likely to occupy remote habitat far from developed areas.

Dividing the peninsula into a grid of five-by-five kilometre cells and overlaying car crash data, they found there was a reduction of to 76 percent in the number of vehicle-deer collisions in areas with high mountain lion presence over a five-year span.

Traffic on the peninsula is light. Even so, state data for the 2020-2025 study period showed there

were two human deaths, more than 80 injuries and US\$14.7 million in estimated health expenses and vehicle repairs from crashes with ungulates (hooved mammals).

Suraci said it isn't yet feasible to work backwards and estimate how many deaths, injuries and economic damage the mountain lions have prevented.

"But it would be substantially higher if all the pumas were gone," he said, adding that in future work he hopes to capture the full extent of economic impacts, costs and benefits, in the counterfactual scenario that they were absent from the Peninsula.

Economic value

Senior author Mark Elbroch, puma program director for Panthera, told AFP the work was important given the grave threats facing cougars, with over 1,000 killed each year across the western US by state wildlife officials responding to attacks on livestock.

"Research like this...helps people want to live alongside cougars," he said.

Suraci stressed that large carnivores, like any species, have inherent value beyond the services they provide to human beings – but said that failing to make the economic case would be a disservice to them.

"This quantification of the economic value that these things provide is only additive to the inherent intrinsic conservation value that all life on Earth has." – AFP

Woman arrested as 4 men stabbed in central London

LONDON – A woman was arrested after four men were stabbed in Covent Garden, a busy area of central London popular with tourists, in a suspected "mental health related incident", police said yesterday.

"A 47-year-old woman was arrested on suspicion of possession of an offensive weapon and assault," London's Metropolitan Police said in a statement posted on X.

The victims were four men aged 34, 39, 42 and 52, the force added.

London Ambulance Service said the four patients had been taken to a major trauma centre after having been treated at the scene.

The Met said in its statement: "While at an early stage of the investigation, this is believed to be a mental health related incident."

Officers seized a pair of scissors at the scene, they added.

Emergency services were called around 12:30 p.m. (local time).

Striking images published by media showed an air ambulance helicopter in Trafalgar Square and a street lined with stores and patio seating cordoned off by police tape.

Shootings are rare in the UK, where the sale of firearms is highly regulated, but the government has been struggling to clamp down on the use of knives and other sharp objects.

– AFP



Police officers stand at a cordon near the Shaftesbury Theatre, pictured from Endell Road in Covent Garden, central London, yesterday. – AFP

Total eclipse gives scientists chance to probe Sun's mysteries

Frédéric Bourigault and Daniel Lawler

PARIS – Scientists plan to use a total solar eclipse that will be visible in Spain next week as a rare chance to learn more about the stormy, unpredictable nature of our star.

When the Moon blots out the Sun on August 12, teams will leap into action studying its magnetic field, atmosphere and furious weather that sometimes causes disruptions back here on Earth.

There is a long history of using eclipses to make scientific breakthroughs.

It was while watching an eclipse on May 29, 1919 on the West African island of Principe that British astronomer Arthur Eddington confirmed Albert Einstein's theory of relativity.

He achieved this by observing the effect of a light-bending phenomenon called gravitational lensing on the stars that became visible while the Sun's dazzling light was obscured.

More than a century later, scientists will watch a total solar eclipse lasting a minute and 40 seconds appear across a swathe of northern Spain next week.

"Our work aims to understand the physical mechanisms underlying the Sun's activity," Allan Sacha Brun, an astrophysicist at France's Atomic Energy Commission (CEA), told AFP.

Every day, specialists are working on models aiming to explain solar activity, allowing them "to put the Sun back into context within its evolutionary timeline, from its birth to its death," he added.

'We're incredibly lucky'

The Sun is constantly spewing out matter and charged particles, sometimes unleashing full-blown solar storms that shoot out giant explosions of plasma and other matter.

When these materials slam into Earth's magnetic shield, they can knock out satellites, threaten astronauts – and create colourful auroras in the skies of northern and southern latitudes.

"These phenomena follow a regular cycle, peaking every 11 years," Brun said. "In 2024, the Sun reached the peak of its 25th cycle."

Next week, CEA scientists will focus on the Sun's corona, the outermost layer of its atmosphere.

"We're incredibly lucky: the Moon is 400 times smaller than the Sun – but it's also 400 times closer to us," Brun said.

This coincidence means the Moon blocks out the Sun's light, but still lets scientists see what is happening in its atmosphere.

The Sun's corona extends out for 10 million kilometres, and is a million times less intense than its surface, which is called the photosphere. But the corona can still reach up to two million degrees Celsius.

During normal times when there is no eclipse, scientists study the Sun's atmosphere with satellites equipped with a coronagraph – "a filter that blocks out the photosphere", Brun explained.

But total eclipses even allow them a rare glimpse of the chromosphere, the layer of atmosphere between the corona and the surface.

'Inspirational'

Scientists at the European Space Agency (ESA) will be analysing next week's eclipse, hoping to learn more about solar winds.

"Why do solar storms propagate in this way? What are their structures, and can we develop models that allow us to predict them?" asked Carole Mundell, the ESA's director of science.

The ESA's Solar Orbiter probe, which launched in 2020, has been busy collecting data about the Sun's atmosphere and wind.

Eclipses are an opportunity to "test just how good our models are – or how bad," the mission's co-principal investigator Miho Janvier said.

Another ESA mission called Proba-3 is currently using three spacecraft flying in synchronised formation to create their own mini-solar eclipses.

There are also plans for a mission called MESOM that hopes to send a spacecraft into the shadow of the Moon to get a much-longer view of the phenomenon.

Lucie Green, a solar physicist at University College London working on the mission, told AFP that total solar eclipses were "inspirational for everybody, artists and scientists alike".

"What we see on the Earth is inspiring what we want to do in our space science research," she added.

– AFP

SpaceX rocket stage believed to have slammed into Moon

NEW YORK – A four-tonne piece of a SpaceX rocket was believed to have unintentionally crashed into the Moon yesterday, a collision that posed no danger to Earth but is expected to leave behind a lunar crater.

