

New obesity group aims to ease healthcare burden

Ida Cheong

The inaugural ceremony for the International Obesity Society (IOS) China Macao Chapter was held yesterday at The Venetian Macao Cotai Expo, aiming to introduce cutting-edge international academic standards and technologies, elevate local medical capabilities, conduct public science outreach to dispel weight-loss misconceptions, and reduce healthcare burdens.

IOS China Macao Chapter President Iao Sok Soi said in a speech yesterday that obesity and metabolic disorders have become major global public health challenges. Macau faces similar hurdles – including overweight children, adult metabolic disorders, and nutritional imbalances among the elderly – driving an urgent societal demand for standardised and internationalised obesity prevention and control services.

Iao highlighted that the chapter's establishment closely aligns with the national "Healthy China" strategy and the local government's "Healthy Macao" blueprint, filling a void for an authoritative international obesity platform and marking a major milestone in Macau's metabolic health sector.

She noted that obesity-related health issues are becoming increasingly prominent across all age demographics in Macau, adding that the organisation will focus on four priority initiatives: (1) fostering exchanges between Macau's obesity prevention sector, the Chinese mainland, and the global community; (2) launching



International Obesity Society (IOS) China Macao Chapter President Iao Sok Soi (third from left) and other attendees pose for a group photo during yesterday's inauguration ceremony for the International Obesity Society (IOS) China Macao Chapter at The Venetian Macao Cotai Expo. – Photo: Ida Cheong

localised, public-benefit health initiatives for schoolchildren, adults, and the elderly; (3) integrating cross-disciplinary experts in medicine, nutrition, and public health to nurture young professionals; and (4) hosting ongoing public science outreach to assist the local government in refining life-cycle nutrition policies.

Meanwhile, an expert roundtable forum on debunking obesity myths was held following the inauguration. The one-day forum convened with international experts, healthcare practitioners, and residents from Guangdong,

Hong Kong, and Macau to breaking down weight-loss misconceptions and promoting scientific weight-management concepts.

The inauguration ceremony and forum took place during the 2026 Guangdong & Macao Branded Products Fair (GMBPF).

4-day Guangdong-Macau fair draws 90,000 visitors

The four-day GMBPF, which concluded yesterday at The Venetian Macao Cotai Expo, attracted over 90,000 visitors, including 1,600

trade professionals. More than 460 business-matching sessions were held during the event, facilitating the signing of 49 cooperation agreements—approximately 90 percent of which were related to Macau's "1+4" appropriate economic diversification strategy.

Nearly 30 companies from Indonesia, Singapore, Thailand, and the Chinese mainland signed project agreements to invest in Macau or Portuguese-speaking countries, according to a statement released by the Commerce and Investment Promotion Institute (IPIM) yesterday. ■

Iranian president has rare meeting with supreme leader

TEHRAN – Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian recently met with supreme leader Ayatollah Mojtaba Khamenei, who has not appeared in public since assuming the post early in the Middle East war, Khamenei's office said yesterday.

"Dr. Masoud Pezeshkian met Ayatollah Mojtaba Khamenei and spoke with him at the start of his third year in the presidency," the supreme leader's office said in a statement, without indicating the date of the meeting.

Pezeshkian, who took office in July 2024, had said in early May

that he met with Khamenei, also without specifying the date, but the supreme leader's office did not issue any statements at the time.

The president had said on Wednesday that communication with Khamenei was "very difficult at the moment", and speculation has swirled about the supreme leader's health after he was reportedly wounded in strikes that killed his father.

Khamenei's office said the two "discussed in detail the country's issues and problems", including the "current military situation and

future prospects".

Iran had been engaged in negotiations with Washington on ending the war launched by the US and Israel in February, but a preliminary deal fell apart, and its top diplomat has said talks are now limited to exchanging messages through mediators.

Yesterday, Tasnim news agency cited a general in the Revolutionary Guards as saying that images showing Khamenei among the people and during meetings would be "published in the future", without offering a timeline. – AFP



A humanoid robot serves as a traffic officer in Shenzhen's Futian District last week. Humanoid robots are being deployed in a wide range of applications across the high-tech metropolis, becoming increasingly integrated into everyday work and life. – Xinhua

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Netanyahu rejects US Gaza plan, vows no pullout until Hamas disarms

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu yesterday rejected a Gaza plan hailed by US President Donald Trump, vowing no military pullout until Hamas is "genuinely" disarmed. – Story on p. 10

Bodies hanging from bridge revive violence in once-calm town in Mexico

Horrific drug violence plagued the Mexican state of Zacatecas for years, until relative calm set in. Then one morning in July this small town woke up to find five bodies dangling from a bridge. – Story on p. 11

Spain starts border checks on Italy after migrant row

Spain on Saturday started border checks on travellers arriving from Italy, responding to similar measures Rome imposed following a massive migrant rush into the Spanish north African enclave of Ceuta. – Story on p. 12

Businessman remanded for attempted murder of girlfriend, illegal weapons

Armindo Neves

The Judiciary Police (PJ) have arrested a mainland Chinese man for illegal weapon possession and the attempted murder of his girlfriend, PJ spokesman Chao Teng Hin said during a special press conference held at PJ headquarters in Zape on Friday.

He was remanded in custody on Saturday.

Chao identified the suspect as a 41-year-old businessman surnamed Chen, and described the victim as a middle-aged mainland woman.

According to PJ spokesman Leong Kuok Hei, the incident occurred at around 10:00 p.m. on Wednesday, when the Judiciary Police were notified by the Public Security Police (PSP) that a knife attack had taken place outside a hotel in Cotai.

A female victim suffering multiple injuries to her face and neck was found at the scene and immediately taken to the public Conde de São Januário Hospital Centre (CHCSJ) for emergency treatment, Leong said, adding that the male suspect was subdued on the spot by hotel security staff.

PJ officers arrived at the scene, arrested the suspect, and carried out forensic investigations and evidence gathering, according to Leong.

The incident took place in the driveway in front of the hotel, where the victim was attacked inside a black seven-seater vehicle. Bloodstains were found on the left side of the second-row passenger seats, alongside two box cutters and a table fork. A table knife and a mobile phone were recovered



Judiciary Police (PJ) officers escort the hooded suspect from the Chinese mainland, surnamed Chen, who is suspected of attempted murder and illegal weapon possession, to a PJ vehicle outside the PJ headquarters in Zape on Friday.

from the ground outside the vehicle. All the weapons were stained with blood.

Leong said that the investigation revealed four people were inside the vehicle at the time of the incident: the driver, two mainland women, and the victim. One of the women had, at the victim's request, been privately selling hotel room reward points and had agreed to meet the victim outside the hotel to complete the transaction. Upon arrival, they parked the vehicle in front of the hotel, and the victim boarded the car alone.

Chen, who had been tailing the vehicle, suddenly forced his way inside and, armed with sharp



Two blood-stained items of clothing, two box cutters, three cutter blades, a knife deformed by a heavy blow, and a fork are on display at PJ headquarters in Zape on Friday. — Photos: Maria Cheang Ut Meng

weapons, repeatedly attacked the victim's head and neck.

The victim screamed for help, prompting the other passengers to flee the vehicle and call for assistance from hotel security staff, Leong said. Security personnel arrived within seconds and subdued the suspect.

The investigation also confirmed that the victim and Chen had met in Macau in May last year and began a romantic relationship two months later.

However, by July this year, the victim had begun distancing herself from the suspect. A few days before the incident, the suspect saw the victim socialising with various male companions and believed she was deceiving him emotionally. Chen also felt aggrieved over the substantial amount of money he had spent on her during their relationship.

On Wednesday afternoon, Chen travelled to a shop in Taipa, where

he purchased two box cutters. Later, according to Leong, he took a knife and fork from his hotel room, intending to kill the victim. At 8:50 p.m. that evening, the suspect spotted the victim with a male friend outside the hotel. As she boarded the seven-seater vehicle, Chen seized the opportunity to rush inside and launch a frenzied attack on her head, neck, and face. He did not stop until hotel security subdued him.

According to evidence presented at the press conference, the table knife was deformed from a heavy blow.

According to the medical report, Leong said the victim suffered multiple severe lacerations to the left side and back of her neck, her lower lip, lower jaw, and right hand, with some wounds measuring between 10 and 20 cm in length. The injuries were consistent with those caused

by sharp weapons and resulted in haemorrhagic shock. Following surgery, the victim was in a stable condition but remains unconscious under sedation, according to Leong. At the time of the press conference, the Judiciary Police had not yet been able to interview her.

Chen was transferred to the Public Prosecutions Office (MP) Friday afternoon, facing charges of attempted murder and illegal weapon possession.

Meanwhile, the Public Prosecutions Office announced in a statement on Saturday that the suspect has been detained pending trial.

The statement noted that, following a hearing at the Criminal Preliminary Investigation Court of the Primary Court (TJB), the court found strong indications that the suspect had committed the offence of attempted homicide, punishable under Article 128 of Macau's Penal Code. Taking into account the nature and seriousness of the crime, the manner in which it was carried out, the motive, and the need to prevent the suspect from fleeing Macau, among other factors, the statement said, the Criminal Investigation Court, having adopted the recommendation of the Public Prosecutions Office, had decided to impose the coercive measure of pre-trial detention on the suspect.

According to Article 128 of the Penal Code, anyone who kills another person faces a prison term of 10 to 20 years. However, according to Article 22, an attempt is punishable with the penalty applicable to the completed crime, with a special reduction. ■

Gongbei Customs seizes 8,000 cigarettes at HZMB

Armindo Neves

Zhuhai's Gongbei Customs announced in a statement on Friday that its officers seized 8,000 cigarettes at the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge (HZMB) Zhuhai Port (checkpoint) on July 31.

According to the statement, on that day, while conducting a routine inspection of outbound passenger vehicles, customs officers noticed that a Guangdong-Hong Kong dual-plate passenger vehicle driver was behaving suspiciously

and therefore stopped the car for inspection.

Upon further inspection, customs officers discovered a total of 40 cartons of cigarettes — amounting to 8,000 cigarettes — in a suitcase, a backpack, and a travel bag onboard the vehicle, the statement said. The statement identified the cigarette brands seized in the operation as “BOHEM”, “Double Happiness”, and “Wuyeshen”.

