

Guangdong-Macau fair: 49 deals signed on day 1

Ida Cheong

The opening ceremony for the four-day 2026 Guangdong & Macao Branded Products Fair (GMBPF) took place yesterday at The Venetian Macao, witnessing the signing of 49 cooperation projects on-site, according to a statement by the organisers.

Covering big health, MICE (Meetings, Incentives, Conferences, and Exhibitions), sports, catering, and kitchen equipment, these agreements demonstrate the platform's pragmatic and efficient role in business matching, the statement underlined.

Commerce and Investment Promotion Institute (IPIM) President Che Weng Keong noted in a speech during the opening ceremony that, in the first quarter of this year, Macau hosted 425 MICE events. These events drove a 29.4 per cent year-on-year increase in revenue across related sectors, including hotels, restaurants, and retail businesses, he said.

Macau has continued to foster the in-depth integration of MICE events and investment promotion, repeatedly receiving international accolades such as "Best Conventions Destination (Asia)", "Best BT-MICE City"*, and "Best International MICE Destination", Che said. He added that these achievements



Commerce and Investment Promotion Institute (IPIM) President Che Weng Keong addresses yesterday's opening ceremony for the four-day "2026 Guangdong & Macao Branded Products Fair (GMBPF)" at The Venetian Macao Cotai Expo. – Photos: Ida Cheong

demonstrate the steadily growing international recognition and clout of the local MICE industry.

Che noted that as this year marks the 75th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between China and Pakistan, the fair has invited Pakistani enterprises to Macau for the first time to promote their premium Halal** food products. This aims to meet the diverse needs of Muslim visitors from across the region and around the world,

while further expanding the event's international network of partners.

Under the theme "New Opportunities in the Silver Economy, A New Chapter in Healthy Living", this year's fair has attracted more than 450 domestic and overseas enterprises. It features six distinctive zones showcasing premium and specialty products from Guangdong, Macau, and "Belt and Road" (B&R) markets, Che said. He added that a raft of forums, business-matching sessions, workshops, and



Taswan, head of Indonesian firm PT Dami Sariwana, speaks to reporters on the sidelines of the opening ceremony for the four-day "2026 Guangdong & Macao Branded Products Fair (GMBPF)" at The Venetian Macao Cotai Expo yesterday.

competitions will be held across the zones to help enterprises explore opportunities arising from the "first-store economy" and jointly expand international market cooperation.

At the same time, this year's fair adopts a "Multi-venue Event" model, with the Macau-Hengqin Forum on the Integration of Cross-boundary Elderly Care Services being held concurrently in Hengqin, alongside an experience zone for healthcare products and elderly care services, Che said.



Taswan, head of Indonesian firm PT Dami Sariwana, told reporters yesterday that his herbal medicine enterprise has participated in the fair twice. During the event, he signed a cooperation agreement with a local company.

Taswan noted that his company is exporting its natural health products to Africa and numerous other regions. Boasting nearly 40 years of industry experience, he plans to introduce Indonesian health products to Macau and the Chinese mainland. ■ (More on page 3)

* BT-MICE refers to Business Travel, Meetings, Incentives, Conventions, and Exhibitions. – Gemini

** Halal ("permissible" in Arabic) describes food and drink that are acceptable for Muslims to consume.

100 deaths in mass border crossing into Spain's Ceuta: local leader

BRUSSELS – About 100 people died during a mass border crossing into Spain's North African exclave of Ceuta last week, Ceuta President Juan Jesús Vivas told an extraordinary meeting of the European Parliament's Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs yesterday.

Vivas said about 80,000 people entered Ceuta, nearly 75,000 of whom subsequently returned voluntarily.

Between 3,000 and 5,000 migrants remain in the enclave, leaving reception centers overwhelmed and creating a severe humanitarian emergency, he said, calling for

stronger security, more reception resources and greater support from EU agencies.

European Commissioner for Internal Affairs and Migration Magnus Brunner described the influx which involved a number of people roughly equivalent to Ceuta's entire population as "incredible".

"Nothing on this scale has happened at any EU external border in 20 years, not in a single day," Brunner told the meeting, stressing that the EU could not accept such a breach of the integrity of its external borders or a violation of the security of the Union. (More on p.12) – Xinhua



Tourists from Vietnam pose for a group photo at the Jiuzhaigou scenic spot in Sichuan Province yesterday. Jiuzhaigou is known for its spectacular waterfalls, lush forests, serene plateau lakes and tufa (calcium carbonate) rock formations, making it a popular destination for international tourists. – Xinhua

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China unveils refined lunar map, empowering future Moon exploration

A Chinese research team has completed an updated geologic map of the entire Moon featuring a scale of 1:5 million, the Institute of Geology, Chinese Academy of Geological Sciences (IGCAGS), said yesterday.

– Story on p. 7

US Senate panel votes to hold top COVID expert Fauci in contempt

A Republican-led US Senate committee yesterday voted to hold the country's former top infectious diseases official Anthony Fauci in contempt of Congress.

– Story on p. 11

Erratic rains dictate menu at 3-star Michelin restaurant in Brazil

Climate adaptation has reached the world of fine dining: At Tuju, a three-Michelin-star restaurant in Brazil, erratic rainfall keeps its owners on their toes.

– Story on p. 12

Police arrest mainlander for attempted homicide & illegal weapon possession

Police suspect 'relationship dispute' as motive

Armindo Neves

The Judiciary Police (PJ) announced in a statement yesterday that they arrested a man from the Chinese mainland on Wednesday for attempted homicide and possession of an illegal weapon.

According to the statement, at 10:02 p.m. on Wednesday, the PJ received notification from the Public Security Police Force (PSP) that a serious assault had occurred outside a hotel in Cotai, and that a woman had been injured and taken to hospital for treatment.

PJ officers immediately rushed to both the scene and the hospital to investigate, initiating standard procedures, including an on-site forensic examination. Preliminary findings indicated that a man had assaulted a female acquaintance over a relationship dispute, inflicting multiple knife wounds of varying severity.

In the statement issued at around 5:00 p.m. yesterday, the PJ said that the injured woman, who is also from the Chinese mainland, had not yet regained consciousness and remained hospitalised.

The investigation uncovered strong evidence that the man is suspected of "attempted homicide" and "possession of an illegal weapon", and he has been taken into custody. The PJ added that a special press conference would be held at its headquarters in Zape at 2:30 p.m. today.

Meanwhile, a Fire Services Bureau (CB) spokesman confirmed to the *Post* by phone last night that at around 9:00 p.m. on Wednesday, the bureau received a report that a person was injured at a hotel on Avenida Marginal Flor de Lótus (蓮花海濱大馬路).

Firefighters arrived at the scene and attended to a middle-aged woman with cuts to her face, neck, and hands. She was conscious at the time and was rushed to the public Conde de São Januário Hospital Centre (CHCSJ) for treatment.

Another middle-aged man, a Nepalese national holding a non-resident worker (NRW) card and employed as a hotel security guard, was found to have a bruised arm. The spokesman said he was conscious and in a stable condition



Downloaded from Facebook last night, these two photos show a black seven-seater cordoned off by police and blood-stained seats inside the vehicle. The *Post* cannot vouch for their authenticity.



when taken to Kiang Wu Hospital for treatment.

This was the first attempted homicide in Macau this year, police sources said, pointing out that no fatal cases have been reported so far. Last year, according to police reports, Macau recorded three homicides. ■

Heat shelter opens amid Yellow hot weather alert

Khalel Vallo

The Social Welfare Bureau (IAS) opened its heat shelter yesterday after the Meteorological and Geophysical Bureau (SMG) issued a Yellow hot weather alert, urging residents to take precautions against heat-related illnesses.

The shelter is located on the ground floor of the Bairro da Ilha Verde Building, at 34 Rua Leste da Ilha Verde (青洲東街34號青洲坊大廈E1的避暑中心).

The Yellow alert is issued by the observatory when the weather is forecast to be "very hot". It is activated when temperatures are expected to reach or exceed 33 degrees Celsius in certain areas. An Orange alert signifies "extremely hot" weather, typically issued when maximum temperatures are expected to surpass 34 or 35 degrees Celsius.

The bureau urged residents to pay particular attention to elderly

family members, those living alone, the chronically ill, and vulnerable individuals, advising them to take appropriate measures to prevent heat-related health issues. Residents seeking information about the centre can call 2827 0939 during office hours or 6399 1963 outside office hours.

Health Bureau issues heatstroke alert

Meanwhile, the Health Bureau (SSM) reminded the public to take precautions against heatstroke, advising residents to avoid prolonged outdoor exertion during periods of extreme heat and, where possible, to schedule outdoor activities for the morning or evening.

People spending time outdoors were advised to wear wide-brimmed hats, use umbrellas, and wear light-coloured, loose-fitting, breathable



This warning icon downloaded from the Meteorological and Geophysical Bureau (SMG) website yesterday shows the Yellow hot weather alert.

clothing. The Health Bureau also recommended ensuring adequate ventilation in warm workplaces – such as kitchens and laundries – by opening windows or using fans.

Those engaging in outdoor activities were advised to drink electrolyte-rich beverages to replace fluids lost through sweating, while avoiding alcohol and caffeinated drinks such as strong tea and coffee.

The Health Bureau also warned against remaining in parked vehicles for extended periods, stressing that elderly people and children must never be left unattended inside cars. It added that older adults, young children, pregnant women, new mothers, people living with obesity, and those with underlying health conditions should remain in well-ventilated, temperature-controlled environments and avoid direct sunlight. ■

Police arrest 2 middle school students for theft



These two handout photos provided by the Public Security Police (PSP) yesterday show a bicycle, helmet, and pair of shoes allegedly stolen by two junior high school students, surnamed Cheng and Chio, last Friday.



Armindo Neves

The Public Security Police (PSP) arrested two junior high school students last Saturday and on Monday for theft, PSP spokesman Wong Chi Weng said during a regular press conference yesterday.

Wong said that the duo, who attend different schools but are friends, are surnamed Cheng and Chio.

According to Wong, last Saturday, the Public Security Police received a report from a local man stating that a bicycle, a helmet, and a pair of shoes had been stolen from a parking space in a residential building's carpark on Avenida de Guimarães (基馬拉斯大馬路) in Taipa, requesting that criminal liability be pursued.

Following an investigation utilising the city's CCTV network and the carpark's surveillance footage, officers confirmed that the duo had entered the car park at around 11:00 p.m. last Friday and taken the items.

On Saturday afternoon, PSP officers went to Chio's home and arrested him, seizing a pair of shoes, Wong said, adding that on Monday afternoon, officers went to Cheng's home and arrested him as well, recovering the bicycle and helmet from the ground floor of the building.

According to Wong, the investigation revealed that neither suspect lived in the building in question.

During questioning, Wong noted, the duo attempted to shift the blame onto each other. Cheng claimed that he had only taken the bicycle and helmet after being repeatedly urged to do so by Chio, whereas Chio argued that he had only entered the building that day to use the toilet.

The police did not reveal the two suspects' ages. Under Macau's Penal Code, the age of criminal responsibility is 16.

The duo have since been transferred to the Public Prosecutions Office (MP), each facing a charge of theft. ■

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Macau Weather

VERY HOT.
FINE APART FROM CLOUDY PERIODS.
A FEW SHOWERS LATER.
POSSIBLE THUNDERSTORMS.
FORCE 2 TO 3 EAST TO NORTHEASTERLY WINDS.
RELATIVE HUMIDITY WILL RANGE BETWEEN 55% AND 95%.



26°C~33°C

Source: SMG

Seniors' denture scheme starts today

Ida Cheong

Aiming to address senior citizens' ongoing oral health needs, the Health Bureau (SSM) launches a new phase of the "Denture Scheme for Elderly" today.

The scheme continues to adopt a phased implementation approach, prioritising older seniors, according to an SSM statement yesterday.

The statement noted that the bureau first partnered with non-profit medical institutions in 2019 to launch the pilot scheme, prioritising denture subsidies for financially disadvantaged seniors. The eligibility age threshold was subsequently lowered in phases to 65 and above, achieving full coverage for all eligible elderly residents.

Additionally, elderly individuals who participated in the scheme in 2019, received a referral, are currently receiving financial assistance, and still require denture services are eligible to reapply for this phase, the statement said.

To date, 240 eligible seniors who expressed interest in receiving dentures have been referred to non-profit medical institutions for follow-up, and all have completed their denture fittings, the statement added.

According to the statement, in order to safeguard the dental and oral health of senior citizens, the local government continues to implement multi-level measures to comprehensively meet the basic dental care needs of the elderly.

Currently, eight local health centres provide free outpatient oral healthcare services to residents, including senior citizens. Services cover fillings, scale and polish treatment, pit and fissure sealing*, simple tooth extractions, and dental consultations, the statement said, adding that patients requiring specialist medical care are referred to the Dental Department of the public Conde de São Januário Hospital Centre (CHCSJ) for further treatment and follow-up. ■

* Pit and fissure sealing is a quick, painless dental procedure where a thin plastic coating is painted onto the chewing surfaces of back teeth. This coating fills deep grooves to block food and bacteria, preventing tooth decay in hard-to-clean areas. — Gemini



This undated handout photo provided by the Health Bureau (SSM) yesterday shows its logo on a wall.

First-store scheme aids Macau debut: exhibitors



Raymond Choi (崔文正), business manager of ZHANGLIANG MALATANG (Macao) (left), and Macau Chain Stores & Franchise Association Deputy Secretary-General Karyo Leung (梁廟婷) speak to the media during an interview session on the sidelines of the "Scheme for Supporting the Development of Macao First-Store Economy" seminar at The Venetian Macao's Cotai Expo Hall A yesterday.

— Photos: Khalel Vallo

Khalel Vallo

Representatives of businesses participating in the "Scheme for Supporting the Development of Macao First-Store Economy" say that the initiative has encouraged investment in the city, with financial support and policy incentives helping new brands establish themselves in the local market.

Speaking to the media during the 2026 Guangdong & Macao Branded Products Fair (GMBPF) at The Venetian Macao Cotai Expo Hall A's Business Matching Area yesterday, representatives from newly established brands and the Macau Chain Stores & Franchise Association (MCSFA) said that the scheme has strengthened confidence in Macau's retail and consumer sector.