While there was not yet official confirmation that the Falcon 9 upper stage struck the lunar surface, it had been expected to make impact at approximately 06:35 GMT.

NASA and its Lunar Reconnaissance Orbiter probe and South Korea's Pathfinder Lunar Orbiter were planning to take images of the site after impact, but it may take days to receive that information.

Scientists and amateur stargazers alike had been looking forward to observing the sunlit plume of rubble and debris created by the smash.

"It might be possible for folks with a telescope to observe the plume of ejecta created by the impact," said Benjamin Fernando of Los Alamos National Laboratory in New Mexico, the lead author on a recent paper on the anticipated impact.

"It is unclear how bright it will be, which is one of the reasons why we are looking to study this event," the researcher told AFP before impact.

Assuming all of the propellant is spent, authors of the paper estimate the spacecraft weighs

approximately 4,000 kg.

It was expected to slam into the Moon's northern hemisphere near the Einstein Crater, at some 8,690 kilometres per hour.

'Space junk'

"There is no danger to Earth," said NASA spokesperson Jimi Russell in a statement.

"NASA will continue to track the booster for training purposes, as well as later observe the impact site for scientific purposes."

The Falcon 9 rocket made by Elon Musk's SpaceX firm took off in January 2025, carrying two lunar landers. The booster returned to Earth, but the upper stage stayed in space to push the landers onward.

Generally, for such "high-energy missions" SpaceX performs a manoeuvre to make sure the second stage "is safe per the appropriate rules and regulations," said Julianna Scheiman, director of NASA Science and Dragon Programs at SpaceX, at a Monday news conference.

"We did that," she continued, but "what has happened is essentially a mixture of solar activity and gravity forces have put it on a path towards the Moon."

Like many scientists, Scheiman added she was "very excited" to see the impact.

The paper authors encouraged

both professional and amateur astronomers to attempt viewing or recording the collision.

"This event provides an opportunity to test a pipeline for localising impacts on the lunar surface for future seismic experiments, investigating the dust and plume dynamics from impact events on the Moon, and considering hazards from artificial space debris impacts," wrote the research team.

NASA hopes to soon establish a sustained human presence on the Moon, making it critical to better understand space debris in lunar orbit.

The Moon routinely weathers impact from space debris including meteoroids. Artificial collisions are less common.

In the 1970s, the US space agency carried out deliberate crashes during its Apollo programme to collect seismic data.

The rocket stage had been just one of many pieces of "space junk" orbiting Earth.

There are more than 46,000 pieces of space debris weighing a total of 17,000 tonnes currently in orbit, the European Space Agency (ESA) said in late July.

Some experts have warned that amassing too much space junk around Earth could lead to a dangerous chain reaction of collisions known as the "Kessler syndrome".

– AFP

Butterflies seek new habitats as climate changes: study

PARIS – Climate change is driving shifts in where butterflies are found globally, a major study said yesterday, with many species moving into new areas while others are retreating from traditional habitats.

The study in *Nature Ecology & Evolution* is one of the most comprehensive to date on how butterfly distributions are changing, assessing more than 1,700 species across 105 countries and territories.

Researchers found that nearly 80 percent of the reported shifts in the geographic ranges where butterflies were associated with climate change and extreme weather events.

Other factors were also driven by human activity: changes in land use, intensive agriculture, urbanisation, habitat fragmentation and the introduction of invasive species.

Butterflies are considered important indicators of ecosystem health because they are highly sensitive to temperature changes, have short life cycles and depend on specific host plants.

As the planet warms, some butterfly species are relocating northwards or seeking out higher elevations in search of cooler conditions.

However, just 22 percent of species showed a shift in elevation.

Overall, 80 percent of species expanded their range while 27 percent experienced range contractions, with some showing different patterns in different regions, underscoring the complexity of responses to climate change.

"This is rather good news as it proves that butterfly species are capable of migrating and shifting their range to adapt to changes," study co-author Jonathan Lenoir, an ecologist from France's national scientific research centre (CNRS), told AFP.

'Trapped'

Lenoir cautioned that range expansions were easier to detect than contractions because it was simpler to confirm a species has colonised a new area than prove it has vanished entirely from another.

Many observations, including those made by citizen scientists, were concentrated in lowland areas and near urban centres, potentially skewing the findings.

But butterflies could only adapt so far, Lenoir said.

It was possible that beyond a certain warming threshold more butterflies would contract their range, causing "much more rapid and sudden upheavals" among certain

species and "potential extinctions".

A 2024 study in *Global Ecology and Biogeography* found that 84 per cent of roughly 270 butterfly species studied in Europe would reduce their range by 2080 if global temperatures keep rising.

"Some butterfly species will not necessarily be able to migrate further north in latitude, or higher up in the mountains, in response to the global rise in temperatures," said Lenoir.

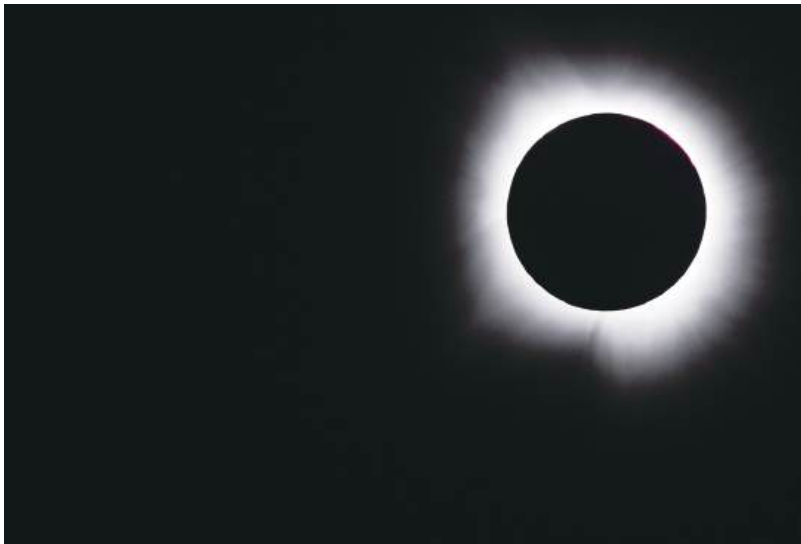
Species endemic to mountain regions on islands could become "trapped" as their habitat is reduced "to almost nothing" with limited options to shift elsewhere, he added.