Gongbei Customs reminded the

public that in line with the Chinese mainland's Tobacco Monopoly Law, the state has implemented a monopoly management system for the production, sale, import, and export of tobacco products, operating under a tobacco monopoly licence system. The export of cigarettes requires approval from the administrative department under the State Council in charge of the official tobacco monopoly and the acquisition of a tobacco monopoly licence. ■



This undated handout photo provided by Zhuhai's Gongbei Customs on Friday shows 40 cartons of cigarettes, comprising three brands, seized by its officers at the HZMB on July 31.

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Macau Weather

VERY HOT.
FINE APART FROM CLOUDY PERIODS.
A FEW THUNDERY SHOWERS LATER.
FORCE 2 TO 4 WEST TO NORTHWESTERLY WINDS WITH GUSTS.
RELATIVE HUMIDITY WILL RANGE BETWEEN 50% AND 95%.



28°C~36°C

Source: SMG

Flights cancelled; check updates before departing

Khalel Vallo

Multiple flights at the local airport have been cancelled due to Tropical Cyclone “Dolphin”, with 30 flights cancelled yesterday and two more scheduled to be cancelled today, according to a statement by the Civil Aviation Authority (AACM) over the weekend.

Dolphin landed in Zhejiang Province yesterday, moving further inland this week. According to the statement, passengers are urged to

confirm the latest flight status with their airlines before departing for the airport.

Passengers can also check the Macau International Airport website (www.macau-airport.com) for the latest flight information or call the airport hotline on 2886 1111, the statement noted, adding that passengers travelling through the local airport today are advised to check with their airlines before departure and allow for possible disruption caused by Dolphin. ■



This undated handout photo provided by the Civil Aviation Authority (AACM) on Saturday shows the local airport in Taipa.

LRT stations transform into Beyblade battle arenas for summer tournament

Khalel Vallo

Several Light Rapid Transit (LRT) stations were transformed into Beyblade* battle arenas yesterday as the one-day “Speed on Rails – Beyblade Tournament” brought competitions and interactive activities to passengers and visitors alike during the summer holidays.

Organised by Macao Light Rapid Transit

Corporation, Limited (MLM) in collaboration with local toy company SWAP, the event ran from 1:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. across several LRT stations, with Barra Station serving as the main venue.

According to generative AI chatbot Gemini, Beyblades are customised, battling spinning tops used in a competitive gear

sport. Players launch their tops into a bowl-like “Beystadium” to clash, winning by outspinning the opponent, knocking the opposing top out of the arena, or causing it to “burst” apart.

The main Beyblade tournament was held within the paid area of Barra Station, featuring an Open Category as well as a Pairs Category for parent-child teams.

Six sessions were contested across the two categories, with first, second, and third places awarded in each. Winners of the Open Category sessions advanced to an ultimate showdown to compete for the overall championship.

Participants could also take part in the “Line Exploration” and Stamp Rally Challenge, according to a statement on MLM’s website. Visitors without their own Beyblades could purchase an Exploration Kit and travel to designated challenge stations along the Taipa Line to battle players and collect stamps for limited-edition souvenirs, the statement said.

A “Free Battle Zone” and themed booths were also set up at Barra Station, allowing attendees to engage in casual battles and interactive activities.

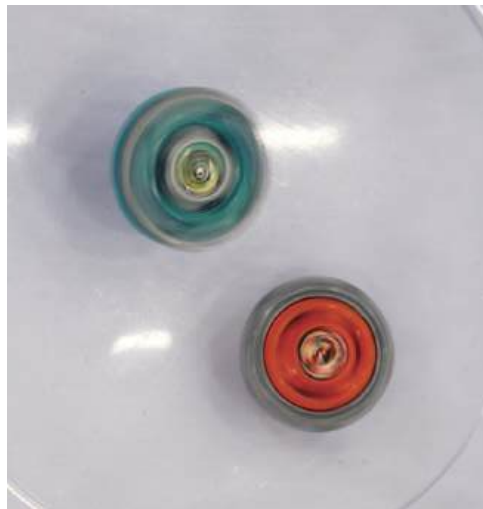
MLM noted that all competition and interactive zones were separated from passenger routes leading to the platforms. Additional staff members were deployed to manage passenger flow, ensuring LRT services continued to operate normally throughout the day.

The tournament formed part of MLM’s efforts to provide new leisure and travel experiences during the summer holidays, bringing interactive activities into LRT stations to encourage residents and visitors to explore the city’s light rail network. ■

**The name Beyblade is a linguistic blend (a portmanteau) that combines elements from both English and Japanese, reflecting the toy’s mechanics and cultural heritage. The first part of the name comes from “beigoma”, a traditional Japanese spinning top that dates back centuries. – Gemini*



Young players prepare their Beyblades to face off during yesterday’s “Speed on Rails – Beyblade Tournament” in Barra. – Photos: Khalel Vallo



A close-up of Beyblades clashing inside a “Beystadium”

Senior dies 1 day after being struck by public bus: police

Tony Wong

A local man in his seventies died in hospital on Friday afternoon, one day after he was hit by a public bus when he dashed into the road in Fai Chi Kei, authorities have announced.

According to a statement released on Friday, the Public Security Police (PSP) received a report at 4:46 p.m. on Thursday regarding the accident. The senior citizen was rushed to the hospital for emergency treatment, where he was pronounced dead at 2:44 p.m. on Friday after life-saving efforts failed.

Police said on Friday that they were still investigating the exact cause of the crash and urged witnesses to contact the Traffic Department on 2837 4214.

The accident occurred on 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 – a two-way road running along the south waterfront of Patane North Bay.

No passengers or the driver on the bus were injured.

Preliminary investigation findings indicate that the pedestrian ran into the road, and the bus driver slammed on the brakes but was unable to stop in time. The driver, aged in his forties, passed a breathalyser test.

Although the pavement was fitted with roadside barriers, the victim squeezed through a gap in the railings before stepping into traffic. ■



A taxi drives along Rua do Comandante João Belo in Fai Chi Kei yesterday. On Thursday when the accident occurred, the senior citizen squeezed through a gap in the railings and dashed across the road, it was later blocked (red circle) following the accident. – Photo: Tony Wong

WORLD NA TCHA FOLK BELIEF CULTURE FESTIVAL 2026

NA TCHA FOLK BELIEF EXHIBITION

Sept 15th - 18th

WELCOMING DINNER

Sept 15th 19:00
Barra Kitchen

NA TCHA JOINT PARADE

Sept 16th 11:00
From Ruins of St. Paul's
to Senado Square

PARADE ROUTE

Ruins of St. Paul's

to

Senado Square

BLESSING CEREMONY

Sept 16th 16:00
Barra Kitchen

FAREWELL DINNER

Sept 16th 18:30
Barra Kitchen



A solo masterclass: British jazz legend Martin Taylor opens Barra Slow Festival

Review by William Chan

British jazz guitar legend Martin Taylor delivered a captivating performance at Navy Yard No. 2 last Wednesday evening as the prelude concert for the Barra Slow Festival.

The night kicked off with local guitarist Chan Hon Chong and his quartet, who delivered a 20-minute set of original compositions from his album *Travelling Coffee*. Having heard the material before, I found Chan's meticulous, complex contemporary arrangements provided an engaging prelude that juxtaposed nicely with Taylor's upcoming performance.

Taylor took to the stage solo for the first section, playing a selection of personal compositions spanning his long career. He is undoubtedly one of the cleanest and most precise instrumentalists I have ever seen live. Using fingerstyle – a technique where the player plucks individual strings directly with the fingertips or fingernails rather than using a plectrum* – Taylor effortlessly balanced basslines, complex rhythmic chords, and soaring lead melodies simultaneously on a single instrument. While his repertoire leant heavily into laid-back tunes tailored to the “Slow Festival” concept – which might have lacked the energy some casual listeners expected – it was an absolute masterclass for guitarists and jazz enthusiasts alike.

The second half featured a duo set with guitarist Eugene Pao (包以正) on a lineup of classic jazz standards, including “Just Friends” and “Billie’s Bounce.” The duo section with the Hong Kong jazz veteran showed promise, but highlighted how challenging it is to match Taylor's pristine rhythm and tone. Pao seemed less at home in the sparse arrangement, making the contrast between the two players quite pronounced.

What truly stood out in the collaboration was the UK master's



British jazz guitar legend Martin Taylor performs.

exquisite use of space. Given the physical limitations of solo guitar – where 10 fingers can only voice so many notes at once – note selection becomes paramount. By strategically omitting obvious notes and letting the audience's imagination fill in the missing basslines or melody, he creates room for far richer, more inventive counter-lines. It was a remarkable demonstration of restraint and taste.

On the organisational front, the event experienced a few stumbles. Despite tickets selling out almost immediately – leaving many locals empty-handed – there was a glaring number of vacant VIP seats near the front, with the entire first row almost emptying out after the opening ceremony.

Furthermore, the event flow was disrupted between the opening act and Martin Taylor's main set by an extended series of official festival introductions and photo ops. While local audiences are accustomed to enduring these formal rituals, placing them squarely in the middle of a concert felt awkward, particularly given the non-English presentations, a move that was likely alienating for paying audiences and the artiste himself.

Fortunately, the hospitality helped make up for the scheduling hiccups. Attendees were treated to complimentary whiskey, wine, and a delicious dessert before entering the hall. The post-performance Q&A session was another highlight. Taylor expressed his genuine appreciation for Macau's preservation and adaptive reuse of heritage sites like Navy Yard No. 2, noting a personal connection to the venue as his late father was a sailor in the Royal Navy. He also praised the professionalism of the local sound engineering team.

During the Q&A, I had the opportunity to ask him whether, even at age 70, he still experiences excitement and nerves on stage. He replied that while the excitement never fades, he has surprisingly never felt nervous on stage in his life – a revelation that perfectly explains his warm, effortless presence.

Ultimately, Martin Taylor's performance was nothing short of a gift to Macau's music scene. His mastery of space, understated brilliance, and genuine warmth reminded everyone present why he remains a titan of jazz guitar. It was a rare, intimate look at a true master at work – one that left guitarists in awe and the rest of the audience thoroughly charmed.

**A plectrum – more commonly known as a pick – is a small, flat tool held between the thumb and forefinger to pluck or strum the strings of a musical instrument. – Gemini*



Eugene Pao and Martin Taylor (left) perform on stage last Wednesday. – Photo: William Chan



The Chan Hon Chong Quartet perform at Navy Yard No. 2 last Wednesday during the warm-up session. – Photos provided by the organiser

Leonel Alves, Macanese Youth and the Responsibility to Better Understand the Country

Commentary by Manuel Silvério

Independent Sports Analyst and Regional Development Consultant (Former senior public official with extensive international experience and a long-standing commitment to public policy and sports development)

Macau offers its residents a high standard of living that is stable, safe and comfortable. It is a compact and functional city where almost everything seems close at hand. Yet comfort also carries its own risks. When a society becomes too accustomed to convenience, it may, almost without noticing, develop a kind of greenhouse mentality: people grow up protected, but sometimes removed from the real demands of the wider world.