Raymond Choi (崔文正), business manager of ZHANGLIANG MALATANG (Macao), said his company's decision to open its first Macau outlet aligned with both its growth strategy and the government's efforts to attract quality brands. He described Macau as a competitive, internationally connected city with a diverse food culture and a steady flow of tourists and local consumers.

"Macau is a very unique city with rich cultural diversity, especially in food and beverages", Choi said, adding that the company hopes to integrate its Harbin-based hotpot brand into the local market while gradually adapting to local consumer preferences.

The restaurant opened its first Macau outlet in Taipa in June. Choi noted that

while the company is still learning about local spending habits, it is actively improving its services and supply chain. "The support scheme gives us confidence to continue developing in Macau step by step", he said.

Oscar Wu (胡澤樺), operating director of July E-Sports, said that Macau's growing youth market and tourism sector convinced his company to invest in the city, noting that esports has considerable growth potential locally. Wu added that while the Chinese mainland already boasts a mature esports ecosystem, Macau is still developing its related industries.

Wu underlined that financial assistance under the first-store scheme helped offset the high cost of purchasing professional gaming equipment. "The funding has mainly helped us invest in high-end computer equipment so we can provide players with a premium esports experience," he said.

Meanwhile, Macau Chain Stores & Franchise Association Deputy Secretary-General Karyo Leung (梁廟婷), said her group welcomed the government's initiative, describing it as consistent with its long-term efforts to attract quality brands to the city.

Leung noted that the association has promoted franchise development since its establishment in 2009 through exhibitions, forums, awards, and business matching activities. Since 2018, it has presented franchise awards during the Macao International Franchise Expo (MFE), helping introduce several well-known

mainland brands to Macau. She added that the association has also expanded its efforts to attract overseas brands while organising business matching events for local small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and entrepreneurs.

According to Leung, more than 100 local SMEs and young entrepreneurs have participated in two business matching sessions held since last November, with another planned in the near future.

She clarified that while the first-store scheme does not directly subsidise local SMEs, it allows them to benefit by partnering with overseas brands entering Macau. Rather than setting up standalone operations, foreign companies can work with Macau businesses already familiar with the city's legal, taxation, labour, and commercial environments – reducing operating costs while creating opportunities for local enterprises.

Leung also noted that the scheme encourages brands to establish outlets in older neighbourhoods and community districts rather than concentrating solely on tourist areas. Attracting established brands into local communities could create a clustering effect that drives footfall and revitalises neighbourhood economies, Leung said. She added that cooperation with experienced international brands will also allow local businesses to adopt more advanced management, supply chain, and branding practices, raising overall professionalism and competitiveness across the local retail sector. ■

Sands China garners 'Great Place to Work Certification'

Rui Pastorin

Integrated resort operator Sands China was recently recognised with the "Great Place to Work Certification", being the first integrated tourism and leisure enterprise in China to garner the recognition.

The announcement was made in a statement on Wednesday, where it was noted that Macau's largest private employer made the achievement upon its first participation in the assessment conducted by the US-based Great Place To Work enterprise, which serves over 22,000 organisations worldwide.

Great Place to Work® is a global corporate culture consulting, research, and employee survey company, according to its website.

The statement said that the certification

is mainly evaluated through the anonymous Trust Index Survey data submitted by staff of participating organisations, assessing the five key dimensions of "Credibility", "Respect", "Fairness", "Pride", and "Camaraderie", along with "a comprehensive review of the company's workplace culture and management practices".

The statement added that in the survey among Sands China staff, 96 percent agreed that the company is a great place to work, with an average score of 92 percent across all five categories, demonstrating "the effectiveness of the company's long-term investment in promoting career development, safeguarding team members' physical and mental well-being, fostering a fair, caring, and supportive workplace culture, and building a high-

trust management team".

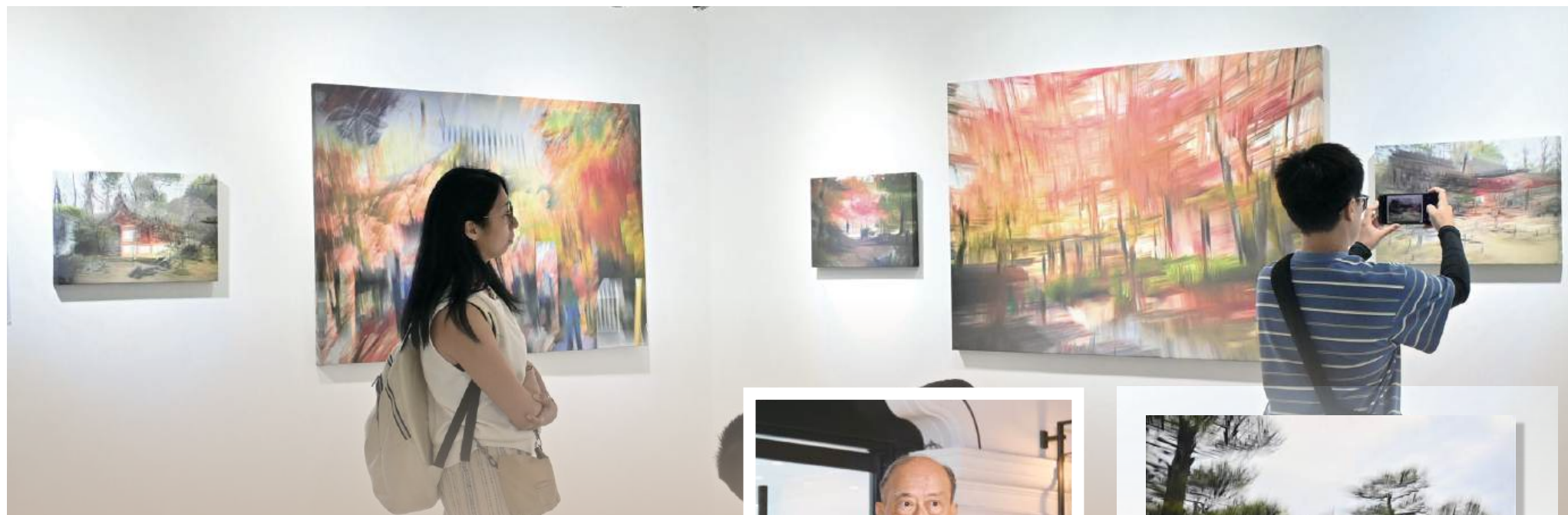
Sands China Chief Executive Officer and Executive Director Grant Chum Kwan Lock was quoted by the statement as saying that the award "reflects the immense trust that our 28,000 team members have placed in the company and their strong belief in the people-centric corporate culture we have cultivated together over the years".

He added: "This recognition reinforces our strong confidence in Sands China's long-term development and our belief that through our collective efforts, the company will continue to advance and scale new heights".

Meanwhile, the statement pointed out that the company had also previously garnered the "Top Employer" recognition by the Top Employers Institute for two consecutive years. ■



This photo provided by Sands China on Wednesday shows a night time shot of The Venetian Macao in Cotai.



From camera to 'canvas': Vong Sek Kuan at Amagao

Interview by Rui Pastorin

Veteran photographer Vong Sek Kuan is presenting a series of images featuring his signature “camera shaking” technique, where photos are seemingly turned into paintings – with no filters or editing involved.

Kicking off its over month-long run with a formal opening ceremony last night at Amagao Gallery in Artyzen Grand Lapa Macau, the launch of the “FLOWING LIGHT • RADIANT COLOURS” solo exhibition was attended by numerous guests, including Vong’s students and admirers of his work.

Running through September 19, each photo is presented exactly as it was shot, incorporating Vong’s imagination to transform a real scene into his own creative vision. The exhibition is curated by Victor Marreiros from Amagao Gallery and Ieong Man Pan from 1844 Macau Photography Art Space.

In his speech, Vong highlighted that in the process of creating his exhibits, the camera was more than a tool that

simply captured what was in front of him; instead, he used it to bridge reality and imagination. By capturing movement, light, and emotion directly in-camera without post-editing, he turned a single moment into a rich visual story, as summarised by the event’s MC.

Elaborating further, Vong – who teaches photography and has worked within the discipline his entire life – told the *Post* after the ceremony that the technique involves not only the camera, but also the mind and body, particularly through the speed and gesture of shaking the camera. Used in tandem, these elements help transform a scene from objective reality into what his mind perceives, using the camera as a paintbrush to depict not just the world around him, but the one within his imagination.

Developing his technique was a lengthy process, involving years of experimentation and refinement to achieve its current style, he said. But that’s all part of the process, he noted, adding that all artists experiment and seek to innovate through change to



Veteran local photographer Vong Sek Kuan delivers a speech during the opening ceremony of his solo exhibition “FLOWING LIGHT • RADIANT COLOURS” at Amagao Gallery in Artyzen Grand Lapa Macau.

– Photos: Rui Pastorin

improve their skills – a mindset he continues to hold.

With this exhibition, Vong said he’s delighted to present his work at the gallery and hopes guests will take the opportunity to visit it throughout the exhibition period.

The gallery, managed by Galeria 57 (which has been active in Macau since 2005), is located in the lobby of the Artyzen Grand Lapa Macau. Members of the public can view the works until September 19. The gallery is open from 11:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m., Tuesday to Sunday (closed on Mondays).



Sam visits Hengqin university town's 1st phase



This handout photo taken yesterday shows an installation welcoming new students at the university town's first phase, Dezhi Plaza in Hengqin.

Tony Wong

Chief Executive Sam Hou Fai yesterday paid an inspection visit to the first phase of the Macao government's Macao-Hengqin International Education (University) Town, located in Dezhi Plaza (德智廣場) in Hengqin, which will start operating on August 17, according to a statement by the Macao Education and Youth Development Bureau (DSEDJ) last night.

Through the visit, the statement said, Sam aimed to gain a better understanding of the teaching facilities and the ongoing preparation for their upcoming operational start.

The Macao government plans to develop its Macao-Hengqin International Education (University) Town project in three phases. The first phase consists of transitional teaching and research facilities used by three Macao public universities, namely the University

of Macau (UM), the Macao Polytechnic University (MPU), and the Macao University of Tourism (UTM), before the completion of their respective new campuses in Hengqin.

The UM is currently constructing its new, second campus on Zhuhai's Hengqin island. The future new campus will be the university's first campus outside the jurisdiction of the Macao Special Administrative Region (MSAR) and it will be the university's second campus. Geographically, both campuses are located in Hengqin, but the first, current one is under the MSAR's direct jurisdiction on a plot of land, covering one square kilometre, leased from the Chinese mainland.

Dezhi ("Virtue and Wisdom") Plaza, a property development project consisting of about a dozen high-rise and low-rise buildings, was initially slated to operate as a "German City" commercial complex, but it



Chief Executive Sam Hou Fai (left) yesterday talks with students in the first phase of the Macao-Hengqin International Education (University) Town, accompanied by officials including Secretary for Social Affairs and Culture Wallis O Lam (third from left) and University of Macau (UM) Rector Song Yonghua (second from left).
— Photos: DSEDJ

has been converted into the first phase of the university town project.

The converted Dezhi Plaza will now be shared by the UM, the MPU, and the UTM for the operation of their respective transitional teaching and research facilities.

The university town's second phase is the UM's new campus in Hengqin, the partial and full operation of which are slated for 2028 and 2029, while the third phase is the new campuses of the MPU and the UTM in Hengqin, construction of which, according to the Macao government's previous announcements, is slated to start in 2027 and be completed in 2030.

Yesterday's DSEDJ statement noted that the transitional teaching and research facilities in Dezhi Plaza shared by the three universities cover a gross floor area of 65,000 square metres.

The statement underlined that the site's

various facilities have now been fully prepared for their upcoming operation, including teaching and office buildings, dormitories, canteens, and scientific research laboratories. The three universities will run various postgraduate programmes in the first-year operation of the site, expecting to have 1,400 students in total, the statement said.

According to the statement, Sam, accompanied by other officials from Macao and Hengqin, toured facilities including classrooms, teaching laboratories, restaurants, student centres, and student dormitories. Sam was briefed by officials about the three universities' upcoming teaching and research activities there.

Sam expressed satisfaction with the site's facilities and the three universities' upcoming teaching arrangements there, the statement said. ■

Four Seasons Hotel Macao unveils Mid-Autumn mooncake collection

Rui Pastorin

Four Seasons Hotel Macao has announced the 2026 Mid-Autumn Mooncake Collection by the Michelin-starred team at Zi Yat Heen, highlighting two signature offerings.

According to a recent press release, the collection pays 'tribute to time-honoured traditions while showcasing the refined finesse of Cantonese haute cuisine'.

The classic option, 'Zi Yat Heen White Lotus Seed Paste Mooncakes with Double Egg Yolks', is priced

at 768 patacas for a box of four. Meanwhile, the more contemporary 'Zi Yat Heen Mini Egg Custard Mooncakes' feature crème custard encased in flaky golden pastry, priced at 698 patacas for a box of six.

The gift packaging features a gold and violet box with gemstone-inspired geometry and a velvet-lined interior.

Mooncake vouchers are available at Zi Yat Heen. Enquiries and orders can be placed by calling 2881 8818. ■



This photo recently provided by Four Seasons Hotel Macao shows the Mid-Autumn Mooncake Collection by Michelin-starred Zi Yat Heen.

Senior struck by public bus after running into road: police

Tony Wong

A local man in his seventies suffered serious head injuries after being hit by a public bus as he dashed into the road in Fai Chi Kei yesterday afternoon, authorities announced.

The accident occurred at around 5:00 p.m. in Rua do Comandante João Belo (俾若翰街/筷子基北街) outside the Lok Yeung Fa Yuen (綠楊花園) residential estate – the two-way road running along the south-side waterfront of Patane North Bay.

No one on the bus was injured.

According to a Public Security Police (PSP) statement, the findings of a preliminary investigation indicate that the senior citizen ran into the road. The bus driver slammed on the brakes but was unable to stop in time. The driver, aged in his forties, passed a breathalyser test.

The Fire Services Bureau (CB) stated that when paramedics arrived at the scene, they found the man unconscious and breathing weakly. He was rushed to the public Conde de São Januário Hospital Centre for emergency treatment.



This photo shows the public bus at the accident scene in Fai Chi Kei yesterday afternoon.
— Photo courtesy of TDM

Public bus operator TCM said in a statement that the No. 101 route bus was travelling "normally" when the male pedestrian "suddenly" dashed into the road. The bus driver immediately applied the brakes, but the pedestrian was hit by the front-left hand side of the vehicle.