The authors advocated for stronger conservation policies, the protection and restoration of butterfly habitats, ecological corridors and micro-climatic refuges, and improving biodiversity monitoring particularly through citizen science.

Underlining it all, they emphasised the urgent need to limit global warming to lower levels.

Knowledge gaps, too, must be addressed: just one in 10 butterfly species has documented data on how its range is changing and tropical regions remain largely understudied, the authors added.

– AFP, MPD



The Moon fully passes over the Sun's horizon during a Total solar eclipse on April 08, 2024 in Brady, Texas.

US revokes visa of Brazilian ambassador to Washington

WASHINGTON, DC – The United States has revoked the visa of Brazil’s ambassador, a US State Department official said Tuesday, in a mounting diplomatic row just months before elections in Latin America’s largest nation.

The move would be reversed, the official said on customary condition of anonymity, if Brazil granted its approval of President Donald Trump’s nominee to be ambassador Brasília.

Trump nominated Daniel Perez, a prominent Florida Republican, as the new ambassador to Brazil in early June.

While the nomination still requires confirmation by the US Senate, he would not be able to take up the post until Brazil gives approval.

“We think the government of Brazil owes us a prompt and positive answer to our request,” the official said.

Brazil’s envoy, Maria Luiza Ribeiro Viotti, was however not

being declared persona non grata and forced to leave the United States, the official clarified.

Brasília responded swiftly and condemned the US move as an escalation of a diplomatic standoff.

“Today’s decision is not an isolated incident. It is part of a deliberate escalation of hostile measures against Brazil, motivated by ideological reasons,” the office of President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva said in a statement on Tuesday.

The latest spat comes just months before Brazil holds a presidential election in October, with leftwing incumbent Lula facing a challenge from rightwing candidate Flavio Bolsonaro.

Brazil also recently denied visas for two US officials who sought to meet with election authorities last month, a Brazilian diplomatic source said, citing the “risk of political exploitation.”

A US State Department spokesperson said at the time that the

two officials wanted to visit Brasília to discuss “election integrity, religious freedom and freedom of expression” with government officials, religious leaders and others.

“Any insinuation of a ‘ploy’ to undermine a democratic nation’s election is a baseless lie,” the spokesperson said.

Brazil’s denial of the visas came after Flávio Bolsonaro renewed claims that the country’s electronic voting system was insecure, and as Trump continues to claim that widespread fraud cost him a 2020 electoral win.

In 2023, Bolsonaro’s father, ex-president Jair Bolsonaro, was barred by electoral authorities from running for office after he raised similar claims the year prior, while still in the presidency.

He was later convicted for plotting a coup following his 2022 election loss and is serving a 27-year sentence under house arrest.

– AFP

Brazil wants Argentine ambassador out: Buenos Aires

BUENOS AIRES – Brazil has asked Argentina’s ambassador to leave the country, the foreign ministry in Buenos Aires said on Tuesday, amid a diplomatic spat sparked by Argentine President Javier Milei’s repeated insults directed at Brazilian leader Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva.

The Brazilian government also said it was downgrading its mission in Argentina to the level of chargé d’affaires, Argentina’s foreign ministry said in a statement.

The escalation in tensions came two days after Milei doubled down on derogatory remarks about Lula.

“He’s a thief, he’s corrupt, he’s been convicted of theft and corruption, he’s been in prison, so it’s true that we can call him a convict,” Milei said of Lula during an interview broadcast Sunday on Argentine television.

The libertarian Argentine leader

made similar remarks during a speech in Brazil last month supporting Flávio Bolsonaro, Lula’s rightwing opponent in the upcoming presidential election.

Brazil recalled its ambassador to Argentina for consultations over Milei’s speech, but Buenos Aires later sought to downplay the spat, with presidential spokesperson Adrian Ravier saying it was a matter of “ideological and political differences.”

Lula, who was previously president from 2003-2010, spent 580 days in jail beginning in April 2018 after being convicted in the sprawling Operation Car Wash anti-corruption probe.

He was freed after his conviction was overturned on procedural grounds, with the presiding judge also later ruled to have been biased.

Lula returned to the presidency in 2023.

– AFP

Rubio expects Venezuela’s transition to take months, not years

WASHINGTON, DC – US Secretary of State Marco Rubio said on Tuesday that he expected Venezuela’s political transition to occur in a matter of months, not years.

“It’s going to require some persistence and a little bit of patience –not years, but certainly of months and weeks,” Rubio told reporters.

Seven months after the capture of former president Nicolás Maduro in a US military raid, delegates of interim President Delcy Rodríguez and opposition members are scheduled to hold their first round of talks this week in Caracas.

Following Maduro’s fall, Rubio became the main architect of US President Donald Trump’s policy toward the Caribbean nation, a major oil producer – a role of increased significance amid a surge in oil prices because of the war with Iran.

After Maduro’s fall, Rubio said that Venezuela must go through three phases: economic stabilisation, political stabilisation and, finally, elections.

“We want to improve the daily lives, help improve the daily lives of Venezuelans economically, so that they’re better off, they’re more prosperous. I think that helps as well facilitate the political transition,” Rubio told reporters, on the sidelines of an event with Paraguayan Foreign Minister Ruben Ramírez.

“If you look at the transitions in Eastern Europe after the fall of the Iron Curtain, if you look at Paraguay, a country that undertook a transition from authoritarianism to democracy, it took them almost three and a half years to complete that process,” he said. “These things are difficult.”