For that reason, the expedition organised by the Association of Macanese Youth to Qinghai Province, from July 26 to August 1, 2026, was far more than a study visit. It was, in many ways, a step outside that greenhouse. It offered direct contact with the plateau, the high altitude, the cold, the dry heat, the vast distances, the power of nature, China's ethnic diversity, ecological security, historical memory and the immense territorial scale of the country.

A Journey Beyond Tourism

The journey did not begin under ideal circumstances. Our departure from Macau took place under Signal No. 3, as Tropical Cyclone Noul approached. Upon arrival, we were reminded that Qinghai had recently experienced an earthquake before our visit, and while our delegation was still travelling across the plateau, another tremor occurred. Nature itself seemed to remind us that travelling through Qinghai requires respect, prudence and humility.

Over the following days, as we crossed endless highways, endured early departures, strong winds, intense sunshine, sudden rain, high altitude and dramatic changes in temperature, it quickly became clear that Qinghai cannot be understood through the window of an air-conditioned vehicle.

The real learning took place in the field: in the shorter breaths taken at more than three thousand metres above sea level; in the shared fatigue; in the generous meals, naturally different from our own culinary habits; in the conversations held aboard the coach; and in those moments when the body longed for rest, yet the mission demanded that we continue.

It also emerged through friendship and mutual support. During the most demanding days, the evening ritual of gathering around a hot pot became almost a collective embrace. It warmed the body, restored our energy and strengthened the bonds within the group.

Perhaps that human dimension was one of the expedition's greatest strengths. Our local guides, who regularly accompany official delegations, confided that they had never worked with a group so courteous, patient and understanding. Such a simple compliment says a great deal. Throughout a demanding itinerary, the young people from Macau demonstrated not only curiosity, but also courtesy, respect, discipline and civic responsibility.

That, too, is Macau.

That, too, is a way of representing the Macao Special Administrative Region (MSAR).

A Speech that Gave Meaning to the Mission

One of the most meaningful moments of the expedition took place during the farewell and evaluation dinner, when the Head of Delegation, Leonel Alves*, delivered a speech that captured the human, community and



Members of a delegation from the Association of Macanese Youth pose in front of the Wang Luobin Music and Art Museum (also known as the Wang Luobin Memorial Hall) in Haiyan County, Haibei Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Qinghai Province, on July 28, 2026. Pictured in the front row are Director-General of the Coordination Department of the Liaison Office of the Central People's Government in the MSAR Qiu Yu (sixth from left), Delegation Head Leonel Alves (fifth from left), and Advisor to the Delegation Manuel Silvério (seventh from right). Wang Luobin (1913–1996) was a renowned Chinese songwriter and music ethnographer, widely celebrated as the “King of Northwest Folk Songs.” – Photo courtesy of Tracy Leong

institutional significance of the visit to Qinghai.

Throughout the entire seven-day programme, both Mr Alves and Ms Qiu Yu, Director-General of the Coordination Department of the Liaison Office of the Central People's Government in the Macao SAR, accompanied the delegation from beginning to end. They shared the same roads, the same timetable, the same fatigue and the same challenges imposed by the plateau. This was not a protocol visit observed from a distance, but an experience lived side by side.

In his closing remarks, Mr Alves expressed his sincere gratitude to the Liaison Office of the Central People's Government in the Macao SAR and, in particular, to Ms Qiu Yu for her close support, dedication and constant guidance throughout the expedition.

He then emphasised that the mission had gone far beyond the limits of an ordinary sightseeing itinerary. In his view, the visit to Qinghai had become a journey of learning, community cohesion and intergenerational transmission, bringing together the Macanese community, engaging younger generations and contributing to the country's overall development.

That idea deserves careful reflection.

At a time when many youth activities risk becoming little more than organised trips, group photographs or items on an annual calendar, the Qinghai experience demonstrated that an immersion programme can achieve something far more meaningful. It can become education. It can provide genuine contact with the country. It can offer an opportunity to understand, first-hand, that China is far more than its great cities, illuminated avenues, monumental shopping centres or the familiar images of contemporary development.

Qinghai invited us to discover another dimension of the nation: its inland regions, its immense distances, its ethnic and religious diversity, its strategic resources, its ecological security, its historical memory and the resilience of its people.

It was in that context that Mr Alves' speech acquired particular significance. It was not merely a formal address delivered at the end of a visit. It was an attempt to transform a shared experience into a deeper sense of collective awareness.

Macau as Home, the Country as the Horizon

In his address, Leonel Alves recalled that, under the Basic Law of the Macao Special

Administrative Region, Macau is the true home of the Macanese** community. It should never be regarded as merely a place of passage, but as a place of belonging, responsibility and future.

This observation carries particular significance today. In 2026, with more than half of the initial fifty-year period established under the principle of “One Country, Two Systems” already behind us, the Macanese community cannot rely solely on memory, culture or family heritage. It must also ask itself what role it wishes to play in the future of the Macao SAR.

The continuity of a community is not secured simply by preserving memories of the past. It depends upon active participation, responsible citizenship and the ability to contribute meaningfully to the society in which it lives. For the Macanese community, this means developing a deeper understanding of Macau, acquiring greater knowledge of the country and preparing younger generations to serve a reality that has changed profoundly.

Mr Alves was equally clear in stressing that Macanese youth should broaden their understanding of global geopolitics and national security. The Qinghai experience enabled the delegation to witness first-hand the country's strategic mineral resources, its vast territory, the importance of ecological security and the historical depth of regions that rarely feature in the everyday imagination of those living in Macau.

At a time marked by growing external challenges, international instability and increasing competition among major powers, Macau's stability cannot be viewed in isolation. The prosperity of the Macao SAR is closely linked to the strength, stability and continued development of the country.

It was within this context that Mr Alves expressed one of the evening's most memorable reflections: **When the country does well, Macau does better.**

The sentence is simple, yet it conveys a clear political and community message. Macau does not exist apart from the national reality. Its stability, its special status, its capacity for development and its role as a platform all depend upon a strong, cohesive country capable of responding successfully to complex challenges.

For the Macanese community, this awareness is particularly important. Owing to its unique cultural heritage, shaped by centuries of interaction between East and West, the community continues to have an

important role to play in Macau. However, that role requires more than identity alone. It demands knowledge, preparation, discipline, linguistic ability, civic maturity and a genuine sense of responsibility.

Preparing the Next Generation

Mr Alves further observed that everything accomplished today should be viewed in the light of future generations – our children and grandchildren – so that they may continue to live, work and prosper with stability in the Macao SAR while deepening Macau's integration into the Guangdong–Hong Kong–Macao Greater Bay Area.

This is a decisive point. When discussing Macanese youth, we are not speaking merely of emotional continuity or cultural preservation. We are speaking about a concrete future: employment, education, mobility, professional skills, a sense of belonging, civic participation and the ability to build meaningful lives in Macau and throughout the region.

Integration into the Greater Bay Area (GBA) and a deeper understanding of the Chinese mainland should be regarded as progressive learning journeys. Whenever possible, they should be accompanied by practical experiences – immersion programmes, internships, language training, professional exchanges and hands-on projects – capable of transforming curiosity into competence and a sense of belonging into meaningful participation.

Macanese youth are far from homogeneous. Some are highly qualified, cosmopolitan, multilingual and ambitious. Others are less confident, less exposed to wider opportunities or still searching for their direction in life. For that reason, opportunities in the Greater Bay Area and throughout the Chinese mainland should not be designed solely for those who are already well prepared. They should also help less confident young people broaden their horizons, strengthen their resilience, enrich their general knowledge and develop the confidence to overcome limitations.

This is precisely where journeys such as the expedition to Qinghai acquire their true value. When properly organised, they are not tourism. They are education. They remove young people from the routines of everyday life and encourage them to live together, adapt, listen, observe, face discomfort, deal with the unexpected and understand that the country is far greater and more complex than the images presented through social media.

Yet such experiences will only fulfil their purpose if they are followed by continuity. It is not enough simply to take young people on distant journeys. Preparation beforehand, proper guidance throughout the programme and structured follow-up afterwards are equally essential. Every expedition should generate reflection, new ideas, stronger networks, greater responsibility and a deeper understanding of Macau's place within the country's overall development.

Qinghai, National Security and Development

In the same address, Mr Alves recalled a message conveyed to him during the dinner hosted by Wang Runyu, Executive Vice-Minister of the United Front Work Department of the Qinghai Provincial Committee of the Communist Party of China. In his own words, he emphasised the importance of following the guidance of President Xi Jinping by persevering in our efforts, embracing innovation with courage and strengthening the country's capacity for high-quality development.

– Continued on p.6

Leonel Alves, Macanese Youth and the Responsibility to Better Understand the Country

Continued from p.5

This reference gave the speech a broader perspective. The visit to Qinghai should not be seen merely as a community activity organised by the Association of Macanese Youth. It should also be understood as part of a wider process of getting to know the country, strengthening national integration and preparing younger generations in the Macao SAR to better understand the challenges of China's contemporary development.

Qinghai offered many valuable lessons. At Base 221, the former Atomic City, national security ceased to be simply a legal or political concept. It became the living memory of scientists, engineers, technicians, workers, families and entire communities who accepted difficult missions under extremely demanding conditions.

Deng Jiaxian symbolises a generation that worked far from public recognition, guided by a simple yet powerful conviction: a vulnerable country cannot enjoy genuine peace. The strategic strength developed there should not be interpreted as a glorification of war, but rather as an expression of national sovereignty whose highest purpose is to safeguard national security and prevent war.

In Golmud and at Qarhan Salt Lake, the immense territory, strategic mineral resources, salt lakes, logistics, energy production and the harsh climate revealed another China, one that extends far beyond the familiar image of the country's great metropolitan centres. There exists an inland China, less visible and less photographed, that guarantees strategic resources, ecological security and long-term national resilience.

Qinghai is also a land of remarkable diversity. The presence of Tibetan, also known as Zang, Hui, Han, Mongolian, Tu, Salar and many other ethnic communities reflects a deeply plural reality. At Hongjue Monastery, history reminds us of centuries of relations between the Central People's Government and the great spiritual lineages of Tibetan Buddhism. At Qinghai Lake, the close relationship between ecology, spirituality and daily life revealed a profound respect for nature and for the cycles of existence.