TCM emphasised that it has activated its emergency response

procedures and sent staff to the hospital to monitor the situation closely. The company added that it will fully cooperate with the police investigation into the exact cause of the accident.

The pavement was fitted with roadside barriers, but the senior citizen squeezed through an existing gap in the railings and dashed across the road when the accident occurred. ■

Xi diplomacy: Hosting the world, building the future

Analysis

BEIJING – As southern China's metropolis of Shenzhen prepares to host the 33rd Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation Economic Leaders' Meeting in November, China is once again extending its welcoming arms to leaders from around the world.

Over the years, China has hosted a series of major diplomatic gatherings that have brought together world leaders. More than simply platforms for dialogue, these occasions have showcased China's vision for global cooperation and offered a glimpse of President Xi Jinping's approach to diplomacy.

For Xi, hosting world leaders begins with hospitality.

In May 2023, on his 70th birthday, Kazakh President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev arrived in the ancient Silk Road city of Xi'an for a state visit to China and the inaugural China-Central Asia Summit. During their talks, Xi extended birthday wishes to his guest.

"On this special occasion, your visit speaks volumes about the strength of our bilateral ties and reaffirms your unique bond with China," Xi said with a smile.

"Thank you," Tokayev, who speaks fluent Mandarin, replied in Chinese.

An old Chinese saying goes: "Is it not a real delight to have friends coming to visit you from afar?"

Whether welcoming old friends or first-time visitors, Xi's attentiveness has become a defining feature of China's diplomacy as a host, helping foster mutual trust and friendship.

Yet these gatherings are about more than hospitality.

In times of global uncertainty, they have also served as venues where China has called for dialogue, openness and cooperation while presenting its proposals to address shared challenges.

In 2016, China hosted the Group of 20 (G20) summit for the first time. Chaired by Xi, the summit marked a milestone in global economic governance.

At the summit, development was placed at the forefront of the global macro-policy agenda for the first time. The summit, which brought together a record number of developing countries, also witnessed the adoption of an action plan to

advance the implementation of the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, as well as the first-ever collective commitment to support industrialization in Africa and the least developed countries.

These initiatives, together with the summit's outcome documents, reflected China's commitment to common development and shared prosperity.

As today's world is struggling with mounting conflicts, as well as the rise of hegemonism, protectionism and other global challenges, Xi has chosen a series of major diplomatic events hosted by China to put forward his key proposals.

The Global Security Initiative was unveiled at the Boao Forum for Asia in 2022, followed by the Global Civilization Initiative at the Communist Party of China in Dialogue with World Political Parties High-level Meeting in 2023, the Global Governance Initiative at the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) Tianjin Summit last year, and a renewed call to implement the Global Development Initiative at the conference marking the 70th anniversary of the Five

Principles of Peaceful Coexistence in 2024.

These proposals have been backed by concrete actions. Behind every summit lies an intensive diplomatic schedule personally led by Xi.

On September 2, 2018, ahead of the opening of the Beijing Summit of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC), Xi held 11 bilateral meetings with African leaders, with every engagement timed to the minute.

At the G20 Hangzhou Summit in 2016, Xi attended 13 meetings and various events within just over 80 hours, during which he delivered 11 speeches, and met with 27 foreign leaders. At the SCO Qingdao Summit in 2018, he participated in more than 20 official events in two days.

The tightly packed schedule underscores not only the intensity of China's diplomatic engagement, but also Xi's personal commitment to advancing international dialogue and cooperation.

China has sought not only to put forward ideas, but also to turn them into action.

Since the Belt and Road Initiative was launched in 2013,

it has generated nearly 1 trillion US dollars in global investment and created at least 500,000 jobs in partner countries. In Africa and many other parts of the world, the thriving Belt and Road cooperation has been widely considered a road to prosperity.

Following the successful implementation of the Ten Cooperation Plans, the Eight Major Initiatives and the Nine Programs, Xi announced a new positioning of China-Africa relations and 10 partnership actions at the 2024 FOCAC Beijing Summit, opening a new chapter in the joint pursuit of modernization.

Over the years, the major diplomatic events hosted by China have marked a journey, along which China and the rest of the world have moved forward together.

As China welcomes the world to Shenzhen, it also renews its commitment to working with countries around the world to build broader consensus on peace and development, strengthen openness and cooperation, and open a new chapter in building a community with a shared future for humanity. — *Xinhua*



A robot patrols Temple of Heaven Park in Beijing yesterday. Fourteen municipal parks in Beijing recently introduced a variety of new robots. The machines perform tasks such as cleaning, smart inspection, guided tours, water rescue, landscape maintenance, and ecological monitoring, bringing smart services to public life.

— AFP

Chinese researchers confirm existence of glueball – new form of matter

BEIJING – Chinese researchers have for the first time confirmed the existence of the glueball, an entirely new form of matter, according to the Institute of High Energy Physics (IHEP) under the Chinese Academy of Sciences (CAS). This finding comes after 15 years of experimental research.

The achievement was made by the Chinese-led international collaboration of the Beijing Spectrometer III (BESIII) experiment, the institute said yesterday.

In nature, atomic nuclei are composed of protons and neutrons, which are made up of quarks, with gluons mediating the strong interaction force between

quarks. The standard model of particle physics holds that gluons can attract each other and bind together to form an entirely new kind of particle – the glueball. However, such a particle had not been discovered in any previous experiments.

Relying on the BESIII experiment at the Beijing Electron Positron Collider, the research team discovered a new particle, X(2370), in 2011. In 2024, the team measured the quantum state properties of X(2370) and found them consistent with the features of a glueball, providing crucial evidence toward confirming its existence.

In the latest study, the research

team discovered multiple new decay modes of the X(2370) particle and successfully determined its "flavor-singlet" property, the most important characteristic distinguishing a glueball from other ordinary particles, thus confirming that the dominant component of X(2370) is precisely the glueball.

This is the clearest experimental result in the search for glueballs over nearly five decades, researchers said, adding that it verifies the theoretical prediction that gluons can bind with one another to form a new type of matter, and is of great significance for testing the standard model of particle physics. — *Xinhua*

China's first 16MW typhoon-resistant floating wind power platform put into operation

BEIJING – China's first independently-developed 16-megawatt TLP-supported floating wind power platform, named "Haiyou Anlan," has been connected to the Lufeng Oilfield power grid and is directly supplying green electricity, the China National Offshore Oil Corporation (CNOOC) announced yesterday.

Designed and built to withstand the extreme conditions brought by a super typhoon with sustained wind speeds of up to about 220 kilometers per hour, the platform and its operation mark a major step forward for China's deep-sea floating wind equipment technology, opening a new pathway for the nation's offshore wind power development, the company said.

Installed about 136 kilometers from the coast in the Pearl River Mouth Basin in the northern part of the South China Sea, the wind power platform stands nearly as

tall as a 110-story building and weighs 7,800 tonnes, with a swept area equivalent to 7.5 standard football fields. Power is transmitted to the Lufeng Oilfield power grid via submarine cables. The facility is expected to generate 54 million kilowatt-hours of green electricity annually, according to CNOOC.

Compared with semi-submersible offshore wind power platforms, the Tension-Leg Platform (TLP) system can reduce the amount of steel consumption without compromising structural strength, thanks to its floating structure. It also cuts down the sea area occupied by the facility, according to the company.

China's deep-sea wind resources are abundant and critical to future offshore wind power capacity growth. The company predicts the project to save 15,000 cubic meters of fuel oil and reduce carbon dioxide emissions by 35,000 tonnes per year. — *Xinhua*

China, Argentina renew currency swap agreement

BEIJING – The People's Bank of China (PBOC), the country's central bank, said yesterday that it has renewed a bilateral currency swap agreement with the Central Bank of Argentina.

The swap amount is set at 130 billion yuan equivalent to 28 trillion Argentine pesos, according to the PBOC.

The agreement runs for five years and is renewable by mutual consent, the PBOC noted.

The renewal of the bilateral currency swap agreement will help further deepen financial cooperation between the two countries, facilitate bilateral economic and trade exchanges, and safeguard financial market stability, the PBOC said. — *Xinhua*

Lessons of Japanese militarism's aggression must forever serve as alarm: spokesperson

BEIJING – The devastation and tragedies brought by nuclear weapons should never repeat themselves, and the lessons of Japanese militarism's aggression and expansion must forever serve as an alarm, a foreign ministry spokesperson said yesterday.

Spokesperson Lin Jian made the remarks when answering a query regarding the 81st anniversary of the atomic bombing of Japan's Hiroshima, adding the Japanese side needs to face up to the concerns of the international community, and earnestly fulfill its nuclear non-proliferation obligations under international law.

On August 6, 1945, the United States dropped the first atomic bomb on Hiroshima, accelerating the end of World War II. 81 years on, right-wing forces in Japan are gearing up to revive militarism. The Japanese authorities are rebuilding Japan's war machine, seeking to revise the three non-nuclear principles, and pursuing nuclear sharing with the US side, even the possession of nuclear weapons.

The particular context of the nuclear explosions should all the more be remembered, Lin said, adding that right-wing forces in Japan have long been distorting historical facts, politically exploiting the nation's identity as a nuclear bombing victim for sympathy and deliberately downplaying Japan's invasion that killed and wounded tens of millions of people in Japan's neighboring countries, in an attempt to escape accountability for the war.

"More ironically, the Japanese authorities have been beefing up military buildup, seeking enhanced nuclear protection from the United States, and attempting to break free from the three non-nuclear principles," said Lin. He pointed out that a senior official at the Prime Minister's Office even clamored for Japan's independent nuclear armament, without even hiding the ambition for remilitarization.

This is a provocation to all peace-loving people in the world and reveals their contempt for historical justice, Lin said.

"This year marks the 80th anniversary of the start of the Tokyo Trials. The jury of history is still out and demands reverence from Japan," Lin said, adding the Japanese side should not once again stand before the court of history.

– Xinhua

China to build planetary protection lab for Mars sample-return mission

HEFEI – China is pressing ahead with its Mars sample-return mission, for which a planetary protection laboratory is to be built in the first phase of Hefei's Deep-Space Science City in east China's Anhui Province, according to the Deep Space Exploration Laboratory (DSEL), which will undertake part of the laboratory's operation.

The planetary protection laboratory will implement a two-way protection system that guards both the returning Martian samples and Earth's biosphere. Its tasks encompass sample sterilization, unsealing, processing and biological risk assessment. The facility is designed to support the implementation of major deep-space missions and to enable scientific research on Martian samples.

In April, the China National Space Administration released the implementation roadmap for the Tianwen-3 mission. The spacecraft is scheduled for launch around 2028. Sample collection and return to Earth are expected to be completed by around 2031.

Li Hang, director of the development planning department at DSEL, said the laboratory will serve scientific research findings from extraterrestrial samples. He also confirmed that China will follow the planetary protection policies of the Committee on Space Research, to prevent biological contamination of Mars by terrestrial organisms and to protect Earth from any potential extraterrestrial life forms that may be carried back in the samples.

The new laboratory is part of China's interplanetary exploration program. In May 2021, China's Zhurong rover landed in southern Utopia Planitia on Mars. By May 2022, it had traveled 1,921 meters across the Martian surface and collected abundant scientific data.

– Xinhua

China calls for effective governance of emerging technologies to fight terrorism

UNITED NATIONS – A Chinese envoy on Wednesday called for stronger international governance of emerging technologies to fight terrorism.

Addressing the UN Security Council, Sun Lei, the chargé d'affaires of China's Permanent Mission to the United Nations, said terrorist groups are increasingly using the Internet, artificial intelligence, drones and other emerging technologies for incitement, recruitment, financing and attacks, posing new challenges to global counter-terrorism efforts.

He urged the international community to improve risk assessment and regulatory frameworks and prevent "the 'three forces' of violent terrorism, ethnic separatism and religious extremism from exploiting emerging technologies to spread and infiltrate."

Sun also called for greater support for developing countries through technology transfer, training and information-sharing to strengthen their counter-terrorism capabilities.

Reaffirming that terrorism remains a serious threat to international peace and security, Sun said the international community should uphold cooperation, reject the politicization of counter-terrorism and strengthen coordinated action.

Stressing the need to address terrorist threats in Syria and Afghanistan, he urged Syria's transitional government to take firm action against all terrorist organizations listed by the Security Council, including the East Turkestan Islamic Movement. Sun called on the Afghan authorities to fulfill their counter-terrorism commitments and

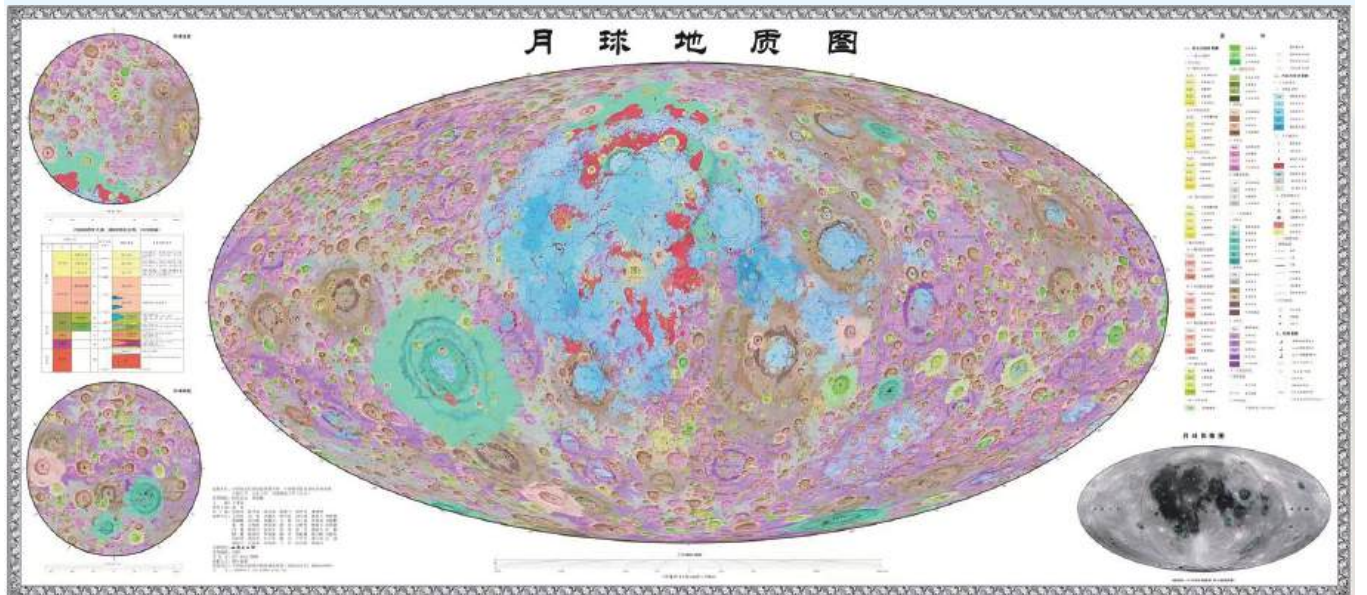
prevent the country from becoming a base for terrorist activities again.