– AFP



Residents in a neighbourhood remain outside their homes during a blackout in Havana on Tuesday. Cuba’s state electricity operator said later that day that the power grid across the country had been reconnected after a 36-hour nationwide blackout. Authorities had struggled to get generation facilities and connectors back on line, prompting frustration among Cubans who have suffered six islandwide blackouts this year on top of constant localised power cuts. – AFP

Ceuta warns of ‘unsustainable’ situation for child migrants after influx

CEUTA – The leader of Spain’s north African exclave of Ceuta said yesterday that the number of children left there after last week’s rush of migrants was “unsustainable”, pleading for government aid.

Spain said 70,000 of the 72,000 people who had entered Ceuta from Morocco in a sudden rush last week had now returned, after an incident that led to a spat between Spain and some other EU countries seeking a harder line on immigration.

But the roughly 2,500 who remain include hundreds of unaccompanied minors who are enduring dire conditions with limited access to food, water, shelter and sanitation.

Ceuta’s leader Juan Jesús Vivas, of the main opposition conservative People’s Party (PP), told public broadcaster RTVE that authorities were taking care of 1,100 youngsters against a theoretical capacity of 90.

“This is an absolutely unsustainable situation,” said Vivas, adding that there was “a high risk for order and public security” as reception centres were overwhelmed.

Groups of young migrants continued to roam the streets of Ceuta yesterday, gathering in parks and beaches as authorities worked to identify and accommodate them, an AFP reporter saw.

The Spanish government’s top official in Ceuta, Miguel Ángel Pérez, conceded those youngsters were “a priority, a source of great concern”.

The charity Save the Children estimates that around 1,000 “unprotected” minors are among the migrants still in Ceuta.

“We are asking for help, for assistance from the rest of Spain” through the leftist central government, said Vivas.

Any redistribution of the children to the rest of Spain under existing legal provisions is likely to meet resistance from regions governed by the PP and the anti-immigration, far-right Vox party.

Socialist deputy prime minister Carlos Cuerpo insisted on public television that the PP and its regional governments “must comply with the law just like everyone else”.

‘Serious trouble’

The ministry for youth and children has announced 25 million euros (US\$29 million) of emergency funding for Ceuta to help the territory of 84,000 inhabitants to care for the minors.

Vivas also said he had contacted Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez’s office on July 27 to warn that hundreds of migrants had entered Ceuta from Morocco and “we were headed for serious trouble”.

The office said it would get in touch with “the relevant ministries” to address the matter, he added.

The following day Vivas said he asked the interior ministry to declare a national state of emergency but was told this was “not legally possible”.

“We gave sufficient warning that the situation was becoming extremely strained and that exceptional measures needed to be adopted,” he added.

The government has maintained that it received no prior warning of the scale of the incident.

– AFP

Mexican influencer killed in public during livestream

MEXICO CITY – A Mexican influencer was shot dead on Tuesday while streaming live on social media outside a restaurant in Sinaloa state, where gang violence is rife.

César Gastelum, who had more than 500,000 followers on TikTok, was broadcasting with two friends – all dressed as food delivery workers as part of a challenge.

Video circulating online showed a motorcycle carrying two people pull up beside them before the driver reportedly shot him in the head.

Local police confirmed Gastelum’s death.

The livestream was halted and later removed by the platform, though footage and images of the attack have continued to circulate.

Local police initially reported the

death of a delivery worker, but later identified the victim as Gastelum, who was reportedly 25 years old and posted lifestyle content.

The attack took place in a busy shopping plaza near the Sinaloa prosecutor’s office in Culiacán, the state capital.

Soldiers and police were deployed while forensic experts collected evidence and removed the body, according to footage from local TV stations.

The district has been troubled over the past two years by internal struggles within the powerful local cartel.

Around a dozen influencers – some allegedly linked to criminal gangs –have been killed in recent years in Sinaloa, local media said.

– AFP

Embattled FIFA chief Infantino in emergency talks, suffers Figo blow

FIFA RABAT, Morocco - President Gianni Infantino held emergency talks with other FIFA directors in Morocco yesterday, a source told AFP, amid a wave of criticism over his now shelved plan to open the World Cup to private investment.

Infantino has come under increasing pressure, even from within FIFA, over his handling of the proposal, and calls for him to step down have grown since he abandoned it last Saturday.

Infantino has been reported to have sought support from former great players known as 'FIFA Legends'.

However, his plea fell on deaf ears with one of them, former Barcelona and Real Madrid star Luis Figo sending him a clear message - "Go".

"I could write 10,000 words on the problems at FIFA. But the solution needs only three: Infantino must go," Figo wrote in the *Daily Mail* yesterday.

"Believe me, I have met some rogues in my time in the game.

"But what I have seen exposed in the last 10 days is the lowest, most deceitful and cravenly self-interested behaviour I have ever witnessed.

"The man who would do that - the man who would try to force through such major changes just to enrich himself and his friends - is a relic of the game's past and should have no part in its future."

One of those believed to be at the meeting is FIFA's secretary-general Mattias Grafstrom, whose internal email to staff criticising the plan was leaked on Tuesday.

Infantino, a 56-year-old Swiss lawyer - who is holding the meeting in FIFA's Africa regional office in Sale close to Rabat - was in Morocco to celebrate last week's Feast of the Enthronement.

Morocco is to co-host the 2030 World Cup and Moroccan Football chief Fouzi Lekjaa is one of the few to have publicly supported Infantino since the humiliating climbdown.

Lekjaa last Saturday had praised his "wise" move to scrap the plan in the interests of "unity and cohesion".

He reiterated his backing for Infantino for "all the initiatives aimed at the development of world football" during his 10 years in charge.

Infantino had been basking in the warm afterglow of a highly successful World Cup - the largest ever with 48 teams and co-hosted by three countries,

Canada, Mexico and the US.

His wish to serve a fourth and final term looked likely to be rubber-stamped in Rabat next March - no other candidate had come forward to challenge him.

However, Tuesday last week all that faded.

FIFA, world football's governing body, floated the plan, saying it could raise up to US\$4.2 billion based on a valuation of US\$20 billion for a new commercial subsidiary, called the FIFA Forward Enterprise (FFE), which it proposed would run events such as the World Cup and Club World Cup.