Crossing the Qaidam Basin, where wind turbines stretch to the horizon, offered another lesson in green development. The powerful winds of the plateau, which physically challenged us throughout the journey, also represented clean energy transformed into future prosperity. In Guide and Kanbula, where the surprisingly clear waters of the Yellow River flow through spectacular Danxia landforms, the landscape told another

story: one of human determination to manage territory wisely, protect fragile ecosystems and create sustainable communities in demanding environments.

These experiences helped us understand that national development is not measured solely by modern skylines, high-speed railways, skyscrapers or major international events. It is equally built upon anonymous work, personal sacrifice, territorial planning, ecological security, cultural diversity and perseverance in regions where life remains particularly demanding.

Making Better Use of Macau's Human Resources

This experience also leaves an important message for the institutions of the Macao SAR. Macau needs more demanding immersion programmes, better organised and more closely connected to the country's realities. These should not become merely symbolic journeys undertaken to fulfil annual schedules or produce official photographs. They should be genuine missions of learning, civic education, direct contact and leadership development.

The Macanese community, particularly its younger generations and those of Portuguese descent, can continue to make a valuable contribution if properly prepared. Macau cannot be compared with Hong Kong in terms of scale, critical mass or human resources. As a smaller special administrative region with its own unique characteristics, it becomes even more important to make intelligent and effective use of every individual possessing distinctive cultural, linguistic and interpersonal skills.

Within this context, the Macanese community should not be regarded merely as the guardian of a historical legacy, but as a valuable strategic human resource. Its members can help Macau interpret different cultures, communicate with greater sensitivity, strengthen its role as a platform between China and the Portuguese-speaking world, and contribute to economic, cultural, educational, tourism, sporting and institutional cooperation.

Making full use of this potential requires vision, method and confidence. It is not enough simply to recognise the symbolic importance of the Macanese community. It is essential to create concrete opportunities for young Macanese to be educated, entrusted with responsibilities, tested in practical situations and encouraged to contribute actively.

It also requires institutions to stop viewing young people merely as spectators.

They should not be invited simply to attend ceremonies, applaud achievements or appear in official photographs. They should progressively be encouraged to write, present ideas, participate in projects, assume responsibilities, organise events, visit Mainland China, receive delegations, build links with the Greater Bay Area and demonstrate through practical action that Macanese identity is not merely a memory of the past, but a living capacity to contribute.

Three Years, Two Provinces, On Autonomous Region

Over the past three years, I have had the privilege of taking part in the Association of Macanese Youth's expeditions to Jilin, Ningxia and Qinghai. They are three very different provinces, each with its own identity, geography and history. Yet, taken together, they offer a powerful insight into the diversity and strength of the country.

We did not travel merely to Tiananmen Square to watch a military parade. Nor did we limit ourselves to visiting China's great metropolitan centres, with their wide boulevards, illuminated skylines, monumental shopping malls and impressive infrastructure. Those images certainly form part of contemporary China, but they do not tell the whole story.

The greatest lesson of these journeys lay elsewhere.

It was found behind the scenes, in regions where life is more demanding, where the climate tests endurance, where distances are immense, where the land requires perseverance, where stability is built through quiet dedication and where national development appears less as spectacle than as a daily task.

Jilin revealed another face of China's Northeast. Ningxia demonstrated the importance of cultural frontiers, ethnic coexistence and economic transformation. Qinghai added yet another dimension: the high plateau, strategic resources, ecological security, spirituality and human resilience.

For Macau, this learning is indispensable. We cannot aspire to serve as an international platform, a meeting point between cultures and a bridge between China and the Portuguese-speaking world if we possess only a limited understanding of the country itself.

A bridge is only as strong as the foundations that support it on both sides.

Returning with a Sense of Responsibility

At the end of the expedition, we returned to Macau tired, yet profoundly changed.

After seven days of travelling through high-altitude landscapes, enduring cold and heat, fatigue, discovery and companionship, the delegation returned with a far clearer understanding of the country's scale and of the responsibility that comes with truly knowing it beyond the familiar images.

We brought home photographs, memories, amusing stories, new friendships and a deep sense of gratitude for the generous hospitality we received. More importantly, however, we returned with a renewed awareness.

The comfort that Macau offers should be appreciated, but it must never lull us into complacency.

Its stability should be valued, but it must never become an excuse for inaction.

The Macanese identity should be preserved, but it must never become imprisoned by nostalgia.

The young people of Macau need to experience the wider world.

They need to know their country.

They need to understand the Greater Bay Area, the Chinese mainland, its cultural frontiers, its more demanding regions, its strategic resources, its people and the unseen foundations that sustain the nation's prosperity.

Only then will they be fully prepared to participate, with maturity and confidence, in the future development of the Macao SAR.

Macau is our home.

The country is our wider horizon.

Between the two, the Macanese community can continue to serve as a living bridge, provided it prepares its younger generations to serve with intelligence, humility and courage.

If the purpose is to better understand the country, to serve Macau and to contribute to our shared future, we shall gladly be ready to go again.

(End)

**Leonel Alves Leonel Alberto Alves (歐安利), 69, is a prominent Macanese lawyer, private notary, and long-standing public figure MSAR. He is a former lawmaker and current member of the MSAR Government's Executive Council, its top advisory body. He also heads the Macau Holy House of Mercy (SCM) – the world's oldest existing Western charity organisation in the Far East. - MPD*

***Customarily, the term "Macanese" refers to residents of mixed Portuguese and Asian descent or upbringing (around 1.5 percent of Macau's population), as well as the broader diaspora. - MPD*

N.B. The article uses "Macau" in most narrative sentences but uses "Macao" in official titles or administrative designations. - MPD

Septuagenarian critical with flu A: Health Bureau

Ida Cheong

The Health Bureau (SSM) said in a statement on Friday that a 70-year-old male resident with a history of chronic illness was in critical condition with a severe case of influenza A.

According to the statement, the patient, a retired local resident, developed a fever, cough, and shortness of breath on Thursday and sought medical care at the private Kiang Wu Hospital. He was diagnosed with influenza A complicated by pneumonia and subsequently transferred to the intensive care unit (ICU), where his condition remained critical.

The statement noted that the patient had no travel history during the incubation period. He had received the current season's influenza vaccine, and no co-habiting family members have reported symptoms.

The statement added that influenza is a highly contagious acute respiratory disease, typically

peaking in Macau during winter-spring (January to March) and summer (June to August). The virus spreads primarily through airborne droplets or direct contact with an infected person's nasal and oral secretions.

Common symptoms include fever, headache, muscle pain, runny nose, sore throat, and cough, the statement said, adding that while most individuals recover, high-risk groups—including the elderly, infants, and individuals with underlying chronic conditions—are at greater risk of severe complications, such as bronchitis and pneumonia.

The bureau urged high-risk individuals to reinforce personal hygiene and preventive measures. Anyone experiencing flu-like symptoms should seek medical attention promptly to enable early evaluation for antiviral treatment, thereby reducing the risk of severe illness, the statement added. ■

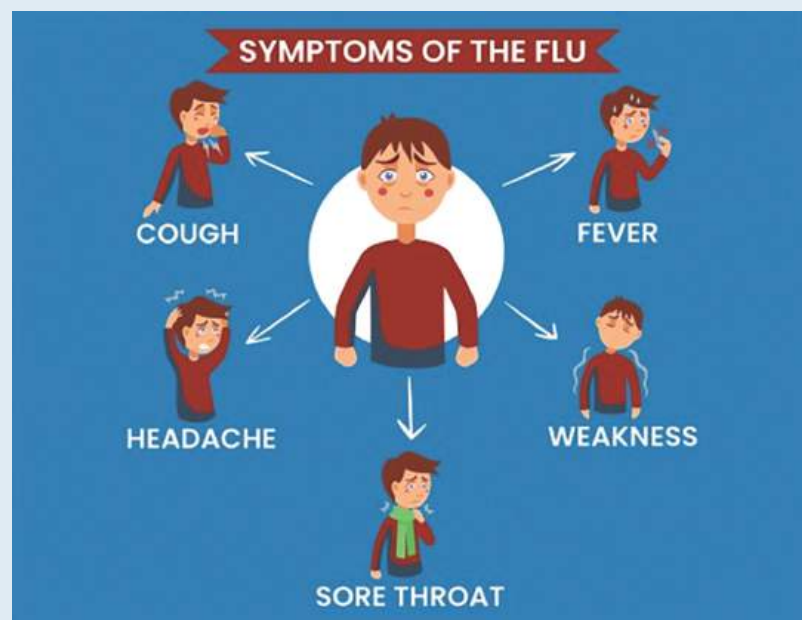


Image courtesy of US California's Universal Primary Care Clinics.

Macau logs this year's top temperature yesterday



Visitors buy drinks and desserts from a shop on Rua da Palha in Macau's city centre, close to its main square, Largo do Senado, and the UNESCO World Heritage-listed Ruins of St Paul's yesterday.

— Photo: Tony Wong

Tony Wong

Yesterday's highest temperature recorded at Macau's main weather station on Big Taipa Hill reached 35.9 degrees Celsius at 2:00 p.m., making it the highest recorded so far this year, according to the website of the Meteorological and Geophysical Bureau (SMG).

Among the city's various weather stations, the station at the Outer Harbour Ferry Terminal recorded yesterday's overall peak temperature at 38.3 degrees Celsius.

According to the bureau, yesterday's top temperatures recorded at other stations across the city all exceeded 36 degrees, ranging between 36.5 and 37.9 degrees Celsius.

Since the establishment of the bureau in 1952, the highest temperature recorded at the main weather station occurred on August 22, 2017, before Typhoon Hato hit the city, when the mercury hit 38.0 degrees Celsius.

Historical meteorological data available on the SMG website dating back to 1901 shows that Macau officially recorded its all-time high temperature (at its main weather station) on July 2 and July 6, 1930, reaching 38.9 degrees Celsius. At that time, Macau's weather station was located on Guia Hill.

Macau's weather observing station was initially established on Penha Hill in 1901 before being relocated to Guia Hill in 1904, where it operated until 1966 when it moved to Mount Fortress (Fortress Hill). Macau's current main weather station on Big Taipa Hill began operating in 1996.

The bureau issued an Orange hot weather alert on Friday, which remained in effect last night.