The Chinese envoy also expressed concerns over the security situation in Africa's Sahel region, calling for stronger international support in border management, intelligence-sharing and capacity building while respecting the sovereignty of regional countries. He said the United Nations should deepen cooperation with the African Union and advance development to tackle the root causes of terrorism.

Sun said China will continue to promote international counter-terrorism cooperation under frameworks including the United Nations, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) and BRICS, and work with all parties to combat terrorism in all its forms.

– Xinhua

China unveils refined lunar map, empowering future Moon exploration



This image provided by the Institute of Geology, Chinese Academy of Geological Sciences (IGCAGS) shows the geologic map of the entire Moon on a scale of 1:5 million. A Chinese research team has completed an updated geologic map of the entire Moon featuring a scale of 1:5 million, IGCAGS said yesterday. Representing a significant scientific iteration from the 2024 version, this map effectively rewrites the Moon's geologic history based on the latest research findings.

– Xinhua

BEIJING – A Chinese research team has completed an updated geologic map of the entire Moon featuring a scale of 1:5 million, the Institute of Geology, Chinese Academy of Geological Sciences (IGCAGS), said yesterday.

Representing a significant scientific iteration from the 2024 version, this map effectively rewrites the moon's geologic history based on the latest research findings. "The lunar geologic history has indeed been rewritten – more precisely, refined and systematized," said Yang Zhiming, director of the IGCAGS.

Specifically, a primary achievement of this update is the recalibration of the moon's ancient geologic eras. The new map systematically updates the age boundaries of the moon's three ancient geologic periods, namely the Aitkenian, Nectarian and Imbrian periods, drawing on recent advances in international chronology.

Crucially, Chang'e-5 samples confirmed volcanic activity on

the Moon as recently as 2 billion years ago, extending its geologic lifespan by 1 billion years from the previously accepted 3 billion years. This independent dating data has now become a cornerstone of the global lunar geologic timescale.

Highlighting these spatial discoveries, the new global lunar geologic map is the first comprehensive canvas to bear exclusive findings from the Chang'e-6 mission. "The lunar samples and this map will provide a new starting point for scientific discussions regarding the lunar far side," said Jin Ming, an associate researcher at the IGCAGS.

The map details the age of young mare basalts on the lunar far side obtained from the Chang'e-6 samples, recording the region's volcanic history. Furthermore, it reveals that KREEP rocks, enriched with rare earth elements and other strategic resources, are far more continuous and abundant in the Oceanus Procellarum than previously

estimated. This discovery, achieved by eliminating spectral noise, prompts a systemic reevaluation of the moon's early magma ocean crystallization and internal thermal evolution.

Beyond its scientific data, the 2.8-by-1.2-meter map introduces a proprietary cartographic standard. Identifying over 13,500 impact craters and 81 basins, it employs a unique color scheme rooted in geologic logic and traditional Chinese aesthetics, following a "lighter for younger, darker for older" principle.

Furthermore, this standard will also be applied to future geologic mapping of Mars and asteroids, ending reliance on foreign standard systems.

"This goes beyond showcasing technological soft power. This standard will be extended to future planetary geologic mapping, establishing an independent intellectual property framework for China's deep space exploration," Yang said.

– Xinhua

US requests Filipino pastor's extradition on sex charges

MANILA — The United States has formally requested the extradition of a Filipino pastor wanted on sex-trafficking charges, the Philippines' foreign affairs department said yesterday.

Apollo Quiboloy, a self-proclaimed "Appointed Son of God" and ally of former president Rodrigo Duterte, was arrested in the Philippines in 2024 on human-trafficking charges.

He faces life in prison if found guilty in the case, which accuses him of using women and child sect members to sell goods and raise funds for his church.

Quiboloy, who pleaded not guilty shortly after his August 2024 arrest, has been held in a Manila jail ever since.

A US grand jury had indicted Quiboloy three years earlier for conspiracy to engage in sex trafficking by force, fraud and coercion, sex trafficking of children,

and bulk cash smuggling.

The 2021 US indictment alleges girls and women between the ages of 12 and 25 were recruited as personal assistants for Quiboloy to prepare his meals, clean his residence, give him massages, and have sex with him.

"The Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) confirms it has received the United States Government's request for the extradition of Apollo Quiboloy. The DFA has endorsed the request to the Department of Justice," spokeswoman Analyn Ratonel told AFP in a text message.

Jose Manuel Romualdez, the Philippines' ambassador to Washington, confirmed earlier that a "formal request had been transmitted to the Dept of Justice".

The US embassy in Manila did not immediately reply to requests for comment.

A spokesman for the Philippine justice department separately told



Apollo Quiboloy (centre), pastor and founder of the Philippine-based Kingdom of Jesus Christ (KOJC) church, arrives to attend a hearing at the Senate in Manila on October 23, 2024, over accusation charges of human trafficking and sexual abuse of a minor.

— AFP

reporters that it would be required to file "the appropriate petition before the court" after receiving the request.

"Ultimately, it is the court

that determines whether the legal requirements for extradition have been met," he said.

Quiboloy was allowed to

run for Senate in the country's 2025 midterm elections despite his incarceration and garnered 5,667,438 votes.

Police said following his arrest that Quiboloy's alleged victims were told they were having sex with the "spirit of God" and were threatened not to tell anyone on pain of being hunted down by "angels of death".

Quiboloy's Kingdom of Jesus Christ church said at the time that members had "freedom of choice" and thus "anything that happens to you... is your own voluntary will or choice".

The powerful sect claims millions of followers in the mainly Catholic Asian nation and owns a television network.

Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos said in 2024 that the government was not yet looking to extradite Quiboloy because it was "focusing on the cases filed in the Philippines".

— AFP

N Korea fires ballistic missile: S Korea military

Claire Lee

SEOUL — North Korea fired a short-range ballistic missile over the Sea of Japan yesterday, Seoul's military said, with the launch coming after Pyongyang lambasted Japan's military build-up in the Pacific.

North Korea, which since 2019 has repeatedly declared itself an "irreversible" nuclear state, featured among growing regional threats in a recent Japanese government assessment.

Tokyo's Defence Minister Shinjiro Koizumi said this week that Japan's military needs to be boosted with a "sense of urgency and crisis".

In a statement carried by North Korean state media on Wednesday, Kim Yo Jong — the powerful sister of leader Kim Jong Un — said Pyongyang's "leadership will set up additional military options which are obviously due to Japan's transformation".

Yesterday, South Korea's Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) said that "our military detected one short-range ballistic missile launched from the Wonsan area of North Korea at around 5:00 p.m. [local time]".

Authorities in Seoul and Washington were analysing the missile's exact specifications, it added in a message to news organisations.

The JCS said earlier the missile was launched towards the East Sea, referring to the body of water also known as the Sea of Japan.

Tokyo's defence ministry posted on X that "something that may be a ballistic missile has been launched from North Korea", later saying there was no impact "on the areas around Japan".

Seoul has strengthened surveillance and maintained readiness for possible additional launches while sharing information with its security allies the United States and Japan, the JCS said.

South Korea and the United States are expected to carry out their annual Ulchi Freedom Shield military exercises, aimed at containing the nuclear-armed North, later this month.

North Korea has always been infuriated by such joint drills, decrying them as rehearsals for invasion.

Under the South Korea-US combined defence posture "our military is maintaining the capability and readiness to respond overwhelmingly to any provocation", Seoul's JCS said yesterday.

'New militarism'

North Korea has deepened economic and military ties with Russia, supplying troops and munitions for Moscow's war in Ukraine in exchange for financial support, food, energy and military technology, analysts say.

Some experts said yesterday's launch could have been intended to test weapons before Kim Jong Un's expected visit to Russia this year.

"Before heading to Russia, Kim may have wanted to demonstrate that Pyongyang had already tested these missile systems and achieved satisfactory results," Ahn Chan-il, a North Korean-born researcher, told AFP.

"If the trip materialises, Kim is very likely to showcase them to Russia or seek to export them."

Japan's defence ministry declined to comment directly on Kim Yo Jong's Wednesday diatribe but said the country's defence capabilities "remain bare minimum" and "are not meant to threaten other countries".

Tokyo raised its military expenditure by 9.7 percent to US\$62.2 billion in 2025 - equivalent to 1.4 percent of GDP, its highest share since 1958.

China, a key ally of North Korea, has also recently expressed alarm at what it sees as "new militarism" by Japan.

South Korea's dovish President Lee Jae Myung has reversed the stance of his hawkish predecessor since taking power in Seoul in June 2025, offering nuclear-armed Pyongyang talks without preconditions.

The hermetic leadership of North Korea has yet to respond to his repeated offers.

The two Koreas remain technically at war because their 1950-53 war, triggered by a North Korean attack, ended with an armistice rather than a peace treaty.

— AFP

Landslides kill at least 4 in northern Philippines

MANILA — Landslides in the Philippines killed four people, authorities said yesterday, as heavy rains driven by a tropical depression raked the country's north and forced school closures.

The archipelago nation's main island Luzon has been battered by heavy rains over the past four days.

Government offices and schools were ordered closed in the capital and across a swathe of northern provinces due to the rain.

In Benguet province, a six-hour drive north of Manila, a hillside gave way and collapsed on a small restaurant yesterday, burying three employees who had been in the kitchen.

"One is alive. Two were dead on the spot," Colonel Dionisio Bonoy of the Benguet provincial police told reporters.

"At 10:00 a.m. [local time], the survivor was retrieved. That was our priority earlier. With the help of God, we hope he survives."

The country's national disaster agency separately confirmed

two others had been killed in a landslide in neighbouring Rizal province the day before.

Earlier yesterday, government meteorologist John Manalo said sustained winds were at about 55 kilometres per hour, as the depression, formerly Tropical Storm Kujira, moved towards the Philippine Sea.

"Severe winds can still affect most parts of the country," he warned.

"Since our land is already saturated and soaked, the potential for flooding and landslides will be higher."

The Philippines is the first major landmass facing the Pacific cyclone belt, and the archipelago is hit by an average of 20 storms and typhoons each year, putting millions of people in disaster-prone areas in a state of constant poverty.

Scientists say human-driven climate change is making extreme weather more frequent, prolonged and intense.

— AFP

Cambodia human, sex trafficking crackdowns up 13 pct in H1 2026

PHNOM PENH — Cambodian authorities cracked down on 112 human trafficking and sexual exploitation cases during the first half of 2026, marking a 13 percent increase year-on-year.

A report released yesterday by the National Committee for Counter Trafficking revealed that law enforcement arrested 169 suspects, including 34 foreigners, between January and June.

"The operations successfully rescued 581 victims, including 333 females and 175 minors under the age of 18," the report said.

According to the report, the human trafficking cases were primarily linked to forced labor, online fraud, illegal employment, and illegal immigration, among others.

Deputy Prime Minister and Interior Minister Sar Sokha, who is also

chairman of the National Committee for Counter Trafficking, instructed authorities at all levels to deepen cooperation to strictly investigate and eliminate trafficking networks.

He emphasized the Southeast Asian country's strict commitment to wiping out human trafficking, sexual exploitation, and cyber scams to protect human rights, dignity, and social justice.

— Xinhua



Officials from the East Java Provincial Disaster Management Agency fly a drone carrying water to battle a wildfire in the Bromo Tengger Semeru National Park near Mount Bromo in Probolinggo, East Java province, Indonesia yesterday.

— AFP



Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) chief Mohan Bhagwat speaks during the India International Movement to Unite Nations (IIMUN) event in Mumbai yesterday. – AFP

Australian politician admits texting ‘my job is boring’ during meeting

SYDNEY – An Australian politician has been left red-faced after being forced to admit yesterday he texted “my job is boring” and an expletive to a contact during a meeting.

Mark Parton – who leads the opposition Liberal Party in the Australian Capital Territory – was subject this week to a complaint alleging he sent the message to a sex worker, local media reported.

“And f--- my job is boring. Wanna swap,” Parton reportedly wrote, accompanied by a picture of a committee meeting last month, according to the *Canberra Times*.

After initially denying the complaint in full as a “smear”, he told journalists yesterday that he did send the text but denied that it was to a sex worker.

He did not say who the message was sent to and defended it, arguing

he was still “holding the government to account”.

“There’s a hell of a lot of private messages that are sent from a hell of a lot of people in the context of sitting days and hearings,” he said.

“I think it’s appropriate to send private messages to people that are not designed for the public realm,” he said.

“I’ve got an off-the-cuff larrikin communication style,” he admitted, using an Australian slang referring to someone with an irreverent sense of humour.

“I understand that most people’s perception of budget estimates hearings is that they’re pretty boring.”

The official complaint has been dismissed and he has referred the police to the alleged “harassment”.

In response to a request for comment from AFP, Parton’s office shared a recording of yesterday’s media conference. – AFP

Pakistan restricts international media reporting outside main cities

ISLAMABAD – Pakistan’s government has instructed international media to register journalists and seek permission for any reporting outside the country’s three main cities, sparking concern from rights and media groups over a threat to press freedom.

The information ministry sent a statement on Monday to an international media message group on the requirement to seek permission for reporting outside Islamabad, Lahore and Karachi.

Written guidelines published by the ministry stated all journalists working for international media, including freelance reporters, should register with the government’s external media wing.

Organisations would then need to seek Non Objection Certificates (NOCs) from the government for reporting outside the three cities.

It was not clear how widely the guidelines would be enforced or if penalties would apply for non-compliance.

Local media and rights groups called for the requirements to be withdrawn.