It said that, if approved, the project could provide each of FIFA's 211 member associations with a one-off payment of US\$20 million in early 2027, and increase their funding allocation for the 2027-2030 cycle from US\$8 million to US\$20 million.

'Sad and reproachable'

Instead of acting as a sweetener it produced a furious backlash, with European football's governing body UEFA resorting last Thursday to the nuclear option of boycotting the sport's jewel in the crown, the World Cup.

By Saturday Infantino held his hands up and withdrew the plan.

"Our purpose has always been - and will always be - to unite and improve," said Infantino.

If he had hoped for that to be sufficient to shore up his authority he was to be swiftly disabused.

UEFA termed the proposal a "shabby, back room, opaque deal" hatched by Infantino.

"The current FIFA leadership has not only lost UEFA's confidence but also that of many other members of the football family," UEFA said in a statement.

North and Central American football's governing body CONCACAF went further still and called for "a comprehensive reckoning with this presidency" while slamming Infantino's "poor governance and leadership".

Grafstrom's leaked email only added fuel to the fire.

He described the fiasco surrounding the proposal as "a sad and reproachable series of events".

He added: "Individuals, unstable moments and unfortunate episodes come and go. The institution, its mission and its responsibility towards world football continue." - AFP

Alonso hails 'emotional' Mudryk return in 1-0 loss to Juventus

Pre-season friendly

Matthew Walsh

HONG KONG - Manager Xabi Alonso hailed Mykhailo Mudryk's "emotional" return from a doping ban as the winger played for Chelsea for the first time in nearly two years in a 1-0 friendly defeat to Juventus in Hong Kong yesterday.

The Ukrainian international came on as a substitute for Nicolas Jackson in the 82nd minute, drawing applause from his teammates and loud cheers from Chelsea fans in the 43,575 crowd at Kai Tak Stadium.

Mudryk had not played since November 2024 because of a doping ban, but won permission to resume his football career on Friday after winning an appeal.

Despite a lively cameo on the left side, he was unable to stop Juventus taking the spoils courtesy of a wonderful second-half strike from Kosovo international Edon Zhegrova.

"Really pleased for him. It was emotional for everyone from the club to see him back," Alonso told reporters.

"He was thrilled, for sure. After such a long period, to be back on the pitch, it was a great feeling for him."

Neither side could find the breakthrough in a drab first half as two experimental line-ups struggled to create clear-cut chances.

Danny Welbeck could have scored a goal on his Chelsea debut but the veteran England striker failed to direct a flicked header on target after 11 minutes.

Zhegrova stunner

Juventus came closest a few minutes before half-time when midfielder Jeremie Boga took aim from just outside the penalty area and forced Blues keeper Robert Sanchez into a diving save.

Early in the second period a long ball from Chelsea skipper Moises Caicedo put full-back Marco Palestra in on goal but his tame shot could not beat Mattia Perin.

Juventus finally broke the deadlock with a moment of magic in the 68th minute, Kenan Yildiz squaring for Zhegrova who curled a stunning strike into the top corner from outside the box.



Chelsea's Mykhailo Mudryk attends a training session ahead of their match against Juventus at Kai Tak Stadium in Hong Kong on Tuesday. - AFP

Both sides rang the changes but Chelsea could not find a cutting edge.

"I think we started pretty well. The first 30, 35 minutes, we have played with good control, we have created a few chances," Alonso said.

"And the second half, there were many changes. The game was not that controlled and stable with all the substitutions.

"Unluckily, we didn't get to win, but for sure, it's the process, it's minutes for everyone."

Chelsea left both Cole Palmer and Levi Colwill out of the matchday squad, with Alonso saying England playmaker Palmer had suffered some discomfort after getting a knock in Saturday's match against Tottenham in Sydney.

The Spanish coach said it was not a recurrence of the groin injury that sidelined him for much of last season, adding that he should be available for the next friendly.

Chelsea play Italian giants AC Milan in Jakarta on Saturday, before rounding off pre-season with games against Malaysia's Johor Darul Ta'zim and Spain's Real Sociedad.

They face Fulham at Craven Cottage in their opening league game on August 24.

Juventus travel to Australia for friendlies against fellow Italians Inter Milan and Palermo before kicking off the Serie A season with a trip to Frosinone on August 23. - AFP

Inter Milan and AC Milan battle to 1-1 draw in Perth friendly

Pre-season match

Tristan Lavalette

PERTH - Frenchman Christopher Nkunku converted a late penalty as AC Milan drew 1-1 with rivals Inter Milan in a lacklustre pre-season derby yesterday in Perth.

In front of 52,310 fans, Serie A champions Inter Milan appeared to be claiming the bragging rights after Federico Dimarco's strike from close range in the 52nd minute.

But Nkunku was brought down by Carlos Augusto in the 83rd minute before squaring the contest with a superbly taken penalty.

The result ensured that new AC Milan coach Ruben Amorim is still seeking a maiden victory after his reign began with a 2-2 draw in a friendly against Celtic in Glasgow last month.

Amorim, fired as Manchester United coach in January, has been tasked with turning around ailing AC Milan, who missed out on the Champions League last season.

He will have some concerns his new side were fortunate to escape with a draw following an error-strewn performance.

They will be encouraged by veteran midfield maestro Luka Modric playing the last 30 minutes having recently signed a one-year extension.

"It was nice to get some minutes under the belt and I felt good," Modric said.

"It's good to have these kinds of games to

prepare for the season.

"I think we did a lot of good things and hopefully we can just improve."

The match was the first for AC Milan since the death of Franco Baresi, who captained the club during a golden era in the 1980s and 1990s.

There was a minute's silence before the match with players from both teams linking arms.

Modric started on the bench much to the disappointment of the crowd, with the Croatian receiving loud applause in the warm-up.

AC Milan dominated the early exchanges with teenager Alphonso Areola and Samuel Chukwueze, whose future with the club is reportedly uncertain, providing some dash.

American Yunus Musah appeared set to break the deadlock in the 18th minute only for his bullet to smash into the left post, leaving AC Milan further frustrated.

Inter Milan then took control of possession as the game went through a lull towards half-time.