A Yellow alert is issued by Macau's observatory when the weather is forecast to be "very hot"—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 reach or exceed 36 degrees Celsius.

The bureau stated on its website last night that due to the influence of outer subsiding airflow brought by Tropical Cyclone Dolphin, Macau's weather is expected to remain extremely hot today and tomorrow. Maximum temperatures are forecast to reach 36 degrees Celsius, with urban areas potentially seeing temperatures one to two degrees higher.

Severe Typhoon Dolphin made landfall in Taizhou, Zhejiang Province, yesterday evening, according to the National Meteorological Centre.

The observatory urged the public to avoid prolonged outdoor exposure and take precautions against heatstroke, including staying well-hydrated.

The SMG noted that high temperatures may trigger atmospheric convection*, bringing strong thunderstorms and gusts to Macau during the afternoon and evening over the next two days.

Additionally, the bureau warned that Macau's air quality is expected to deteriorate today, advising senior citizens, children, pregnant women, and individuals with heart or respiratory illnesses to minimise outdoor activity, particularly in areas with heavy traffic flow. ■

**In meteorology, atmospheric convection refers to the vertical transport of heat and moisture driven by buoyancy differences, occurring when solar radiation heats Earth's surface and causes the warm, less dense air directly above it to rise. As this ascending air expands and cools at higher altitudes, its water vapour condenses to form clouds and precipitation, while cooler, denser air sinks to take its place and complete the circulation loop. — Gemini*

Wong vows advancing Macau-Hengqin rule alignment

Tony Wong

Secretary for Administration and Justice Wong Sio Chak has underlined that in terms of his portfolio work, the Macau government will remain committed to solidly advancing the alignment of rules and mechanisms between Macau and the Guangdong-Macao In-Depth Cooperation Zone in Hengqin.

Wong made the remarks on the University of Macau (UM) campus while delivering a speech during the swearing-in ceremony for the fourth-term board members of the Macau Legal Workers Association on Saturday. The event also marked the 10th anniversary of the association's establishment.

The event was attended by dignitaries including Chief Executive Sam Hou Fai; Zhang Yingjie, a deputy director of the Liaison Office of the Central People's Government in the Macao Special Administrative Region (MSAR); and Legislative Assembly (AL) President André Cheong Weng Chon.

In his speech, Wong noted that President Xi Jinping delivered an important speech during his inspection visit to Macau in December 2024, requiring the continuous advancement of the rule of law in Macau and the enhancement of its governance effectiveness. Xi's speech provided clear instructions on improving Macau's legal system and strengthening Macau-Hengqin

integrated development, Wong said.

Wong noted that when delivering a speech during the gathering in celebration of the 105th anniversary of the founding of the Communist Party of China (CPC) held in Beijing on July 1 this year, Xi reaffirmed the central authorities' commitment to comprehensively, accurately, and unswervingly implementing the principles of "One Country, Two Systems," "Macau people governing Macau," and a high degree of autonomy, while ensuring the implementation of the "patriots governing Macau" principle and enhancing the effectiveness of law-based governance in Macau.

Wong said that Xi's various speeches have profoundly clarified the central role of the rule of law in Macau's overall development, providing the fundamental principles and pointing out the way forward for Macau's long-term stability and sustained development.

In terms of his portfolio work, Wong underlined the Macau government's commitment to aligning Macau's 3rd Five-Year Plan with the nation's 15th Five-Year Plan, upholding Macau's executive-led system, improving the city's legal system, deepening public administration reform, fostering positive interaction between the executive and legislative organs, improving laws and regulations across various areas — such as commercial affairs,



Secretary for Administration and Justice Wong Sio Chak delivers a speech during Saturday's swearing-in ceremony for the fourth-term board members of the Macau Legal Workers Association, on the University of Macau (UM) campus. — Photo courtesy of TDM

public administration affairs, and those related to residents' daily lives — and solidly advancing the alignment of rules and mechanisms between Macau and Hengqin.

Wong noted that the nation's development is progressing rapidly, while the development of the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area (GBA) and the Guangdong-Macao In-Depth Cooperation Zone in Hengqin is strongly advancing. These bring new opportunities for the consolidation of the rule of law in Macau and the development of its legal sector and professionals while also presenting higher requirements for them, he said. ■

Population rises to 686,500 in June – 22,553 per km²

Staff Reporter

Macau's population rose by 600 year-on-year to 686,500 at the end of the first half of the year, resulting in a population density of 22,553 per km², one of the world's highest, based on Macau's current land area of 33.4 km², according to official demographics released on Friday.

At the end of 1999, Macau's population stood at 438,100 and its land area at 23.8 km² — a population density of 18,407 per km².

Females accounted for 54.0 percent of the population at the end of June. Male babies accounted for 52.5 percent of the 1,340 live births in the first half of the year.

In the first six months, the number of marriage registrations rose by five to 1,447. ■



Local residents and visitors alike throng Rua de S. Paulo yesterday, a narrow pedestrian-only street leading to the UNESCO World Heritage-listed Ruins of St. Paul's landmark. — Photo: Tony Wong

HK Observatory posts record high temperature

HONG KONG — Hong Kong Observatory posted a record high temperature of 36.9C yesterday as Typhoon Dolphin swept warm air over the city.

The approaching storm has already triggered mass flight cancellations and evacuations along the Chinese mainland's east coast ahead of its landfall and fuelled intense heat in the region.

"The maximum temperature recorded at the observatory was 36.9 degrees, the highest ever recorded since 1884," when records began, the Hong Kong Observatory said in the afternoon.

The previous record was set at 36.6 degrees on August 22, 2017, before Typhoon Hato hit the city.

Figures recorded at the observatory's headquarters serve as

one of the key references for Hong Kong, according to the weather service, although temperatures can vary significantly in the densely built finance hub.

Temperatures elsewhere in the city topped 39C.

The station in Sheung Shui, in the city's north, recorded 39.8C, the highest temperature logged in Hong Kong since automatic weather

stations were introduced in the 1980s, the observatory said.

"With Tropical Cyclone Dolphin moving towards the vicinity of Zhejiang and moving inland, its outer subsiding air will persistently bring extremely hot weather to the territory today to on Tuesday," the forecaster said.

The observatory issued a "Very Hot Weather Warning" yesterday,

advising citizens to drink water and avoid vigorous outdoor physical activities.

Typhoon Dolphin made landfall in the Chinese mainland about 1,000 km northeast of Hong Kong.

It has triggered more than 1,000 flight cancellations, evacuations and a top-level alert from authorities as it approaches China's densely populated east coast. — AFP

Indonesia seizes 1.3 tonnes of ketamine worth millions in major bust

BATAM, Indonesia – Indonesian authorities have seized 1.3 tonnes of ketamine worth tens of millions of dollars from a foreign-flagged vessel, a top anti-drug official said on Sunday, in one of the country's largest drug busts.

Authorities received intelligence in February that the MV King Sun was sailing east from Thailand towards Indonesia with "suspicious" cargo, prompting months of surveillance, National Narcotics Agency chief Suyudi Ario Seto said.

A navy warship intercepted the vessel on Thursday as it entered Indonesian territory, he said.

"On August 7, the joint team found 65 sacks hidden inside the ship. After testing, the items were known to contain ketamine," Suyudi told a news conference on the Indonesian island of Batam yesterday.

The load of an estimated 1.3 tonnes was worth around 2.07 trillion rupiah (US\$116.2 million), he said. Authorities were still searching the boat to see if there was more.

Ketamine functions primarily as a fast-acting anaesthetic but is widely abused as an illicit party drug. Its distribution is tightly controlled and monitored in Indonesia.

State news agency Antara



Officers from various Indonesian agencies prepare sacks containing ketamine during a press conference revealing an international narcotics smuggling case in Batam, Riau Islands, yesterday.

– AFP

reported that the vessel was registered under a Tanzanian flag and that it was intercepted in waters around the Riau Islands province near Singapore.

Eight crew aboard the vessel – seven Myanmar nationals and a Taiwanese – have been detained, the narcotics agency said.

"We are still investigating with regards to the origin of the load, port destination, who was the sender and who was the receiver," Suyudi said.

Indonesian authorities seized

3.37 metric tonnes of cannabis buds last month when they foiled a smuggling attempt from Thailand, arresting 12 suspects.

In 2021, Indonesian police busted a smuggling ring that moved 2.5 tonnes of methamphetamine into the country from Afghanistan, with 17 suspects arrested.

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

Philippine police mobilize rescue units amid floods

MANILA – The Philippine National Police (PNP) have mobilized frontline forces for rescue and evacuation operations amid widespread flooding, with additional personnel and assets on standby for rapid deployment to the hardest-hit areas, according to local media reports yesterday.

"We have made available as many personnel and resources as possible for evacuation and disaster response," PNP chief Gen. Jose Melencio Nartatez Jr. said yesterday. He advised the public to monitor official channels and refrain from sharing unverified information.

Flooding and gridlock from the enhanced southwest monsoon and tropical cyclones have crippled major thoroughfares across Luzon, forcing emergency evacuations. In Central Luzon, police have been assisting affected communities through search and rescue, evacuation and relief distribution.

Over 380,000 affected by severe weather

The enhanced southwest monsoon and tropical cyclones

have affected more than 380,000 residents across eight regions in the Philippines, according to Philippine official media reports yesterday.

According to the Philippine News Agency, at least 110,000 families were affected, and the death toll remained at six, with seven injured persons recorded. The weather disturbances also damaged 148 houses, including 138 partially and 10 totally destroyed.

Two of the fatalities were caused by a landslide triggered by heavy rain, two by a rockslide, and the remaining two by drowning and electrocution, respectively, according to the official reports.

The National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council of the Philippines said 86 evacuation centers have been activated, sheltering 2,200 families or 7,300 persons. Another 1,132 families, or 3,700 persons, are staying outside evacuation centers.

Severe flooding hit at least 132 villages across six provinces, with roads and a bridge in Bulacan and Pampanga still impassable, according to the reports.

Local malls shelter flood-affected in Manila

Multiple shopping malls in Metro Manila opened designated waiting areas for residents displaced by heavy rains and flooding caused by the enhanced southwest monsoon, according to local media reports yesterday.

The participating malls, operated by the SM Group, one of the Philippines' largest conglomerates, are providing free Wi-Fi, restrooms, charging stations and help desks to affected residents. Free overnight parking is also available at these malls on Saturday night.

Residents in need of temporary shelter were advised to proceed to the nearest participating mall for their safety. The local government urged residents to remain alert and take necessary precautions as rains and flooding continue.