They said the rules would curb reporting and freedom of information in the country of 250 million – the world’s fifth-most populous nation where many major security, environmental and human rights events unfold outside the three main urban centres.

The Human Rights Commission of Pakistan “is deeply concerned by the government’s new Foreign Media Facilitation Guidelines 2026, which, rather than facilitating

journalism, will invariably institutionalise bureaucratic control over news gathering and risk deterring independent reporting on matters of public interest,” it said in a statement on Wednesday.

“This is the latest in a growing pattern of restrictions on media freedom in Pakistan,” the organisation added, warning that “the space for journalism continues to shrink”.

Pakistan is ranked 153 out of 180 nations for press freedom in a Reporters Without Borders index.

Foreign media workers already have to request NOCs for reporting outside the main cities, which could take weeks to obtain, limiting their ability to cover urgent news from the ground.

International media organisations often rely on Pakistani nationals who are based across the country and carry out much of their written and visual coverage of the South Asian nation.

Under the new guidelines, the local journalists would also require an NOC before covering a story.

Pakistan’s foreign ministry spokesman yesterday referred journalists to the information ministry in response to questions on the rules.

The information minister and the ministry’s external media wing did not immediately respond to AFP’s request for comment.

Kashmir protests

The instructions come in the wake of protests and a local election in Pakistan-administered Kashmir, during which rights groups decried press restrictions.

The information minister and the ministry’s external media wing did not immediately respond to AFP’s question on whether the situation in the Himalayan region had prompted the new guidelines.

The Committee to Protect Journalists, an international media advocacy group, posted on X on Monday that it was monitoring “deteriorating press freedom conditions in Pakistan-administered Kashmir amid ongoing protests” and called on authorities to restore access to information and allow independent reporting.

Protests by the Joint Awami Action Committee group demanding electoral reform, and ensuing deadly clashes with law enforcement have been regularly reported on by international media in recent months.

Pakistan’s information ministry issued a statement on X on Monday criticising Al Jazeera for the broadcaster’s reporting on the polls from the regional capital Muzaffarabad.

The ministry accused the broadcaster of “yellow journalism” and “selective reporting” that corresponds to “the agenda of external actors with vested interests who are attempting to delegitimise this electoral exercise”.

Pakistan and neighbouring India both claim Muslim-majority Kashmir in full and have fought several wars over control of the region, which has been divided between the two countries since their independence from British rule in 1947. – AFP

Indian court jails former top editor for 10 years in rape case

MUMBAI – An Indian court sentenced former news magazine editor Tarun Tejpal to 10 years in prison yesterday after convicting him of raping a junior colleague, in a case that drew nationwide attention.

Tejpal, co-founder of investigative magazine *Tehelka*, was accused of raping the journalist in the lift of a five-star hotel in the western coastal state of Goa during an event in November 2013.

In 2021, a trial court in Goa acquitted Tejpal of the charges of rape, sexual harassment and wrongful restraint.

The acquittal was challenged by the Goa government before the Bombay High Court, which set aside the trial court’s verdict and sentenced him to 10 years in jail yesterday.

“He has been convicted to 10 years of rigorous imprisonment. He has been given two weeks’ time to surrender,” Goa Police investigator Sunita Sawant, who led the probe against Tejpal, told reporters.

The court also ordered him to pay a fine of US\$5,250, Sawant added.

Tejpal, 63, said he would challenge the conviction in the Supreme Court.

“For the past 13 years, they have been pursuing me as a part of a political vendetta,” he told reporters.

Tejpal, who had initially blamed the assault on “a lapse of judgement”, was arrested in 2013 and spent seven months in jail until the Supreme Court granted him bail.

He later alleged that the case against him was part of a “political vendetta” by the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) government in Goa.

The case emerged at a time when India’s handling of sexual assault cases was under intense scrutiny following the fatal gang rape of a 23-year-old student on a New Delhi bus in December 2012.

That attack triggered nationwide protests and international outrage, prompting the government to strengthen the country’s rape laws.

Tejpal’s case severely damaged the reputation of *Tehelka*, a publication that had built its profile on investigative journalism and campaigns for women’s rights and social justice.

While *Tehelka* continues to operate under new leadership, it has failed to regain the influence it enjoyed before the 2013 case. – AFP

Japanese PM’s remarks on non-nuclear principles in Hiroshima criticized as ambiguous

TOKYO – Japanese Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi yesterday attended a memorial ceremony in Hiroshima marking the 81st anniversary of the US atomic bombing of the western Japanese city.

In her address at the event, Takaichi was notably vague on Japan’s long-held Three Non-Nuclear Principles, stopping short of explicitly pledging that the country will uphold them.

Japan’s *Mainichi Shimbun* reported that although Takaichi said Japan upholds the Three Non-Nuclear Principles, her wording differed subtly from that of previous prime ministers, as she did not clearly state that the country will continue to maintain them in the future.

The report cited a source close to the prime minister as saying that if the government were to consider revising the Three Non-Nuclear Principles, its position would “maintain the status quo” until any formal revision is made, suggesting that Takaichi’s wording, which merely described the situation as it currently stands, was intentional.

Kyodo News quoted Junya Ogawa, leader of the opposition Centrist Reform Alliance, as saying that although Takaichi mentioned the Three Non-Nuclear Principles, her remarks were merely an explanation of the current situation and lacked a firm commitment to maintain the non-nuclear principles.

Yuichiro Tamaki, leader of the opposition Democratic Party for the People, said Takaichi had simply reiterated the government’s long-standing position.

At a press conference after the ceremony, Takaichi declined to clearly state whether the Three Non-Nuclear Principles would be upheld in the revision of the country’s three key security documents.

She only said that it’s premature to comment on the final form of the wording as work is underway to revise the documents before year-end.

Ayumu Takeshita, a Japanese resident from Kobe City, told Xinhua after the ceremony that he believes it is unacceptable for

Japan to possess nuclear weapons, and that Defense Minister Shinjiro Koizumi’s call for putting nuclear-related issues on the table for discussion is also completely unacceptable.

Japan’s Three Non-Nuclear Principles, which prohibit possessing, producing or permitting the introduction of nuclear weapons into Japanese territory, were formally adopted by the Japanese parliament in 1971 and have since become the cornerstone of the country’s nuclear policy.

Japanese media previously reported that the Takaichi administration was considering revising the principle of not permitting the introduction of nuclear weapons into Japan as part of the planned revision of the country’s three key security documents later this year.

In July, Koizumi publicly said at an online program that Japan should discuss nuclear-related policies without taboo. These developments have fueled continued concern across the Japanese society. – Xinhua

Houthis kill dozens of Saudi-backed Yemeni govt forces: medical sources

DUBAI – Yemen’s Iran-backed Houthis killed dozens of Saudi-backed government troops in missile and drone attacks yesterday, medical sources said, the deadliest violence in years between them as the conflict becomes the latest front in the US-Iran war.

Houthi military spokesman Yahya Saree said the rebels attacked government positions with ballistic missiles and drones in response to an alleged military buildup backed by neighbouring Saudi Arabia.

The attacks killed at least 38 government troops and injured 29, two medical sources told AFP, with a military official describing them as the deadliest between the two sides since 2022.

The latest attacks risk pushing Yemen

into a more intense cycle of violence and retaliation.

The Houthis have ramped up the provocations of their Saudi foe since last month in what has become another front in the US-Iran war.

The military official, who spoke on condition of anonymity, told AFP that a military camp in the al-Ruwaik area of Marib province in central Yemen had been attacked, as well as camps in the Al-Abr and Al-Wadiah areas of Hadramawt, near the border with Saudi Arabia.

One of the missile attacks hit troops during their morning formation at the camp in Marib, “killing and wounding at least 45 personnel”, said another military source, who declined to be named for security reasons.

Saree named Al-Ruwaik, al-Thaniyah and al-Abr as being among the areas hit, warning the rebels were “prepared to confront any escalation”.

Tit-for-tat

Yemen, which has been embroiled in more than a decade of war, last month became the latest front to be sucked into the Middle East war, as the Tehran-backed Houthi rebels upended a 2022 truce with the Saudi-backed government.

The rebels welcomed an Iranian plane directly in the capital Sanaa, triggering tit-for-tat attacks, and they later announced a maritime blockade of the kingdom and began hitting its tankers.

Last month, the Houthis killed 16 troops in an attack on government-aligned forces south of the port city of Hodeidah, two medical officials told AFP.

The Houthis have been at war with the government since 2014 in a conflict that has killed hundreds of thousands of people and triggered a major humanitarian crisis in Yemen.

The rebels control Yemen’s capital Sanaa and much of the populous north, while the internationally recognised government holds much of the south.

The fighting between the two sides has largely been frozen since a UN-negotiated truce in 2022 that had held despite expiring.

– AFP

Israel charges settler in killing of Palestinian activist in West Bank



Israeli security forces deploy on a street during an Israeli military raid in the Qalandia refugee camp in the Israeli-occupied West Bank yesterday. Since the start of the Gaza war in October 2023, violence has escalated in the West Bank, which Israel has occupied since 1967. – AFP

JERUSALEM – Prosecutors charged an Israeli settler yesterday in the killing of Palestinian activist Awdah Hathaleen in the occupied West Bank, the first such indictment since the outbreak of the Gaza war in 2023, activists say.

“Yinon Eliya Levi (33), from Ma’on, has been charged with allegedly firing toward an area where people were present during a confrontation that developed over earthworks on private land, causing the death of the late Awdah Hathaleen,” Israel’s ministry of justice said on X.

“The Southern District Prosecutor’s Office has filed an indictment against him... on charges of reckless manslaughter, trespassing, and willful property damage.”

Hathaleen, an activist who took part in the production of the Oscar-winning documentary “No Other Land”, was killed in July 2025 during a settler attack on his village of Umm al-Khair, in the southern West Bank.

Umm al-Khair sits in the region of Masafer Yatta, where Palestinian communities have faced frequent settler violence and home demolitions by the military, which has declared parts of the area an army firing zone.

Israeli rights group B’Tselem said the indictment was the first of its kind for the killing of a Palestinian in the West Bank since the start of the war in Gaza in October 2023,

which marked the beginning of a surge in violence in the West Bank.

“The decision to indict Yinon Levi is the exception that proves the rule,” B’Tselem spokesman Yair Dvir told AFP, accusing Israel of fostering a culture of impunity that “is not a failure of the system -- it is a central component”.

Hathaleen’s attorney Eitan Peleg told AFP the indictment “is a very important decision. I hope it will be a precedent in future cases of [Israelis] committing crimes against Palestinians in Palestine.”

“Many Palestinians are killed by settlers, by the army, but this was the first time a full investigation was held and they had no other option but to charge. This was a very clear case,” he added.

Palestinian rights group Al-Haq conducted a forensic investigation of Hathaleen’s killing, using footage in which Levi is seen shooting at a crowd of Palestinians in Umm al-Khair the day he was killed.

The US and EU placed sanctions on Levi in April 2024 for previous violent attacks on Palestinians.

Excluding Israeli-annexed East Jerusalem, some 500,000 Israeli settlers live in the West Bank among some three million Palestinians.

All settlements in the West Bank, which Israel has occupied since 1967, are illegal under international law. – AFP

UK reports record numbers referred to anti-radicalisation scheme

LONDON – A record number of people were reported last year to the UK’s anti-radicalisation Prevent programme, the interior ministry said yesterday, with “extreme right-wing” concerns accounting for the most referrals related to an ideology.

The Prevent programme is part of the country’s counter-terrorism strategy and aims to identify and stop people in the early stages on the path towards becoming radicalised as extremists.

In the year ending September 2025, people made 10,293 referrals, the highest number for a single year since reporting began in 2015, the Home Office said, calling it a “significant increase”.

The UK in April raised its terror threat level to “severe” – the second-highest, meaning an attack is “highly likely” – with security officials citing the “broader Islamist and extreme right-wing terrorist threat”.

The largest number of referrals due to concerns about a specific ideology related to “extreme right wing” views, accounting for 20 percent of all referrals.

There were 2,103 such referrals – a sharp rise of 42 percent on the previous year.

The anti-immigrant party Reform UK led by Nigel Farage has enjoyed electoral success recently, while far-right, anti-Muslim campaigners such as Stephen

Yaxley-Lennon, also known as Tommy Robinson, have bolstered support online.

Teachers, medics and others can raise concerns about an individual at risk of radicalisation with police and local authorities, resulting in screening and potential safeguarding intervention – although the person has to consent to this.

Children aged 11 to 15 were the largest proportion of all referrals, and accounted for 35 percent of extreme right wing ideology referrals.

Referrals over fascination with extreme violence also rose, accounting for eight percent of the total.

The government attributed this to “increased awareness of the risk” of such cases, following the 2024 Southport attack, when teenager Axel Rudakubana murdered three young girls in a stabbing spree.

Rudakubana was referred repeatedly to Prevent, but the cases were closed over his lack of clear ideology.

Concerns over Islamist extremism accounted for 860 referrals or eight percent, down nine percent on the previous year.

The government said the total number of Islamist extremism referrals that progressed to the safeguarding stage had gone up, stressing: “Islamist terrorism remains the primary terrorist threat in the UK”.

– AFP

Portuguese PM backs migration policy amid EU border woes

LISBON – Portuguese Prime Minister Luis Montenegro on Tuesday defended his government’s approach to migration as a model of regulated reception and integration, contrasting it with what he described as the “lack of regulation of migration flows” seen elsewhere.

According to Lusa News Agency, Montenegro said Portugal was working to ensure that migrants arriving in the country could live with dignity through access to employment, housing, healthcare, education, and mobility.

He argued that countries with pull-effect migration* policies often attracted migrants without providing sufficient conditions for their reception and integration.

He made the remarks following an emergency video meeting of European Union (EU) interior ministers on the migrant influx into Ceuta, a Spanish exclave in North Africa. EU ministers agreed on Tuesday that border reinforcement and stronger migrant return mechanisms are necessary.

Spain’s interior ministry said about 72,000 people had entered Ceuta irregularly within 24 hours last week, with around 70,000 having since returned to Morocco.

– Xinhua, MPD

*Pull-effect migration refers to human movement driven primarily by the attractive, positive conditions of a destination region rather than adverse circumstances at the place of origin. – Gemini

Norway records 'highly unusual' reindeer deaths

OSLO – Norwegian authorities yesterday reported more than a dozen unexplained reindeer deaths in the Svalbard archipelago in the Arctic, considered “highly unusual” for the summer season.