With both coaches ringing the changes, the game opened up after the interval as Dimarco pounced on sluggish AC Milan defending.

Modric entered in the 62nd minute amid a big ovation from the terraces, but AC Milan's struggles continued.

They appeared set for defeat before Nkunku stepped up late.

AC Milan will continue their pre-season against Chelsea in Jakarta on Saturday. - AFP



Manchester City's Phil Foden (right) crosses the ball as Team K-League's Park Tae-jun challenges during their exhibition match at Seoul World Cup Stadium in Seoul yesterday. City won the game 3-1. - AFP

De Minaur fights past Duckworth in all-Aussie Montreal battle

Tennis

MONTREAL – Alex de Minaur blew through the opening set but needed some good luck in the second to emerge with a 6-2, 7-6 (8/6) opening win over James Duckworth on Tuesday at the ATP Montreal Masters.

De Minaur, seeded third, hasn't lost to a fellow Aussie in four years, but he was made to work hard by his 86th-ranked compatriot to keep that streak alive.

The second-round match turned in an instant in the second-set tiebreaker when a return which rolled off the top of the net handed de Minaur a match point after he saved six set points for his opponent.

"A little bit of luck went my way in the tiebreaker," de Minaur said. "He was hitting me off the court in the second set, but I got lucky and managed to sneak away with the tiebreaker."

"Ultimately it was a lot of fighting and competing," added de Minaur, the 2023 runner-up in Canada who married British WTA player Katie Boulter last month.

De Minaur said he hasn't given much thought to his solid recent record against fellow Aussies.

"We're doing our best to make Australia proud," he said. "We have strength in numbers."

In other second-round action China's Shang Juncheng - only just returned from months away because of injury - scored the first notable upset of the week with 7-5, 4-6, 7-6 (7/5) defeat of 10th seed Andrey Rublev.

Shang saved five match points, on his way to the third round, breaking Rublev as he served for the match at 5-3 in the third and hanging on to win a seven-deuce service game.

Former world number three Stefanos Tsitsipas regained some of the touch lost during a recent rankings slump, with the high-profile qualifier dispatching Martin



Joao Fonseca of Brazil plays a backhand against Stefanos Tsitsipas of Greece during their singles match at the ATP 1000 National Bank Open presented by Rogers at Stade IGA yesterday in Montreal, Quebec, Canada. – AFP

Damm 6-4, 6-4 in a first-round match delayed by rain.

The 53rd-ranked Tsitsipas, winner last month in Gstaad, said that his latest coaching split from his father, Apostolos, is paying off.

Buddhist philosophy

"It's a chapter that should have started a long time ago," Tsitsipas said. "I guess I was too patient with my time and too nice with handling certain things, to take so much time to proceed with the change. But it's how life works."

"Certain things come at a certain time, I'm very Buddhist in that sort of philosophy."

The Greek claimed the opening set against Damm and came back from a break down in the second to earn a 5-2 lead and the chance to serve it out.

Damm managed to break back before Tsitsipas clinched the victory two games later.

The 98-minute victory sent Tsitsipas into a match with Brazilian Joao Fonseca yesterday, which he lost 6³ - 7⁷, 5-7.

Hubert Hurkacz, a 2022 finalist in Montreal who is coming back

from a knee injury suffered at Wimbledon, beat Marcos Giron 7-5, 4-6, 6-2.

Britain's Jakob Fearnley, who reached the final of a hard court Challenger last month, advanced past French veteran Adrian Mannarino 7-6 (7/3), 6-4, overcoming more than 30 unforced errors to book a meeting with 13th seed Czech Jakub Mensik.

Fellow Brit Jack Draper shed bitter tears as his latest injury comeback collapsed in a 6-3, 2-6, 6-2 loss to France's Terrance Atmane, who delivered an ace on match point.

Draper, who had not played a match since Eastbourne in June, was consoled at the net by his victorious opponent.

It was more disappointment for Draper after he and new coach Andy Murray travelled to last week's Washington event only for Draper to withdraw as an existing arm injury flared up.

Canadian Denis Shapovalov, who reached the final in Los Cabos at the weekend, was disappointed to retire with an ankle injury to hand a 4-6, 6-4, 3-0 victory to Zachary Svajda. – AFP

Sabalenka tops Uchijima in WTA Toronto opener

Tennis

TORONTO – World number one Aryna Sabalenka returned to her hard court comfort zone with a 6-3, 6-3 victory over Japanese qualifier Moyuka Uchijima in the WTA 1000 in Toronto on Tuesday.

It was a solid start for Sabalenka in her bid to bounce back after falling in the quarter-finals at Roland Garros and in the round of 16 at Wimbledon.

The Belarusian star has dominated on hard courts this year and on Tuesday notched her 24th win in 25 matches on the surface. The lone defeat was her loss to Elena Rybakina in the Australian Open final.

Now she's eyeing a North American hard court run that could include a three-peat at the US Open, the final Grand Slam of the year that starts on August 30 in New York.

"I'm happy with the performance, I'm happy with the fight," Sabalenka said after her second-round opener. "I knew going into this match I might struggle a little bit after a little break, but I was ready for that."

"I'm happy that mentally and physically I was ready to go."

Sabalenka didn't have it all her own way against the 111th-ranked Uchijima. But she emerged from an exchange of five breaks of serve that opened the second set with a 3-2 lead and made the advantage stand up.

She held for 4-2, and when she had her first chance to serve it out she pounced, sealing the match on her second match point with an overhead winner.

Uchijima had surprised the Belarusian in the opening game of the match, clawing back from 40-15 down to break on the way to a quick 2-0 lead.

But Sabalenka won the next five games and polished off the opening set with a confident hold of serve.

In the third round she'll face China's Zhang Shuai, who was leading Jelena Ostapenko 6-0, 4-0 when the Latvian retired from their match.

Former world number one Iga Swiatek survived some nervy moments to launch her US Open

build-up with a 6-0, 6-3 victory over Sara Bejlek.

In her first match since her Wimbledon title defence ended with a third-round exit, Poland's seventh-seeded Swiatek was rolling through the first nine games, appearing in total control with a double-break for a 3-0 lead in the second.