Metro Manila, one of the biggest metropolises in Asia, has long been plagued by urban flooding during the annual rainy season, with residents in low-lying areas the most vulnerable to the recurring deluges. – Xinhua

Philippine police dismiss over 1,300 cops for grave offenses

MANILA – The Philippine National Police (PNP) have dismissed 1,337 police officers for grave offenses since August last year, local media reported yesterday.

The police officers were discharged due to grave misconduct, and 2,276 others were suspended, 235 demoted, 672 reprimanded, and 100 had their salaries forfeited, the

report added.

Meanwhile, 3,524 police officers accused of wrongdoings were exonerated after investigation, according to the PNP. – Xinhua

Students, teachers mourn girl killed in Thailand school shooting

Thanaporn Promyamyai

BANGKOK – Dozens of bereaved students, parents and teachers queued at a Buddhist temple in Thailand yesterday to pray over the body of a 12-year-old girl, one of eight victims of a home and school shooting two days earlier.

The 14-year-old assailant shot dead the grandparents who raised him at their home north of Bangkok on Friday before killing six others at his school, using his grandfather's handgun, and then turning the gun on himself, authorities said.

Investigators are still seeking a motive, but police said yesterday the boy had watched violent videos online and once taken a BB gun to school. Officials said earlier he faced academic-related stress and a classmate said he was bullied.

Mourners dressed in black gathered yesterday in the pavilion of Wat Lat Pla Duk in Nonthaburi province, bordering Bangkok, where the body of the slain schoolgirl, Naphat Chaima, lay for a ceremonial bath.

She died in hospital on Saturday after suffering gunshot wounds at the school, police said. Five teachers and school staff were also killed on Friday.

Mourners took turns gently pouring water over a hand of the deceased while others lit incense sticks and folded their hands in prayer.

"She was a good kid. A kid who loved to do every activity," said the girl's music teacher, who declined to give her name.

"She loved to dance."

Several psychologists were available to consult with grieving children under the care of their parents, an AFP journalist saw.

Another woman said her 12-year-old daughter was a classmate of the dead girl. They had done cheerleading together.

"This family lost their daughter. I came to support the mother" who lost her child too soon, she told AFP.

She said she wanted the school to tighten security, questioning how the teenage shooter could have taken a gun and bullets into the school.

However, ultimately the incident was "beyond anyone's control", she said.

Her daughter was able to exit a school building, physically unharmed, through a back door, she said.

'Real cause'

Investigators have interviewed 17 witnesses and were examining the boy's computer and phone to determine the "real cause of the shooting", Atthapol Anusit, a deputy police commander for the region surrounding the capital, told reporters earlier.

"We looked into his PC and found history that he watched violent videos on social media," Atthapol said.

"From questioning the kids, we know that he took a BB gun to school last year but a teacher seized it."

Witnesses told police the boy had been interested in guns for a year or two, Atthapol said, adding that he had learnt how to use one by watching content on social media.

The child had lived with his grandparents since he was two years old after his parents had separated, he said.

The boy's father apologised "to society for what my son did" on Friday, according to local media.

Prime Minister Anutin Charnvirakul has said the boy experienced school-related stress, and his dead grandmother was a former teacher who had been "quite strict on him about studying".

Thailand has one of the highest rates of gun ownership in the region, with around 10 million firearms estimated to be in circulation - roughly one for every seven inhabitants.

Officials have promised stricter gun laws since Friday's shooting, but previous pledges have failed to prevent repeated shootings. – AFP



A portrait of 12-year-old school shooting victim Naphat Chaima is displayed in front of her coffin during her funeral at the Wat Lat Pla Duk Buddhist temple in Nonthaburi province, north of Thailand's capital Bangkok, yesterday.

– AFP



People dance during a water gun festival amid an ongoing heatwave in Seoul on Saturday. — AFP

Sri Lanka deploys troops to contain growing prison unrest

COLOMBO—Sri Lanka deployed troops to its main maximum-security prison in Colombo and two other jails on Friday, following unsuccessful breakout attempts in which three inmates were killed and 23 wounded, a government minister said.

Public Security Minister Ananda Wijepala said an inmate was killed and 10 others wounded after guards thwarted an attempt by about 40 convicts to escape from Colombo's maximum-security Welikada Prison on Thursday night.

Sri Lankan jails have been hit by a spate of unrest in recent weeks, with 10 guards and 23 inmates killed in two separate riots at two other prisons outside Colombo since last month.

Officials have attributed the growing unrest to acute overcrowding. Sri Lanka's prisons hold about four times their intended capacity.

Wijepala told parliament that the situation at the Welikada jail had been brought under control,

but similar unrest was reported at another prison in Kuruwita, about 80 kilometres southeast of Colombo.

Two inmates were killed and another 13 wounded at Kuruwita, he said.

"Security forces have been deployed at that prison too and order has been restored," Wijepala said.

Unrest was also reported at a prison in Pallansena, north of Colombo, where 30 inmates climbed onto the roof and refused to return to their cells after breakfast on Friday.

"We see a pattern in these incidents and suspect a conspiracy," Wijepala told parliament, without giving further details.

Authorities announced plans last month to convert disused state buildings into prisons, but new facilities have yet to be added.

More than three-quarters of inmates in Sri Lanka are remand prisoners awaiting trial, with most being held in connection with drug offences. — AFP

Sri Lanka expands ban on gambling sites

COLOMBO — Sri Lanka has added nearly 100 more online betting sites to a list of banned portals as part of a crackdown on unauthorised gambling, the Digital Economy Ministry said on Friday.

Online gambling is legal in Sri Lanka, but operators must register with the authorities and pay a licence fee to the government.

Another 98 sites were added to the list of portals to be blocked in Sri Lanka, two days after 24 major gambling sites were banned.

Those online gaming sites were operating without licences, the ministry said.

It also warned Sri Lankans that investing in such sites was illegal.

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

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

However, internet users in Sri Lanka can still access the blocked sites using VPN software. — AFP

Air India pilot undergoes 'confirmatory' drug test after flight plunge

MUMBAI — India's aviation ministry said yesterday that an Air India pilot whose flight plunged dramatically in turbulence injuring 17 passengers and crew is undergoing a "confirmatory" psychoactive drug test.

The Airbus A320, carrying 137 passengers and eight crew, lost around 300 feet (91 metres) on August 4 while flying from Phuket in Thailand to New Delhi, before stabilising and landing safely, the civil aviation ministry said.

Eight passengers and four cabin crew members were admitted to hospitals after landing in the Indian capital, whose conditions were described as "stable", after which both pilots were given a standard "psychoactive substance screening test", the statement read.

"The screening test in respect of the Pilot-in-Command (PIC) indicated a result requiring confirmatory testing," it said.

"Samples have accordingly been sent to the designated laboratory for

confirmatory analysis, and the final report is awaited."

The ministry said the flight has been classified as a "Serious Incident", and that India's Aircraft Accident Investigation Bureau (AAIB) has launched an investigation.

Both pilots have been removed from the flying roster pending outcomes of investigation.

"Further action, as appropriate, will be taken based on the outcome of the investigation and confirmatory test results," it added.

Videos of the incident's aftermath showed cabin baggage strewn across the aisle. Some of those injured were taken to hospital on stretchers.

Air India, in a statement earlier yesterday, confirmed that a "post-flight screening test" had been conducted on the flight's pilots, but it said the results had not been shared with the company.

The incident is the latest in a series of setbacks for the Indian carrier, which appointed a new

executive on Wednesday.

Since taking over Air India in 2022, India's Tata Group has embarked on an ambitious overhaul, ordering hundreds of aircraft and upgrading its ageing fleet.

While the airline has managed to modernise operations and integrate the group's aviation businesses, it has faced persistent headwinds including aircraft delivery delays and airspace closures caused by the 2025 India-Pakistan conflict.

But the biggest blow to the airline's image came in June 2025, when Air India Flight 171 — a London-bound Boeing 787 Dreamliner — crashed shortly after take-off from Ahmedabad, killing all but one of the 242 people on board and 19 people on the ground.

The carrier has now turned to former Ethiopian Airlines chief Tewolde Gebremariam, widely seen as an industry veteran capable of righting the ship, as its new CEO as it seeks to execute a turnaround. — AFP

S Korea vows truth over forced overseas adoptions

SEOUL — South Korea's President Lee Jae Myung promised Friday to "fully uncover the truth" about the nation's dark history of forced overseas adoptions, months after apologising for the state-sanctioned malpractice.

South Korea was once one of the world's biggest exporters of babies, sending more than 140,000 children overseas between 1955 and 1999, according to official figures.

International adoptions began after the Korean war, sending away stigmatised mixed-race babies fathered by US soldiers and infants born to women ostracised out of wedlock in a conservative society.

It morphed into big business, generating millions of dollars for adoption agencies in South Korea's booming 1970s and 1980s.

Last year, the country's Truth and Reconciliation Commission said the government was responsible for abuse in the practice by fabricating records and obtaining inadequate consent from birth parents.

The commission recognised state responsibility in just 56 of the 367 overseas adoption cases flagged for investigation, sparking backlash from adult adoptees and a new probe to revisit those cases, which started on July 21.

"We will thoroughly uncover the truth about... cases of forced overseas adoption that were not fully investigated in previous inquiries," Lee said at an event with probe officials and victims of other state violence.

Advocates for investigations have largely been adopted children, with birth parents reluctant to speak out over the still-stigmatised subject.

But in May, five South Korean birth mothers came forward to demand a state probe, saying their children were sent for overseas adoption without their consent.

One claimed she was told her daughter had died after birth, only to later learn she was adopted in the United States.

"In some cases, unjust human rights violations occurred during

overseas adoption procedures," Lee said in October.

"At such times, the state did not fully meet its responsibilities. On behalf of the Republic of Korea, I offer my heartfelt apology."

Korean adoptees have advocated for their rights for years, many reporting that their birth mothers were forced to give them up, saying records were fabricated to meet legal requirements for adoption.

Some parents and adoptees even claimed their children were kidnapped by agents who sought out unattended children in poor neighbourhoods.

Other allegations include authorities directing lost children towards adoption without trying to reunite them with their families.

Despite South Korea's notoriously low birth rate, the country continued sending children abroad for adoption until recently.

According to the government data, 24 children were adopted overseas in 2025, 58 in 2024, 79 in 2023, and 142 in 2022. — AFP

Malaysia Airlines to test all pilots after Indonesia drug arrest

KUALA LUMPUR — Malaysia Airlines' parent firm announced on Friday mandatory drug screenings for its pilots, after one of them tested positive for a cocktail of narcotics and was arrested in Indonesia for smuggling.