During an annual count, 13 recently deceased reindeer – 11 females and two males – have so far been found in two Svalbard valleys located a little over a 1,000 kilometres from the North Pole, the local governor’s office announced.

“It is very unusual for females of breeding age and adult males to die during the summer. That’s why we want to monitor this development closely,” it said.

The causes of death are not yet known, and authorities have called on the public to report any new carcass finds.

The Norwegian Institute for Nature Research (NINA) told AFP it had “no clear indication nor any specific hypothesis” to explain the unusual summer deaths.

“In winter, it is mainly the youngest and oldest individuals that die,” said researcher Vebjørn Veiberg.

“The animals found dead this summer are, on the contrary, in the most vigorous and productive period of their lives,” he added.

“Veterinary specialists are naturally looking for an explanation related to disease. However, it seems unlikely that a disease would primarily affect the most robust animals.”

Svalbard, roughly twice the size of Belgium, has a population of around 22,000 reindeer – about seven times more than the number of people.

They are significantly smaller in size than the mainland reindeer. – AFP

Italy breaks up migrant smuggling ring, 8 arrested

ROME – Italian police said yesterday they arrested eight people as they broke up a human smuggling ring that ferried migrants from Algeria to the island of Sardinia.

The group allegedly used small boats to take about a dozen people at a time from the Algerian port of El Kala to Sardinia’s southern coast.

Migrants paid up to 2,500 euros (US\$2,890) each to make the dangerous journey, police said, adding they had documented at least five crossings in recent months.

The eight suspects, all Algerians and including the alleged ringleader – an asylum-seeker residing in Sardinia – were arrested in a series of raids.

About 100 law enforcement officers took part in the operation dubbed “Phantom” as the group was planning to purchase fast vessels to scale up its operations and smuggle drugs, police said.

The ring had ties to Algeria and France, home to the organisation’s main financier, they added. Most of the migrants came from Algeria and Tunisia.

“In Sardinia there was a network responsible for receiving migrants, producing forged documents and providing operational support to its associates,” the police said.

Those arrested face charges including criminal association aimed at aiding illegal migration and forging documents.

Almost 17,000 migrants have arrived in Italy by boat so far in 2026, down from 37,000 over the same period last year, according to the interior ministry. – AFP

US Senate panel votes to hold top COVID expert Fauci in contempt

WASHINGTON, DC – A Republican-led US Senate committee yesterday voted to hold the country’s former top infectious diseases official Anthony Fauci in contempt of Congress, in an escalation of efforts to blame him for potential COVID-19 pandemic missteps.

On the advice of his lawyers, Fauci last week had invoked his constitutional right to stay silent to prevent self-incrimination under antagonistic questioning from Republican senators, as they probed him over unsubstantiated claims that the origins of the pandemic were covered up.

The party-line vote advances the extraordinary effort to prosecute the 85-year-old career government scientist, who spent decades as the nation’s top expert in infectious diseases.

It stems from an initiative by Republican Senator Rand Paul, who had subpoenaed the now-retired Fauci to testify before the Senate Homeland Security Committee.

Prior to the hearing, Paul released thousands of pages of the immunologist’s personal diary.

Fauci indicated his lawyers believed Paul intended to entrap him in a slip-up that could result in perjury charges, so Fauci opted to invoke his Fifth Amendment right not to answer.

Paul, the committee’s chairman, has

signalled he intends to send the panel’s recommendation straight to the Justice Department, which can decide whether to take the case.

Contempt resolutions generally go through the full Senate, and bypassing that route would bring fresh scrutiny on accusations that President Donald Trump’s administration aims to persecute its perceived political foes.

Democrats on the panel voiced their disdain over the vote, with Senator Gary Peters accusing Paul of a “rushed investigation.”

He said the vote could “harm our ability to conduct future investigations and disregards constitutional protections long recognized by the US Senate, all without making a reliable case that there is a legal basis for holding Dr Fauci in contempt.”

Legal maze ahead

Paul has charged that under Fauci’s watch at the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, the US-funded “gain-of-function” research in China triggered the spread of COVID-19.

The senator insists Fauci lied about that to Congress, an allegation which he has repeatedly denied.

More than six years after the pandemic’s onset, the debate over whether COVID-19

leaked from a lab remains intense. Fauci has maintained that the virus had natural origins, even if he’s said he is open to the idea of a lab leak.

Paul now says that Fauci is ineligible for protection under the Fifth Amendment, because former president Joe Biden granted the doctor an unconditional pardon for public service actions dating from 2014 through January 19, 2025.

Republicans say the pardon already protected him from perjury.

But law scholars are split on the issue that opens the door to a murky legal maze pitting the reach of a presidential pardon against the scope of the Fifth Amendment.

Law professor Tracey Maclin of the University of Florida told AFP that if the Senate panel had truly wanted Fauci to speak frankly, they would have offered him immunity.

Several Democrats yesterday had unsuccessfully pushed for a delay on the vote, arguing that the panel should hear from legal experts.

Two Trump advisers dating to the president’s first term, Steve Bannon and Peter Navarro, served time in prison for failing to comply with congressional subpoenas.

But they did not plead the Fifth, opting instead to refuse to appear. – AFP

Britain’s EasyJet flies into US hands as takeover confirmed

Ben Perry

LONDON – Britain’s no-frills airline EasyJet confirmed yesterday a £5.7-billion (US\$7.7-billion) takeover by US private equity firm Apollo after a rival American firm pulled out of the bidding.

“The boards.. are pleased to announce that they have reached agreement on the terms and conditions of a recommended cash acquisition,” EasyJet, which flies mainly across Europe, said in a statement.

The deal is expected to complete by the end of next year’s first quarter, it added.

EasyJet’s headquarters will remain in the town of Luton, known for its airport close to London.

Earlier yesterday, US investment group Castlelake said it did not intend to make a higher offer for the carrier, having proposed to buy the airline for a little over £5 billion.

Under UK takeover rules, the two firms had until today to table revised bids.

“Castlelake confirms that, following

careful consideration, it does not intend to make an [improved] offer for EasyJet,” the US group said in a statement yesterday.

‘Strong partner’

EasyJet last month said that Apollo’s informal bid, valued also at £5.7 billion, delivered a “superior outcome” for shareholders compared to the Castlelake proposal.

EasyJet chief executive Kenton Jarvis yesterday said Apollo’s “experience in the aviation sector makes it a strong partner”.

The US firm manages more than US\$1 trillion in assets worldwide, while investing in Aero-mexico, Sun Country Airlines, and Atlas Air.

It has provided financing also to Air France-KLM and Virgin Atlantic.

Alex van Hoek, partner and European private equity lead at Apollo, said the company is “proud to be trusted to play a lead role supporting the EasyJet Group in this next phase of its growth and furthering its important contribution to the European

and UK aviation sectors”.

As a foreign entity, however, Apollo is unable to take full ownership of the airline outright owing to UK and European rules requiring firms to be majority owned and controlled by regional nationals.

However, the US firm had confirmed it would take necessary steps to find a European partner.

The offer price is £7.15 per EasyJet share, which was trading at £6.73 following yesterday’s takeover confirmation.

EasyJet recently said its net profits had plunged in the third quarter as the Middle East war sent jet fuel prices soaring.

Profit before tax slumped 70 percent to £85 million in the April-June period compared to one year earlier.

EasyJet was founded by entrepreneur Stelios Haji-Ioannou in the 1990s as Europe’s budget airline sector took off.

Irish airline Ryanair is Europe’s biggest carrier by passenger numbers. – AFP



Two Easyjet aircrafts are seen at Geneva Airport on June 11. – AFP

How online disinformation fuelled Ceuta migrant surge

Analysis by Cristina Alonso Pascual

A wave of disinformation on social media drove the deadly rush of tens of thousands of migrants into Spain’s north African territory of Ceuta last week, analysts have told AFP.

An unprecedented 72,000 people poured into Ceuta from Morocco from July 30, mostly by swimming around a barrier in the Mediterranean Sea, according to official Spanish figures.

Spanish authorities have recovered the bodies of 78 migrants who drowned in the attempt, while Morocco says 11 people died on its side of the border.

A rumour that “the Ceuta border is open” spread like wildfire on social media as men, women and children risked their lives trying to reach Spain.

An online campaign that generated 11 million views from early July fuelled the surge, according to a report published by Chema Gil, a security and intelligence analyst at the University of Murcia.

An open-source investigation by technology company Golden Owl concluded “with a high degree of confidence” that the migrant rush “was a deliberately organised operation”.

Marcelino Madrigal, an expert in social media and security, told

AFP “there was evidence that this was going to happen”.

“Rumours, messages and groups that caused this crisis” mainly appeared on Facebook and WhatsApp, said Madrigal, although it was impossible to determine “who or what ignited the flame”.

Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez promptly blamed the migrant rush on human trafficking gangs. His government avoided criticising Morocco, with whom it has delicate diplomatic relations.

‘This isn’t over’

The Spanish government has singled out a deliberate misinterpretation of a July Supreme Court ruling that said irregular migrants would not be immediately returned if they arrived by sea.

An Instagram post appeared a day after the court ruling making that very claim.

Messages to that effect were “spread by accounts that were unidentifiable and had practically no interactions, which raises questions about the possible use of mass-diffusion algorithms,” said Mohamed Benaissa, president of the Northern Observatory for Human Rights.

But Antonio Benítez Ostos and Antonio Jesús Pérez, of the Administrativando law firm, told AFP the court decision did not mean the border was “open” for irregular

arrivals by sea.

The text specifies that a procedure different to immediate returns at the border applies to those “intercepted on the high seas” because those migrants do not breach physical infrastructure.

“The person may be returned all the same, it’s just that this procedure requires basic guarantees”, said human rights lawyer Laura María Medina Ferreras, adding that in her view these must “always” be respected.

After last week’s scenes, Spain has installed floating barriers between Ceuta and Morocco, which could “legally enable” returns at the border if they are deemed elements of containment, said the lawyers Benítez and Pérez.

It is not the first time that social media has encouraged irregular crossings into Ceuta. A similar case in 2024 led to more than 150 people being prosecuted in Morocco.

Social media expert Madrigal predicted that “this isn’t over”, pointing to fresh online posts that are calling for mass arrivals in August.

He said social media platforms bore responsibility for not rebutting in time the content that encouraged last week’s rush, warning it was “very likely” a similar event would happen “in any part of the world”.

– AFP

Erratic rains dictate menu at 3-star Michelin restaurant in Brazil



Cooks work in the kitchen of the Tuju restaurant, in São Paulo on July 16. – AFP

Facundo Fernández Barrio

SÃO PAULO – Climate adaptation has reached the world of fine dining: At Tuju, a three-Michelin-star restaurant in Brazil, erratic rainfall keeps its owners on their toes.

Chef Ivan Ralston and his partner, gastronomic researcher Katherina Cordas, spent two years studying local ingredients, mainly from the state of São Paulo, but using them at their peak is a challenge.

In a region where summer storms bring chaos and reservoirs run dry in winter, it takes “a lot of flexibility,” said Cordas, 38, who runs a culinary research centre that the pair created for the restaurant.

Tuju is situated in gastronomic powerhouse São Paulo, a megalopolis of 12 million inhabitants. In April, it secured its third Michelin star along with another restaurant in the city, Evvai – becoming the first two locations in Latin America to earn the top culinary honours.

Tuju offers four menus a year – “Humidity,” “Rain,” “Gale” and “Drought” – but they are not tied to fixed dates.

Instead, they follow the rain.

“São Paulo is usually dry in July, but this year it stayed somewhat wetter because of El Niño, so mushroom season lasted almost twice as long. You always have to stay alert and adapt,” said Ralston.

Tuju’s 10-course tasting menu draws primarily on ingredients from small-scale producers across Sao Paulo state.

Sardines, pork, artichokes, chestnuts, grapes, guava, capers and more: the products are prepared “with the most modern techniques, emphasizing creativity and the research work behind the scenes,” according to Michelin.

The third star is “like a black belt for karate practitioners,” said Ralston, the son of restaurateurs who trained in some of Spain and Japan’s top kitchens.

But he insists the accolade

has not gone to his head: “The pursuit of perfection is superficial. What we promise is a genuine experience.”

‘Pay attention’

Ralston leads a team of eight young chefs – mostly women – who work in silence and perfect synchrony in an open kitchen, dramatically lit at the centre of the minimalist dining room.

Cordas, mother of two of Ralston’s children, glides between the restaurant’s nine green marble tables, attending to diners, who pay 1,650 reais (about US\$320) for the tasting menu.

Ralston is frustrated by the fact that some diners come mainly in search of content for social media.

“Eating is a moment to pay attention to details. My advice would be: stop working on the marketing of living and enjoy life a little more!”

The evening begins with cocktails beneath a towering jabuticaba tree, native to Brazil, alongside a glass-enclosed wine cellar housing 5,000 bottles.

It ends on a rooftop terrace with sweeping views, with a taste of chocolates and honey from native stingless bees.

Ralston opened Tuju in 2014 and earned his first Michelin star just months later. A second followed. Then, the restaurant was forced to close because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Ralston and Cordas embarked on their two-year study of Brazilian cuisine and in 2023 partnered up to re-open Tuju – named after a Latin American bird.

São Paulo boasts more Michelin-starred restaurants than any other city in Latin America – although the guide rates only cities in Argentina, Brazil, and Mexico.

While half a million families live in extreme poverty in São Paulo, Ralston attributes its culinary wealth to “the size of Sao Paulo’s economy: there’s a lot of money here.”

– AFP

Hantavirus detected in France tourist now isolated in Spain

PARIS – A case of hantavirus, which recently sparked international alarm, has been detected in a Franco-Argentine national who holidayed in France in July before being put in isolation in Spain, the French health ministry said yesterday.

The patient had few symptoms and now has none, the ministry said, adding that “all measures” have been put in place to “trace the stages” the person’s journey.

The ministry said experts were to meet on Thursday to determine the next action to be taken and that Europe-wide coordination was being established.

The patient’s infection with the Andes strain of the virus, the only

one transmissible between humans, was confirmed on Thursday.

The authorities have not indicated a link to a deadly outbreak of Andes strain hantavirus on a cruise ship earlier this year that triggered a global health alert.