Pretty physical

But her Czech opponent dug in and disrupted Swiatek's rhythm, winning two straight games before Swiatek pulled off a great escape - fending off nine break points in a 22-minute sixth game to hold serve for a 4-2 lead.

"I'm happy that I stayed in the game and stayed solid because I felt at the end it got pretty physical," Swiatek said.

Swiatek has slipped from third in the world at this time last year to her current eighth.

Her Wimbledon disappointment came just four weeks after the four-time French Open champion bowed out in the last 16 at Roland Garros.

In fact, Swiatek has yet to reach a Tour-level final this season. She'll continue her quest to change that when she takes on Switzerland's Viktorija Golubic, a 5-7, 6-2, 6-3 winner over Croatian Donna Vekic.

Eighth-seeded American Amanda Anisimova reached the third round by walkover when scheduled opponent Lanlana Tararudee of Thailand withdrew because of illness.

Ninth-seeded Ukrainian Elina Svitolina rallied from a set and a break down to beat Spain's Jessica Bouzas Maneiro 6-7 (5/7), 7-6 (7/4), 6-4.

10th-seed Ukrainian Marta Kostyuk, who reached the semi-finals at Roland Garros and Wimbledon, shook off a slow start to beat Canadian wild card Katherine Sebov 7-6 (7/4), 6-0.

Kostyuk, was broken twice to trail 4-1 in the first set before rebounding.

"Obviously the first set wasn't easy, but I'm happy to have that type of match coming back because (if) you kind of pull through difficult moments you know you can do it," said Kostyuk, who next faces former Australian Open champion Madison Keys. – AFP



Aryna Sabalenka (right) of Belarus shakes hands with Uchijima Moyuka of Japan after their singles match at the 2026 National Bank Open tennis tournament in Toronto, Canada, on Tuesday. – Xinhua

Scottish police confirm Uganda boxers unaccounted for after Commonwealth Games

Boxing

LONDON – Scottish police yesterday confirmed to AFP that members of the Ugandan boxing team were unaccounted for after they participated in the Commonwealth Games in Glasgow.

Police Scotland said in a statement that it had "received reports of several athletes who are unaccounted for" and that it was conducting "enquiries" and engaging with the interior ministry.

Around 3,000 athletes from 74 nations competed in the 2026 Commonwealth Games in Scotland's largest city, with the closing ceremony held on Sunday.

Only two members of the

Ugandan boxing team of six have returned to Uganda, the president of the Ugandan Boxing Federation, Muhangi Moses, told AFP in Kampala after the first athletes arrived back Tuesday evening.

Moses said those who had not returned were the team captain, Nuhu Batte, as well as one other male and two female team members.

The boxing team members who returned home included a grandson of former Ugandan dictator Idi Amin, Aziz Abdul, who was disqualified for a headbutt in his quarter-final.

Moses said it was "too early to say that the four boxers disappeared", noting the athletes' UK visas were still valid and team members were

free to visit friends and family.

He said some team members were meant to return "later this week" and others at the weekend.

"It is too early to call it disappearance. Let us wait until their visas expire," Moses said.

The chief executive of the Games, Phil Batty, on Monday told the UK's Press Association news agency "we work really closely with Police Scotland, the Border Force and UK visas and immigration to make sure everyone arrives and departs in line with regulation".

A Pakistani boxer was also reported as failing to return home on schedule, according to regional media. – AFP

UK mansion where ‘listeners’ spied on Nazi generals becomes museum

Anna Malpas

ENFIELD, United Kingdom – Upstairs, Nazi generals enjoyed wine and lounged in elegant rooms. Downstairs in the basement, a team of covert listeners followed their chatter, gleaning vital insights into Germany’s war plans.

During World War II, Trent Park, a country house north of London, was turned into a camp for high-ranking German prisoners of war.

Now it has become a museum called Trent Park House of Secrets, which highlights the role of the team of German speakers, most of them Jewish refugees, who transcribed titbits from the prisoners’ bugged conversations.

“Trent Park is one of a network of intelligence houses, let’s call them, the most famous of them being Bletchley Park,” museum director Giuseppe Albano told AFP.

Depicted in the Oscar-winning film “The Imitation Game”, Bletchley Park, north of London, was a country house where mathematician Alan Turing cracked the code on encrypted Nazi messages.

For Albano, Trent Park is “on a par in terms of the military intelligence that was gained and... was used by the British government to shorten the length of the Second World War”.

It was part of a network of country houses with similar set-ups for eavesdropping, with the gathered intelligence then shared with Bletchley Park.

The idea to accommodate Nazi



The exterior of the new Trent Park Museum is pictured after its recent opening in Enfield, north London, on July 29, 2026. – AFP

generals in comfort to lure them into indiscretions was a “brilliantly devious strategy”, Albano said.

Trent Park was famed for its fashionable interiors in the 1930s when it was owned by a wealthy politician and guests included Charlie Chaplin and Winston Churchill.

During the war, the government handed it to a top-secret military intelligence unit, and engineers wired it with hidden microphones throughout – even in the garden.

These connected to listening equipment downstairs in the servants’ quarters, monitored day and night.

A total of 84 generals and 22 lower-ranking officers were held in the house – known as No. 11 Camp – between 1942 and 1945, served by

valets and even allowed out on day trips.

They included General Dietrich von Choltitz, the last Nazi commander in Paris, who arrived in late August 1944 after defying Hitler and surrendering the city.

Rocket secrets

Not realising they were audible even leaning out of windows or in the garden, the prisoners let slip secrets, including details of the development of the first ballistic missiles, V-2s.

This helped the British to bomb the research facility and delayed the use of the rockets, which first hit London in 1944.

The government removed the bugs when the war ended, but some wiring was left behind and is now



Visitors browse books in the library at the new Trent Park Museum, after its recent opening in Enfield, north London, on July 29, 2026. – AFP

on display at the museum, which opened as part of redevelopment by a property company.

The transcripts were released to the National Archives, but “some things are still classified”, said Albano.