Authorities at Jakarta's Soekarno-Hatta International Airport arrested the 39-year-old pilot last month, shortly after arriving from Kuala Lumpur, for allegedly attempting to smuggle more than 70,000 ecstasy tablets in his suitcase.

Malaysia Aviation Group said in a statement on Friday that it would carry out tests "for all active pilots, beyond industry practice".

The group, which also owns budget airline Firefly, said the process would begin with 1,260 pilots from the national carrier, with tests to be completed by August 15.

Pilots who are not tested will "not operate flights" until they have been cleared, the company said.

The process would complement the aviation group's "existing random testing programme", it added.

"Operational safety and crew fitness for duty are non-negotiable," said the group's president and chief executive, Captain Nasaruddin A. Bakar.

"We take any breach of our safety standards seriously and

have acted swiftly to enhance mandatory drug screening across our active pilots."

The detained pilot faces the death penalty on conviction in Indonesia.

Results of his urine test came back positive for meth, MDMA and cocaine, according to Indonesian customs officials.

Malaysia Aviation Group has said he was not the one who flew the plane from Kuala Lumpur that day, but a cockpit "observer" who had been "off duty for two days preceding the incident".

It added that the aircraft "was operated safely at all times by two qualified operating pilots". — AFP



People in traditional attire take part in celebrations marking the International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples in Kathmandu, Nepal, yesterday. The International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples is observed every year on Aug. 9. — Xinhua

Houthi attacks kill 11 in Yemen, target Saudi refinery

ADEN – Strikes by Iran-backed Houthi rebels yesterday killed at least 11 people, a medical source in the Yemeni port city of Mokha told AFP, after an earlier drone salvo targeted a Saudi oil refinery on the Red Sea coast.

A years-long truce in Yemen's civil war between the Houthis and the Saudi-backed, internationally recognised government appeared to collapse last month as fighting between regional allies of the United States and Iran flared.

The breakdown of the UN-backed 2022 accord came as the rebels announced a maritime blockade of Saudi Arabia, hitting Saudi tankers in the Red Sea and the kingdom's oil infrastructure, in parallel with Iran's blockade of the Strait of Hormuz.

A medical source in Mokha, held by Yemen's internationally recognised, Aden-based government, said three civilians and eight military personnel had been killed in the Houthi attacks.

A further 32 individuals were wounded, six of them civilians, the source added, explaining all the

civilian casualties had been a result of strikes on Mokha's port.

Two military sources with the government forces earlier confirmed at least eight troops had been killed in the strikes and more than 40 personnel were injured.

The Houthis' military spokesman Yahya Saree said the group had targeted "Saudi enemy" troops and equipment in the area with missiles and drones.

Earlier, Saree said the Houthis had struck an oil facility on Saudi Arabia's Red Sea coast after the Gulf kingdom's energy ministry said it had extinguished a fire at the Jazan site.

He added that the attack on the facility operated by Saudi Arabia's state-owned oil firm Aramco was launched in response to incursions by drones from the Gulf monarchy into northwest Yemen.

The two military sources with the Aden-based government confirmed the Houthis attacked Mokha with several waves of missile and drone barrages.

One of the two military sources said the Houthis also targeted pro-

government forces and installations outside Mokha and sites on islands near the Bab al-Mandab Strait, the shipping chokepoint at the southern entrance to the Red Sea.

The same military source said some locations targeted by the Iran-backed group housed Saudi troops but no casualties had been reported among military personnel from the Gulf kingdom.

Residents in Mokha confirmed to AFP they heard blasts in the area, with one saying they "heard explosions from drones and air defences over the port and city".

Another resident said they heard "six consecutive explosions" at the port.

The Houthis control vast swathes of Yemen, including the capital Sanaa and areas on the border with Saudi Arabia's Red Sea provinces.

The Yemeni threat to shipping and Saudi oil facilities came as Iran pressed its blockade of the Strait of Hormuz, now the central flashpoint between Tehran and Washington amid efforts to end the Middle East war begun by the US and Israel in February.

– AFP

Syria says reached deal with Moscow on fate of Russian bases

Maher Al Mounes

DAMASCUS – Syria said yesterday that it reached a deal with Russia on the fate of its two bases in the country, which Moscow once used to provide military support to ousted leader Bashar al-Assad during the Syrian civil war.

Russia was a key Assad ally during the 13-year conflict, helping to keep the former leader in power, and his ouster in 2024 dealt a major blow to its influence in the region.

President Vladimir Putin has since worked to build relations with the new Islamist authorities in Damascus to secure the future of Russia's only two official military bases outside the former Soviet Union.

Syria's official SANA news agency quoted the foreign ministry as saying that the Hmeimim airbase and Tartus naval base would be turned into "joint training and capacity-building centres, within new arrangements that preserve mutual interests".

The memorandum of understanding, which followed a year and a half of negotiations, "set a time limit of no more than three months to complete the process", SANA said.

In the meantime, civilian facilities at both bases will be handed over to Damascus.

Russia has yet to officially comment on the agreement.

Both the Hmeimim and Tartus bases had remained operational while talks were ongoing.

Syrian Foreign Minister Asaad al-Shaibani visited the sites yesterday "to inspect the facilities and installations included in the historic



This handout picture released by the official Syrian Arab News Agency (SANA) shows Syria's interim foreign minister Asaad Shaibani (front, second from right) touring the port of Tartus yesterday, to inspect facilities included in a memorandum of understanding between Syria and Russia.

– AFP

memorandum of understanding", according to SANA.

'Important step'

Omar al-Hasri, head of Syria's Civil Aviation Authority, said the body was taking control of Latakia's international airport, a civilian facility adjacent to Hmeimim whose operations were closely linked to Russia's presence.

"The Authority's specialised teams have begun the technical and operational assessment of the airport, its facilities and systems, in preparation for developing a plan to rehabilitate it," Hasri said.

He called the move "an important step towards restoring and operating Syrian airports and reintegrating them into the national civil aviation system".

Syria has expressed a willingness to cooperate with Moscow, and President Ahmed al-Sharaa has been received by Putin in Moscow twice since taking over.

During Sharaa's last visit in January, Putin said "much has been accomplished in terms of restoring our interstate relations", commending Sharaa for his "efforts to restore Syria's territorial integrity".

While Sharaa praised Russia's "historic role" in Syria and the region, Damascus has repeatedly demanded that it extradite Assad, who has been sheltering in Moscow with his wife since his ouster.

Earlier this year, the Kremlin withdrew its forces from the Qamishli airport in Syria's northeast.

– AFP

Netanyahu rejects US Gaza plan, vows no pullout until Hamas disarms



Israeli soldiers patrol the market in the Old City of Nablus, in the northern Israeli-occupied West Bank, yesterday. The occupied West Bank has been gripped by almost daily violence involving Israeli troops and settlers since the start of the Gaza war in October 2023. Israel has occupied the West Bank since 1967.

– AFP

JERUSALEM – Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu yesterday rejected a Gaza plan hailed by US President Donald Trump, vowing no military pullout until Hamas is "genuinely" disarmed.

After more than a week of gradually escalating criticism of the plan, Netanyahu explicitly opposed it as he faced pushback from his right-wing base ahead of elections.

"Israel rejects the 15-point document," Netanyahu said, referring to a plan endorsed in late July by Hamas.

The Israeli military "will not carry out any withdrawal until Hamas is genuinely disarmed and will continue to thwart threats against our forces and our citizens," Netanyahu said at a cabinet meeting.

The document, the latest stage in a US-led ceasefire announced in October that has reduced but not ended Israeli operations in Gaza, said Hamas would surrender weapons to a nascent Palestinian governing body.

The plan said Israel would begin pulling out forces in tandem

with the disarmament, an idea adamantly rejected by Israel which also wants Hamas to destroy its weapons.

After meeting Netanyahu recently, Trump's body implementing the deal, dubbed the Board of Peace, backtracked and said Israel would only need to withdraw after "complete" disarmament.

Netanyahu, Israel's longest-serving leader, who according to polls is in a tight race to stay in power, has faced calls from his far-right allies to hold a new cabinet vote and end the Gaza plan.

Netanyahu said that Israel was speaking with the United States about its objections.

"They have ideas; some of them are acceptable to us and some are not, and we know how to stand our ground on these matters," he said.

Netanyahu said that Hamas must give up all of its weapons, a goal that Board of Peace members say is not realistically achievable.

"We are talking about real disarmament, not fictitious disarmament," Netanyahu said.

– AFP

Pope calls for humanitarian corridors in Sudan

VATICAN CITY – Pope Leo XIV called yesterday for humanitarian corridors to be opened for civilians caught up in a conflict in Sudan which has killed tens of thousands of people and displaced millions.

Leo said he was following "with concern the tragic situation in Sudan, especially in the city of El-Obeid", the largest city in the southern Kordofan region, which has come under intense drone attacks in recent weeks.

The attacks have prompted the UN to issue a "red alert" over what it described as an unfolding catastrophe.

"In expressing my spiritual closeness to all the people of the nation, I renew my appeal to

those in authority to guarantee humanitarian corridors for the civilian population," Leo said at the end of the Angelus prayer.

"At the same time, I urge the international community to support efforts aimed at bringing about an immediate ceasefire.

"Let us pray that the Lord may sustain those who are suffering, convert the hearts of those who sow violence, and grant the long-awaited peace," he said.

The war between Sudan's regular army and the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF) erupted in April 2023, creating what the UN describes as the world's largest displacement and hunger crises.

– AFP

Bombing attacks mark first day of Colombia's new right-wing government

SANTANDER DE QUILICHAO – Two bombing attacks in different parts of Colombia on Saturday marked the first day in office for new President Abelardo de la Espriella, leaving at least one police officer dead and several wounded.

The tough-talking hard-right leader campaigned on confronting “narcoterrorism without truce” and ending peace talks with armed groups following his inauguration on Friday in the southwestern city of Cali.

Colombia's army said FARC guerrilla dissidents used explosives to destroy a highway tollbooth near Cali in the early hours of Saturday, with two security guards suffering minor injuries.

Rebels under the command of Iván Morodisco, Colombia's most wanted guerrilla commander, operate in the area surrounding the tollbooth, which was under construction on the Pan-American highway in the Santander de Quilichao municipality.

Morodisco leads dissidents who broke away from the historic 2016 peace agreement between the FARC and Colombia's government.