The World Health Organisation (WHO) declared the end of the outbreak in early July after the last affected person left quarantine.

A French woman who contracted the virus on the MV Hondius was discharged from intensive care on Thursday after nearly three months in the hospital unit, the health ministry said.

The woman, who was repatriated in May in a critical condition along

with four other French nationals, none of whom developed the disease, has been transferred to a rehabilitation centre, the ministry added.

There were 13 cases stemming from the MV Hondius cruise, including three deaths.

Spread by rodents, hantavirus is a rare virus for which no vaccines or specific treatments exist.

The cases from the cruise ship pale in comparison to the tens of thousands of hantavirus infections recorded worldwide every year, which mostly involve humans being infected by close contact with a rodent.

– AFP

Portuguese jobless rate falls to 15-year low of 5.3 pct in Q2

LISBON – Portugal’s unemployment rate fell to 5.3 percent in the second quarter of the year, the lowest level since the national statistical series began in 2011, the National Statistics Institute (INE) reported on Wednesday.

Meanwhile, Portugal’s employed population reached its highest level in 15 years.

The unemployment rate

declined by 0.8 percentage points from the first quarter and 0.6 points from the same period a year earlier, with 300,800 people unemployed between April and June, down 45,500 from the start of the year and 28,700 fewer than that of the second quarter of 2025.

The employed population reached approximately 5.4 million people, an increase of 99,000, or 1.9

percent, from the previous quarter and 151,500, or 2.9 percent, from the same period in 2025, the highest figure since the first quarter of 2011.

Remote working continued to expand, with 21.3 percent of the employed population, nearly 1.2 million people, in the second quarter, the highest share since the third quarter of 2023.

– Xinhua

Forlan named new Uruguay head coach



Uruguayan ex-football star Diego Forlan smiles during his farewell match at Centenario Stadium in Montevideo, Uruguay on December 28, 2019. — AFP

Football

MONTEVIDEO, Uruguay — Former striker Diego Forlan has been appointed head coach of the Uruguay national team following their disastrous World Cup campaign, the country's football association (AUF) announced yesterday.

Forlan will take over, reportedly on an interim basis, from Marcelo Bielsa who stepped down following Uruguay's group-stage exit from the World Cup.

"Diego Forlan is coming home (to take charge of) the Under-20 national team and the senior national team," the AUF said in a short statement.

The agreement with Forlan, who won the Golden Ball award for player of the tournament at the 2010 World Cup, was finalised after weeks of negotiations.

The 47-year-old will take over as interim coach but his contract keeps the door open for an extension, AUF sources recently told AFP.

He will be in charge of the team for friendlies in September, October and March.

Two-time world champions Uruguay are reeling after failing to get out of their group for a second successive World Cup.

Back-to-back draws with Saudi Arabia and Cape Verde put them in unexpected danger of crashing out, before their elimination was confirmed by a loss to eventual champions Spain.

The 71-year-old Bielsa was widely criticised for his tactics and for the decision to coax Fernando Muslera out of international retirement, with the veteran goalkeeper then making a string of errors.

Forlan has little coaching experience despite enjoying a stellar playing career.

He made his coaching debut during the 2020

season with former club Penarol but left the post after just 11 matches due to poor results.

Forlan's only other managerial stint came in 2021, when he spent 12 games in charge of Atenas in the Uruguayan second division.

He is highly regarded, though, in Uruguay after scoring 36 international goals, including five during their run to the 2010 World Cup semi-finals, in 112 appearances.

Forlan, alongside strike partner Luis Suarez, was also a key member of Uruguay's 2011 Copa America-winning side.

He enjoyed prolific spells at both Villarreal and Atletico Madrid in Spain, winning the European Golden Shoe award with both clubs.

Forlan endured a difficult stint at Manchester United between 2001 and 2004, despite winning the Premier League in 2002/03. — AFP

Police raid S Korea's FA in probe into World Cup coach appointment

Football

Jihye Shin

SEOUL — Police raided South Korea's football association yesterday as part of an investigation into the appointment of the coach in charge during their dismal World Cup campaign.

Police conducted "search and seizure operations" at the Korea Football Association (KFA) offices, probing allegations of "obstruction of business" in the recruitment of former coach Hong Myung-bo, a police spokesman told AFP.

The 57-year-old Hong resigned in June after South Korea were knocked out at the group stage of the 48-team showpiece in the United States, Mexico and Canada following a shock 1-0 defeat to South Africa.

Questions were already dogging the Korean Football Association over the 2024 appointment of Hong, but scrutiny has intensified since the team failed to make the last-32 knockout stage.

Seoul police said financial crimes investigators were "looking into whether there were charges of obstruction of business during the appointment of Hong Myung-bo", a spokesman told AFP.

Local media reported authorities are investigating whether senior KFA officials improperly intervened in Hong's appointment, allegedly in violation of internal rules.

South Korea's media had labelled the 2026 World Cup squad a "golden generation" and there were high hopes for a team featuring former Tottenham Hotspur star Son Heung-min, Bayern Munich defender Kim Min-jae and former Paris Saint-Germain midfielder Lee Kang-in.

In late July, Hong was summoned before a committee of lawmakers, where he said he took "full responsibility" for the poor performance.

President Lee Jae Myung blamed the failure on "incompetent people" promoted to leadership in

a statement alluding to "loyalty and factionalism" tainting recruitment at the sport's top level.

The KFA declined to comment when contacted by AFP.

Hong's decision to leave Son on the bench in the first half for the decisive match against South Africa at the World Cup baffled and angered many supporters.

In June, South Korea fans greeted Hong's return from the World Cup with boos and chants of "Hong out!", while applauding the players who emerged behind him at the airport.

Hong admitted he was struggling to understand what had gone wrong.

At last month's parliamentary hearing, MPs also raised claims Hong had enjoyed a salary of 3.8 billion won (US\$2.6 million) - a figure reportedly at the high end for national coaches.

Hong said at the time the figure was wrong, but declined to disclose the correct one. — AFP



FIFA President Gianni Infantino (centre) leaves Al-Madina Stadium in Rabat following the 2026 Women's Africa Cup of Nations match between Malawi and Zambia on Wednesday.

Infantino, under fire for a now shelved plan to open the World Cup to private investment, earlier held emergency talks in Morocco with directors of the world football governing body.

FIFA then issued an apology while reaffirming its "full support" for Infantino. In a statement, the leadership acknowledged "that errors were also made after the proposal was leaked to media".

Zambia won the game 2-1.

— AFP

Former Iranian women footballers 'proud' to become Australian

Football

SYDNEY — Two former Iranian women footballers said yesterday they were "proud" to have been granted Australian citizenship after being branded traitors at home for refusing to sing the national anthem before a game.

Fatemeh Pasandideh and Atefeh Ramezaniadeh were members of a group of seven from Iran's delegation who asked for Australia's protection following the high-profile protest during the women's Asian Cup in March.

With their demands for protection an embarrassment for Iran's leaders but lauded by US President Donald Trump, five later changed their minds and returned home.

Pasandideh and Ramezaniadeh stayed, however, and were granted Australian citizenship at a ceremony on Wednesday overseen by interior minister Tony Burke.

"Yesterday was a truly special and unforgettable day for me. I feel proud and deeply grateful to become an Australian citizen," Ramezaniadeh said in a statement.

"After everything we've been through and all the challenges we faced, this moment means more than words can express," Pasandideh added.

A week after seeking asylum, the pair were pictured smiling and training with Australian club Brisbane Roar, which on Wednesday congratulated the pair.

"What they have been through since February is more than most people deal with in a lifetime," a spokesman for the club said.

"To see them arrive at this point is something everyone here at Brisbane Roar is glad to have had a small part in," they added.

"Queensland is their home now. If they ever want to pull on a training top and come back out with us, the door will always stay open."

The plight of the rest of the team remains unclear since their return to Iran.

AFP reporters saw them cross into their homeland from Turkey on a bus wearing the national team tracksuits and with their hair covered.

Soon after, Iranian parliament speaker Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf said on X that the players and their support team were "children of the homeland and the people of Iran embrace them".

By returning, they had "disappointed the enemies (of Iran) and did not surrender to deception and intimidation by anti-Iran elements", he added. — AFP



UEFA says boycott of World Cups stands despite FIFA backdown on private investment

PARIS — European football's governing body UEFA said they would maintain their boycott of the men's and women's World Cups yesterday despite FIFA withdrawing the plan to open up their competitions to private investment.

UEFA's initial threat issued last Thursday to boycott FIFA competitions is widely credited in being pivotal in the plan being shelved.

Although that was one of their conditions to be met for them to withdraw their threat, they said yesterday the second one had not been met.

"UEFA's associations were very clear about the conditions attached to their non participation in FIFA competitions," read their statement.

"First, the proposals to sell off the major competitions had to be withdrawn and secondly, assurances have to be made that such attempts to disfigure the game in this way will never be made again.

"These conditions have not been met."

Whilst UEFA had welcomed the withdrawal of the plan last Saturday they had slammed FIFA president Gianni Infantino and his "shabby, backroom, opaque deal."

Their tone had not changed in yesterday's statement.

"UEFA made it abundantly clear in its statement on Saturday that it has lost confidence in Gianni Infantino's presidency. That position holds," they said.

Infantino had gained some respite on Wednesday when he held an emergency meeting of senior FIFA directors in Morocco.

They had backed him, issuing a statement saying he had their "full support" but apologising "over errors made after the proposal was leaked to media".

UEFA dismissed this show of support, which included FIFA secretary-general Mattias Grafstrom, whose leaked email to staff on

Tuesday had criticised the plan.

"Yesterday's [Wednesday's] announcement that some people employed by the FIFA President (and whose careers depend on his favour) agree with him changes nothing," said UEFA.

FIFA floated the plan last Tuesday, 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.

However, after a global backlash Infantino was forced into the humiliating climbdown days later.

— AFP

Seeds Rybakina, Pegula, Gauff reach 3rd round at WTA Toronto

Tennis

TORONTO – Second seed Elena Rybakina, third seed Jessica Pegula and fourth-seeded Coco Gauff all advanced to the third round of the WTA 1000 tournament in Toronto on Wednesday.

Australian Open champion Rybakina, of Kazakhstan, began her hardcourt run ahead of the US Open by outlasting Australian Daria Kasatkina 6-3, 5-7, 6-4 in 2hr 33min.

World number two Rybakina began the match by hitting six consecutive winners but also made 58 unforced errors.

“I want to see better serve, the percentage,” Rybakina said after coughing up 16 double faults against 15 aces.

“Today in key moments it worked, but still the percentage is quite low.

“I’m still adapting a bit to the jet lag and everything, so maybe my energy level could be better.”

Rybakina hit back-to-back double faults to drop the second set and three double faults while serving for the match before advancing to face 28th-seeded American Ann Li, who eliminated Canadian wildcard Kayla Cross 7-6 (7/2), 6-3.

“For the first match it wasn’t too bad, but of course I want to improve,” Rybakina said.

Pegula, who lost in a rain-delayed Washington final on Monday, was also extended in a 3-6, 6-3, 6-2 win over Poland’s Magdalena Frech.

“I was just happy with the way I was able to mentally stay in there,” said Pegula, who also beat Frech in the second-round in Washington a week ago.

“It was more of a mental battle just for me figuring out what to do and not get too frustrated.

“Having to face an opponent like that back-to-back is never easy, especially with a quick turnaround this week.”

Pegula faces a third-round match against Uzbekistan’s Kamilla Rakhimova, whose opponent Katerina Siniakova retired when trailing 6-7 (1/7), 6-0, 5-2.

Two-time Grand Slam winner Gauff cruised into the third round by dispatching fellow American Kayla Day 6-2, 7-5.

“The goal is to peak at the US Open, so I know maybe this first week I’m not going to be feeling 100 percent,” said Gauff, who will face Greece’s Maria Sakkari next.

“I feel like by tomorrow (yesterday) I’ll be good. I think it was just a long couple of weeks for me training.”

World number five Russian Mirra Andreveva, the French Open champion, cruised past Czech Karolina Pliskova 6-0, 6-2.

Andreeva will play Canada’s 30th seed Leylah Fernandez, who beat Mexico’s Renata Zarazua 6-2, 6-2.

Japan’s Naomi Osaka, a four-time Grand Slam winner, won 6-2, 6-4 against Hungary’s Panna Udvardy and will play Belgian Elise Mertens next.

Wimbledon champion Linda Noskova



Alexandra Eala of the Philippines celebrates her win against Alycia Parks of the United States during the National Bank Open Presented by Rogers at Sobeys Stadium on Wednesday in Toronto, Ontario. – AFP

was knocked out by American Caty McNally 7-6 (7/5), 6-1.

McNally will meet Alexandra Eala, fresh from the Filipina’s maiden WTA title in Washington. Eala beat Alycia Parks 6-1, 4-6, 6-2. – AFP

Sport in brief

Pogacar teammate Del Toro gets new UAE deal after Tour podium Cycling

PARIS – Young Mexican rider Isaac Del Toro was rewarded with a new UAE contract yesterday after finishing third in the Tour de France won by superstar teammate Tadej Pogacar.

The Emirati outfit said the 22-year-old would ride in their colours until the end of the 2031 season. Pogacar, who turns 28 next month, is under contract with UAE until 2030.

“The extension represents another significant investment in the future by UAE Team Emirates-XRG, securing one of cycling’s most promising young riders through what are expected to be the prime years of his career,” the team said in a statement.

Pogacar may go on dominating the sport for many more years after winning a record-equalling fifth Tour de France title but he is likely to face some stiffer opposition from younger rivals.

“Signing long-term gives me a lot of confidence because I know I’m in the right place for my future,” said Del Toro who joined UAE in 2024.

“We’ve already achieved some amazing victories together, but I honestly believe the best is still to come.

“I’m excited to keep growing with this team and fighting for the biggest races in the world.”

Alongside team leader Pogacar, the Mexican impressed during the Grande Boucle, winning the second stage in Barcelona and finishing on the final podium behind “Pogi” and Belgian rider Remco Evenepoel.

He also claimed the white jersey for the best young rider ahead of 19-year-old

Frenchman Paul Seixas.

Del Toro had won several races this season notably the UAE Tour, Tirreno-Adriatico and Tour Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes. – AFP

British Grand Prix stays on MotoGP calendar until 2028

MotoGP

LONDON – The British Grand Prix will remain on the MotoGP World Championship calendar until at least 2028.