In the museum’s recreated listening rooms, visitors can hear actors reading out some of the conversations.

One prisoner refers to a “rocket testing site” while discussing bratwurst supplies for the top brass.

Some also admitted atrocities. Von Choltitz said “the worst job I carried out was the liquidation of Jews”.

Britain did not hand this to war crimes trials, however, to avoid revealing how they had obtained the information.

“What happened at Trent Park was obviously very important and

it’s good it’s being commemorated,” said Adam Ganz, author of a radio play broadcast by the BBC called “Listening to the Generals”.

His late father, Peter, was recruited as a listener after fleeing Germany where he was detained in Buchenwald concentration camp.

The Oxford professor never spoke publicly about his war work, Ganz said, but “I think it was something he was proud of, committed to”.

The government trusted the listeners with the most sensitive secrets, but at the time no one knew of their role and “there was widespread hostility to refugees”, Ganz noted.

“It’s important and valuable that that contribution is being recognised.” – AFP

Paramount CEO says politics fuelling Warner Bros. merger battle

WASHINGTON, DC – Paramount CEO David Ellison said on Tuesday that the legal battle over his proposed multibillion-US-dollar takeover of Warner Bros. Discovery was fuelled by politics rather than concerns over market share.

His remarks in an opinion piece published in *The New York Times* came as a federal judge set a March 2027 trial date for the antitrust challenges to the megamerger.

Ellison’s Paramount Skydance agreed late last month to delay its US\$110 billion merger with Warner Bros. to June 2027 while the US lawsuit seeking to block the deal moves forward.

If the merger eventually closes, the new combined company would reshape the entertainment and media industry, in addition to delivering a major win to its owners, the Ellison family, who are close allies of US President Donald Trump.

If the deal doesn’t close, the Ellison family could be on the hook for billions in kill fees.

In a combative op-ed, Ellison

argued that the fight over the deal “is not really about market share.”

“The issue is whether I can be trusted as a steward of Warner’s CNN. There has been speculation about my politics, my loyalties, my intentions,” he wrote.

In their complaint against the deal, 12 Democratic-led US states claim the combined company would control roughly 27 percent of wide-release theatrical film distribution and a similar percentage of basic cable channel licensing.

“We are eager to continue to make our case in court... to ensure this unlawful merger never sees the light of day,” California Attorney General Rob Bonta said in a statement last month.

The deal would include CNN, one of the largest US cable news networks and a frequent target of Trump’s insults and attacks over coverage critical of his administration.

On June 12 the Trump administration approved the blockbuster deal without demanding a single change, clearing the way for one of the

largest media mergers in years.

Ellison argued that he held views across the political spectrum, “just like most Americans.”

“When it comes to our news operations, I do not aspire to lead these companies to bend their newsrooms to my views,” he said. “I believe that news should be based on facts and truth.”

Ellison’s Skydance acquired CBS News in mid-2025, with the major US broadcaster reaching a US\$16 million settlement with Trump over coverage of presidential candidate Kamala Harris in the same period.

Shortly after CBS became a part of Paramount Skydance, the company brought in Bari Weiss – a longstanding critic of progressive politics – to lead its news division.

Many CBS News journalists quit following Weiss’s appointment, alleging curbs on their editorial independence.

David Ellison is the son of Oracle founder Larry Ellison, who Forbes says has a net worth of more than US\$185 billion, making him the seventh richest person in the world. – AFP



US actor Matt Damon (centre speaks at a red-carpet event for the film ‘The Odyssey’ alongside South African-US actress Charlize Theron (right) and British-American film maker Christopher Nolan in Seoul on Tuesday, ahead of its premiere in South Korea yesterday. – AFP

World Weather			
CHINA	ASIA-PACIFIC	WORLD	LUSOPHONE
Beijing 26°C~38°C	Manila 25°C~29°C	New York 23°C~32°C	Lisbon 18°C~30°C
Shanghai 26°C~35°C	Bangkok 26°C~34°C	London 13°C~23°C	Rio de Janeiro 21°C~31°C
Hong Kong 23°C~30°C	Tokyo 24°C~34°C	Frankfurt 13°C~29°C	Luanda 17°C~22°C
Taipei 24°C~34°C	Singapore 25°C~33°C	Vancouver 16°C~27°C	Maputo 15°C~30°C
Guangzhou 23°C~34°C	Kuala Lumpur 25°C~35°C	Paris 11°C~25°C	Dili 18°C~35°C
Nanjing 24°C~35°C	Jakarta 23°C~33°C	Moscow 19°C~30°C	São Tomé 24°C~31°C
Guilin 23°C~34°C	Seoul 26°C~38°C	Las Vegas 29°C~43°C	Praia 24°C~31°C
Xi'an 20°C~28°C	Sydney 7°C~17°C	Monte Carlo 23°C~31°C	Bissau 23°C~29°C



Silver balls

Visitors look at an exhibition at the teamLab Borderless exhibition at the MORI Building Digital Art Museum in Tokyo on Monday, as teamLab Borderless celebrates over 4 million visitors after last month.

— AFP



Silent witnesses

Palestinian Muslim worshippers walk up the stairs in the grounds of the Dome of the Rock at the al-Aqsa Mosque compound, Islam's third holiest site in the old city of Jerusalem on Tuesday.

— AFP



Wonderwall

A woman visits the 798 art district in Beijing yesterday.

— AFP



Long gone...

A 'No Fishing' sign is pictured in the dried up Falmer Pond in Falmer, East Sussex, south of London yesterday. England and Wales both experienced the "driest July on record", the UK Met Office weather agency said yesterday, based on provisional figures.

— AFP



Natural fireworks

The Fuego volcano erupts 65 kilometres southwest of Guatemala City on Monday. On Monday, Guatemalan authorities declared a "danger" alert, the second-highest level, due to a powerful eruption of the Fuego volcano, and began evacuating nearby hamlets.

— AFP



The Pink House...

A home is covered in fire retardant dropped by firefighters during the Old Trails Fire in Spokane, Washington, on Tuesday.

— AFP