MotoGP has extended its agreement with Silverstone, which stages the race, to cover the 2027 and 2028 seasons.

The British Grand Prix returned to Silverstone, which also hosts Formula One races, after a 24-year absence in 2010.

This year’s British race will take place on Sunday – the 12th of 22 races in the MotoGP season.

“This extension underscores our commitment to two-wheel racing,” said Silverstone chief executive Stuart Pringle.

“This renewed partnership secures our place as the undisputed home of elite international racing.”

Carmelo Ezpeleta, chief executive of MotoGP Group, added: “The UK has a rich motorcycle racing heritage and remains one of the most important markets for MotoGP.

“Silverstone provides a fantastic stage for MotoGP, 11 different winners in the last 11 Grands Prix hosted at the circuit is a testament to the quality, competitiveness and unpredictability of racing at the circuit.” – AFP

LIV Golf CEO says funding secured to play beyond 2026

Golf

NEW YORK – LIV Golf has reached a deal with a lead investor to keep the series playing beyond the end of the 2026

season, LIV chief executive officer Scott O’Neil said Wednesday.

Speaking at this week’s LIV Golf New York event at Trump National in Bedminster, New Jersey, O’Neil provided the first glimpse of what LIV might resume after the pullout of financial support by Saudi Arabia’s Public Investment Fund.

“LIV Golf has an agreement in place with a lead investor, signed by the investor and approved by the board, to anchor the transaction and play a key role in supporting the path forward for the league’s next era, driven by and for the players,” O’Neil said in a statement.

“We’re also seeing strong interest from more than a dozen additional parties to potentially serve as minority investors, creating a multi-partner model built for long-term stability and growth.”

LIV began in 2022 and lured some of golf’s top names from the PGA Tour, which banned LIV golfers from its events.

Saudi officials withdrew their backing of the series, however, after promising to keep LIV afloat through the 2026 campaign, which is set to conclude later this month.

O’Neil has sought up to US\$300 million in backing from new sponsors to produce a season in 2027 and beyond.

“Notably, our next chapter will make the players the majority equity holders in LIV Golf, a first for a major global sports league, and gives the league the foundation to keep growing the game worldwide,” the statement said.

“We anticipate finalising terms in the coming weeks with the goal of entering a transaction in September.

“In the meantime, our focus is on delivering a great week for fans and players at Bedminster and finishing the 2026 season strong.” – AFP

Zverev, Auger-Aliassime & Medvedev exit Montreal Masters

Tennis

MONTREAL – The ATP Montreal Masters lost its top two seeds in the space of a few hours on Wednesday as Germany’s Alexander Zverev and Canadian Felix Auger-Aliassime both exited the field.

Top seed and world number three Zverev, this year’s French Open champion and Wimbledon runner-up, was toppled by Dutchman Tallon Griekspoor, who rallied for a 6-7 (3/7), 6-2, 6-4 second-round upset.

“I didn’t expect to play well,” Zverev said. “I also didn’t expect to play this bad, to be honest.”

Montreal native Auger-Aliassime had to withdraw before his scheduled night match after injuring his back during training on Monday.

“It was quite sudden. I was training here for two weeks and I had zero problems,” Auger-Aliassime said. “Just the timing is tough.

“I thought that day by day things would get better, but I tried to go on court today, I tried to warm up, and then I basically couldn’t serve really, so it was impossible for me to think about even competing.”

Joining his fellow elites on the sidelines was fourth seed Daniil Medvedev, the 2021 champion, who went out 6-3, 7-6 (7/5) to Botić Van de Zandschulp, another Dutch spoiler.

Medvedev missed out on achieving his 100th career victory at the Masters level as he lost in his Canada opener, weighed down by 40 unforced errors.

Tournament officials already were fuming at an event in which world number one Jannik Sinner and Novak Djokovic were both high-profile absentees even before the start.

“I’m not going to lie, we were hoping that Felix was going to win at least a few matches,” tournament director Valerie Tetreault said.

“He’s definitely the player everybody was talking about and people wanted to know when he was going to play.”

Zverev was competing for the first time since his Wimbledon final loss to Sinner and began to fade in the second set against world number 69 Griekspoor.

“This was probably the worst match of the season,” Zverev said. “This one was up there as the worst.

“Tennis comes with ups and downs. I’m very happy with how the last couple of months were. Now it’s about getting back to that form.”

The Dutch winner came within a point of a 5-2 lead in the third set, but found himself square at 4-all as he lost serve.

But the underdog broke the seed straight back and served out the match in one of his biggest victories a game later.

“This is one of the most special wins I’ve ever had,” he said. “I’ve had a tough season. I was close to throwing in the towel a few times. But I’ve been working harder in practice and reaching a good level.

“I felt it was about time for a big win.”

Fifth-seeded defending champion Ben Shelton rallied from 4-1 down in his second set to overhaul US compatriot Jenson Brooksby 6-3, 7-5, winning six of the last seven games for his 28th victory of the season.

‘A huge positive’

The son of a former ATP pro has won seven straight matches in Canada, taking 96 minutes to go through to the third round. He’s 15-3 against countrymen since the start of 2025.

“Defending is tough. I had to get over pre-tournament nerves but I got my first straight-set win of the summer season,” Shelton said.

“Jenson is a nightmare match-up for me. To win it is a huge positive.”

Greek Stefanos Tsitsipas fell 7-6 (7/3), 7-5 to 19-year-old Brazilian Joao Fonseca in the second round.

Fonseca, who fired nine aces among his 31 winners, next plays ninth seed Casper Ruud. – AFP



September 2023 file photo of Hong Kong lyricist Peter Lai Bei-dak – Photo courtesy of HK01

HK lyricist Peter Lai dies at 76

HONG KONG – Renowned Hong Kong lyricist Peter Lai Bei-dak (黎彼得), who spearheaded the city’s golden era of Cantonese pop music, has died aged 76, his family and friends said yesterday.

Lai was hospitalised after suffering a stroke this year and passed away on Wednesday morning, his son and a long-time friend said at a press conference.

Nicknamed “The Lyrical Maverick”, he wrote the words to hits including “Monica” in 1984, performed by superstar Leslie Cheung Kwok-wing, one of the most widely recognised Hong Kong pop classics.

He wrote more than 200 Cantopop songs. Lai also worked as a screenwriter and film producer for Golden Harvest and TVB. He also acted in movies and TV series.

His lyrics also contributed to the huge success of generational cantopop superstars, including Sam Hui and Anita Mui Yin-fong.

“Thank you for crafting countless remarkable works for the Hong Kong cantopop scene,” Hui wrote in a tribute note.

“Your lyrics are exoteric yet never vulgar.”

Lai, whose decades-long career

reached its pinnacle during the 1970s and 80s, was one of Hong Kong’s first-generation of lyricists for cantopop, alongside James Wong Jim and Jimmy Lo Kwok-tsim.

His work was known for its grassroots appeal and humour, drawing inspiration from the working class and everyday life during Hong Kong’s economic boom.

Lai’s passing sparked a flood of tributes on social media.

“Who can replace your place?” one user said, in a reference to Lai’s famous line from “Monica”.

“Many thanks, Peter.”

– AFP, MPD

Thousands mourn at funeral of Irish musician Glen Hansard

DUBLIN – Thousands of mourners including U2 frontman Bono gathered in Dublin on Tuesday for the funeral of Oscar-winning Irish musician and actor Glen Hansard, who starred in the 1991 cult film “The Commitments”.

The star-studded funeral service for Hansard, who died last week in a motorcycle crash aged 56, saw top musicians pay tribute and perform in memory of the influential figure.

Hansard played lanky guitarist Outspar Foster in the feel-good musical-comedy “The Commitments”, directed by Alan Parker, about a band playing classic 1950s and 1960s soul music.

Based on a book by author Roddy Doyle and with a powerful musical score, it won four Baftas and was nominated for an Oscar and a Golden Globe.

Born in Ballymun, Dublin in April 1970, Hansard began playing music very young, performing on Dublin streets and founding the band The Frames in 1990.

With Hansard as lead singer, guitarist and composer, The Frames became one of the most popular bands on Ireland’s music scene and he won international acclaim during three decades working in film, music and cinema.

At the funeral in Dublin’s St Patrick’s Cathedral, aired live on Irish television, Bono sang lyrics from U2 track “Beautiful Day” and encouraged mourners to join in.

He also played a voice mail message from US punk rock veteran Patti Smith where she sang a lullaby for Hansard.

Those unable to fit inside the cathedral sat on the grass outside to watch the service on large screens while more than 40,000 watched a live-stream.

“I’m here to pay my respects to Glen, who was a cultural icon for a lot of us,” one young mourner, Conor Behan, told AFP outside the cathedral.

“He came from a very poor background himself, but he never forgot that, and he helped a lot of young musicians realise their dreams,” said another mourner, Siobhan O’Brien.

In 2007, Hansard won an Oscar with Czech musician Marketa Irglova for their co-written song “Falling Slowly” from the Irish romantic film “Once” directed by John Carney.

Set in Dublin, Hansard plays a busker who meets fellow musician Irglova bonding over their shared love of music.

At the funeral, Irglova performed Hansard’s “The Song of Good Hope” with Pearl Jam’s Eddie Vedder and The Frames.

– AFP

Disney profits top forecasts on strength in theme park business



This picture, taken on March 28, 2026, shows the Disneyland Paris logo displayed at the entrance to Disneyland Paris in Marne-la-Vallée, east of Paris. – AFP

John Biers

NEW YORK – Disney reported better-than-expected profits on Wednesday, citing a strong performance in its theme park business amid lingering worries about macroeconomic weakness.

While Disney executives acknowledged weakness at theme parks in Shanghai and Hong Kong, the company’s press release described Walt Disney World in Florida as having enjoyed a “standout quarter,” adding that forward bookings at the US theme park “remain robust.”

Disney also reported solid results in its streaming business, where it pointed to less “churn” from customers coming and going. The company has begun weighing a complementary offering that could be built around advertising sales.

Overall profits were above analyst expectations, lifting shares.

Disney’s third-quarter profits came in at US\$2.6 billion, about half the level compared with the year-on-year period, which was boosted by a large one-time tax benefit.

Revenues rose 6.8 percent to US\$25.2 billion, a bit under analyst forecasts.

“Demand is strong across domestic parks and cruises,” said Chief

Financial Officer Hugh Johnston.

Johnston said the company was “not immune” to effects from higher fuel prices, pointing to a “weaker consumer” at Asian parks. He reiterated that the ongoing US-Iran war in the Middle East had no impact on plans for a major new park in Abu Dhabi.

While attendance at US parks rose three percent, Disney acknowledged a slowdown in the number of international visitors to its US venues.

TikTok tie-up

Disney scored higher revenues in its entertainment business behind growth in streaming subscriptions.

Chief Executive Josh D’Amaro said on an earnings conference call that the company was exploring a free streaming product for consumers, viewing the option as “way to expand our reach to a customer segment that’s more price sensitive.”

While Netflix does not offer a free service, the streaming giant in October 2022 began offering a lower-priced ad-supported option, later attributing the offering with a boost in subscription counts.

While the company praised the box office performance of

“Toy Story 5” and “The Devil Wears Prada 2,” it saw “Star Wars: The Mandalorian and Grogu” underperform.

However, Disney cited upside in theme park attendance and retail products built around the franchises.

In its sports division, Disney saw a bigger operating profit decline than it previously forecast due to four-game sweeps in the NBA basketball playoffs. Results were also dented due to higher sports rights costs.

A note from Briefing.com said the results showed improved profitability in its streaming business, concluding that Disney’s “major earnings drivers are improving simultaneously.”

In parallel with the earnings, Disney announced a new venture with TikTok that will allow fans and creators to use Disney content to make short videos that will be broadcast on both TikTok and Disney’s streaming platform.

Disney said in a statement it will make available Marvel, Star Wars and other content comprising “memorable scenes and moments from Disney movies and shows.”

The agreement will “pilot in the US in the coming months with the intention of other markets to follow.”

– AFP

World Weather

CHINA	ASIA-PACIFIC	WORLD	LUSOPHONE
Beijing 24°C~37°C	Manila 25°C~29°C	New York 24°C~33°C	Lisbon 19°C~32°C
Shanghai 27°C~36°C	Bangkok 26°C~33°C	London 14°C~25°C	Rio de Janeiro 21°C~32°C
Hong Kong 24°C~31°C	Tokyo 23°C~33°C	Frankfurt 14°C~27°C	Luanda 18°C~21°C
Taipei 25°C~33°C	Singapore 26°C~33°C	Vancouver 15°C~25°C	Maputo 15°C~26°C
Guangzhou 25°C~35°C	Kuala Lumpur 25°C~36°C	Paris 14°C~27°C	Dili 20°C~31°C
Nanjing 24°C~35°C	Jakarta 23°C~33°C	Moscow 17°C~30°C	São Tomé 24°C~30°C
Guilin 23°C~35°C	Seoul 26°C~38°C	Las Vegas 29°C~43°C	Praia 24°C~31°C
Xi’an 21°C~30°C	Sydney 6°C~18°C	Monte Carlo 23°C~31°C	Bissau 25°C~31°C



Mud bath

People cover themselves with mineral-rich mud at a Dead Sea resort, east of Jerusalem, on Wednesday. People visit the Dead Sea resort as high temperatures sweep across Israel and the Palestinian territories.

— Xinhua



Camouflage failure

A praying mantis is pictured in a drought-stricken cornfield in the countryside in Bene Vagienna, near Cuneo, north-western Italy, yesterday.

— AFP



Mobile service

A masseuse holds the tools of his trade while looking for customers at the Juhu beach in Mumbai yesterday.

— AFP

So little shade

An aerial view shows a herd of domestic water buffaloes laying in the shade of a tree as they seek shelter from the sun at a farm in the village of Knicanin, near Titel, Serbia, yesterday, as a prolonged heatwave continues to affect much of the region.

— AFP



Purple haze

This image made with a thermal camera shows people cooling off in an air-conditioned temporary shelter in a public square on a hot day in Seoul 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



Making gifts for brothers

A visually impaired woman prepares 'rakhis' or ceremonial wristbands, at the Andh Kanya Prakash Gruh School for the Blind in Ahmedabad, India yesterday ahead of the upcoming Hindu festival of Raksha Bandhan.

— AFP