De la Espriella condemned the bombing on social media on Saturday, saying “attacking the country's infrastructure is attacking progress” in an X post.

“To those responsible, I send a clear message: there will be no refuge, no leniency and no impunity,” he added.

‘Will not go unpunished’

About 1,000 kilometers away, in the northern department of

César, an officer was killed in another bombing early Saturday when an explosive-equipped drone struck a police station, officials there said.

Authorities there on Saturday had not yet identified suspects, but De la Espriella vowed whoever is responsible “will not go unpunished.”

The confrontational style of the first-time political leader, who openly admires US President Donald Trump and El Salvador's Nayib Bukele, now faces tough opposition from the guerrilla groups and drug traffickers operating in Colombia.

De la Espriella has promised to open mega-prisons like Bukele and to intensify bombing raids against guerilla groups and drug traffickers operating in Colombia, with support from the United States and Israel.

His inauguration comes during the worst wave of violence the country has experienced in the last decade.

A decade after landmark peace accords, pockets of Colombia are still ruled by dissident armed groups that dominate global cocaine production.

Roberto Sandoval, a firefighter who lives in the neighbourhood next to the tollbooth, told AFP tensions were high following the bombing.

“We are all on edge, very tense and nervous.”

Elsewhere in the neighbourhood, windows shattered and left glass strewn on the bed of Sonia Zapata, a 68-year-old housewife.

She said she feels “very nervous, very afraid.” –AFP

Bodies hanging from bridge revive violence in once-calm town in Mexico

Jesse Mireles and Esther Consuegra

POZOS DE GAMBOA –

Horrific drug violence plagued the Mexican state of Zacatecas for years, until relative calm set in. Then one morning in July this small town woke up to find five bodies dangling from a bridge – a grim calling card that showed the bloodshed never really left.

These days in Pozos de Gamboa, a Zacatecas town of 5,000 residents that is known for growing beans, people are terrified. No one goes out after dark and no one talks about that morning when the bodies showed up.

Zacatecas is key to the drug trade because it links central Mexico with the north and west of the country and features routes that are key to smuggling cocaine and drugs north to the hungry consumer market in the United States.

The state of 1.6 million inhabitants had become painfully used to narcotics-related violence as rival gangs fought each other, with bodies turning up almost on a daily basis and people going missing right and left.

Then things calmed down, a lot. Killings in Zacatecas fell from around 1,300 in 2022 to 144 in 2025, according to government figures. The government has attributed the decline to better coordination between state and federal law enforcement officials.

The calm spell ended shockingly on July 18 with the spectacle of the bodies hanging from the bridge. The victims included a former mayor, civil servants and businesspeople from other parts of the state. Five other bodies were found elsewhere in town that same day.

Mexico's two largest drug cartels – Jalisco New Generation and Sinaloa – have been fighting to control Zacatecas because of its strategic value in the US-bound drug trade.



A cross is seen near a highway bridge in the town of Pozo de Gamboa, Zacatecas state, Mexico, on Friday. Five men were found hanged from the bridge last month. – AFP

‘They kill over nothing’

Prosecutors opened a probe into the killings and the state government promised “an immediate and forceful response,” while noting that violence like this had been on the decline. It asked for help from the army and the National Guard to boost security in Zacatecas.

AFP visited Pozos de Gamboa and observed that on the road here from the state capital, also called Zacatecas, there were no roadblocks and just a few police patrol cars out and about.

One Pozos de Gamboa resident who declined to be named, fearing for his safety, described it as being like a ghost town – “as if no one ever lived here.”

“Here, you always used to see people,” this man said. But now, “at 9 [o’clock] in the evening there is no one out on the street.”

Indeed, in this town most people have lost a relative or an acquaintance – dead or missing – to all the drug violence.

When people go missing they are routinely killed, this man said. “They make it so the bodies do not smell.”

“They killed a brother of ours,” he added. “They kill over nothing at all.”

The bridge where the bodies were found last month had been used in the past as a spot for the drug cartels to leave these grim messages.

A woman who runs a food stall in the street said she saw the bodies hanging as early 4 a.m.

The image recalled the worst years of Mexico's drug wars, when the government deployed federal forces in 2006 to fight the cartels and these crime gangs fought back, hanging bodies from bridges or dumping them elsewhere in public to intimidate rivals and the security forces.

The Pozos de Gamboa killings drew the attention of leftist President Claudia Sheinbaum's government, which promised to arrest whoever was behind them.

She has deployed soldiers in violence-plagued states such as Sinaloa and Michoacan as she endures pressure from US President Donald Trump to intervene directly in Mexico against the cartels so as to keep drugs from crossing the border into the United States. – AFP

4 killed in helicopter crash in Rio de Janeiro

RIO DE JANEIRO – Four people were killed in a helicopter crash on Saturday in Rio de Janeiro, including three Colombian tourists from the same family, the country's consul told AFP.

The helicopter went down in Tijuca National Park, a mountainside forest with very dense vegetation.

Firefighters confirmed the pilot and three women “burned to death” and released images showing the smoking remains of the aircraft on a steep, hard-to-reach hillside.

Diana Paez, the Consul General of Colombia in Rio de Janeiro, told AFP the three women were part of a family group who had travelled to the Brazilian city to celebrate a girl's 15th birthday. The group of six had split up because the helicopter could only take three passengers.

The birthday girl's grandmother, aunt and cousin died in the crash, and she was supposed to take a second flight later on, with her

father and his partner, Paez said.

The consulate provided support to Brazilian authorities in identifying the victims, a difficult task because of the condition of the bodies.

The aircraft went down near Vista Chinesa, a replica of a Chinese pagoda known for its high-altitude vantage point, with its views of Rio from the heart of the forest.

The monument appeared in the 2011 animated film “Rio.”

In June, two helicopters collided over Rio and left six people dead, including American singer Oliver Tree and Argentine YouTuber Gaspar Prim.

Helicopter rides are a popular attraction for tourists who want to see Rio de Janeiro's famed sights and the natural splendour of the seaside metropolis.

Rio's mayor Eduardo Cavaliere posted to X that he has asked Brazil's National Civil Aviation Agency to immediately step up monitoring to ensure the safety of helicopter flights. –AFP

Ecuadoran prosecutors charge 7 in murder of presidential candidate

QUITO – Ecuador's Prosecutor's Office formally charged seven people on Saturday on suspicion of being the masterminds behind an assassination plot against a prominent presidential candidate in 2023.

Fernando Villavicencio, a legislator known for his anti-corruption investigations, was polling in second place when he was shot and killed at a campaign event in Quito 11 days before the 2023 presidential election.

Ecuador's Prosecutor's Office announced on X that it “charges the seven defendants as indirect perpetrators for their alleged participation in the crime of #Murder.”

Among those charged were former Interior Minister José

Serrano, former legislator Ronny Aleaga, businessman Xavier Jordan, and four people linked with the Los Lobos Gang, including its suspected leader Wilmer Chavarría, who went by the alias “Pipo.”

Jordan, who lives in the United States, “financed and planned” the assassination, according to prosecutors.

Serrano, who served under former president Rafael Correa, is accused of providing the Los Lobos (“The Wolves”) with information about Villavicencio's whereabouts.

Aleaga, who has been granted asylum in Venezuela, coordinated “actions to carry out the murder,” prosecutor Ana Hidalgo alleged in a filing.

Chavarría, who is facing extradition proceedings from Spain to Ecuador, allegedly planned the murder in exchange for US\$1 million.

A former investigative journalist, Villavicencio reported receiving threats from organised crime groups prior to his death.

Five other people have already been sentenced in connection with the assassination, with some receiving prison terms of up to 34 years.

The suspected gunman in the attack was shot and killed by Villavicencio's bodyguards, while six other suspects allegedly linked to the crime were killed in prison.

– AFP

Spain starts border checks on Italy after migrant row

MADRID – Spain on Saturday started border checks on travellers arriving from Italy, responding to similar measures Rome imposed following a massive migrant rush into the Spanish north African enclave of Ceuta.

“I don’t see a lot of the word ‘diplomacy’ used in these decisions, not by the Italian government, nor by the Spanish government,” said one 36-year-old Italian tourist, Maria Celeste Grillo, who had just flown into Madrid.

She said she had not seen any added checks as she stepped off the plane, but found their implementation “sad”.

Spain announced on Friday it would proceed with the heightened controls, citing what it said was “persistent irregular migration pressure” facing Italy – deepening a tit-for-tat row between the EU partners and NATO allies.

Spain’s left-wing government has complained that Italy’s right-wing government on July 31 unfairly imposed one month of border checks on travellers from Spain – suspending the EU’s Schengen Area visa-free travel arrangements – because of the Ceuta influx.

More than 70,000 migrants crossed from Morocco into the Spanish enclave on July 30 and 31, though most returned to Morocco



Migrants from Morocco and elsewhere in Africa queue for food distributed by NGO Luna Blanca (“White Moon”) in the Spanish North African enclave of Ceuta on Friday. – AFP

within 48 hours.

The inflow alarmed European nations, especially right-wing governments urging tougher rules on irregular migrants. However, rules for Ceuta mean migrants cannot travel onward to continental Europe without passing another layer of border checks.

The EU’s migration chief Magnus Brunner said he had been in contact with both the Spanish and Italian interior ministers on Saturday and that “both confirmed that the internal border controls are temporary.”

“I stressed the progress we’ve made on tackling illegal migration and that trust between member states is our most valuable currency,” Brunner posted on X.

He also said Spanish authorities had provided assurances the Ceuta events “will have no lasting effect on the Schengen area,” adding: “That is why there are signals from Italy that controls could be lifted soon.”

Spain’s interior ministry said the new checks on incoming travellers from Italy would apply until September 7. – AFP

Senegal begins ECOWAS facilitation mission in Guinea-Bissau

BISSAU – Senegal has begun its role as facilitator of Guinea-Bissau’s political transition following its appointment by the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), Senegalese Foreign Minister Cheikh Niang said last week.

Niang made the remarks on Thursday after meeting Guinea-Bissau’s transitional President Horta Inta-A Na Man during an official visit to Bissau.

He said the Senegalese delegation had informed Inta-A of the country’s appointment and would also hold talks with transitional Prime Minister Ilidio Vieira Té as part of efforts to facilitate the electoral process.

The visit was also intended to formally convey to Guinea-Bissau’s transitional authorities the decisions adopted at the 69th Ordinary Session of the ECOWAS Authority of Heads of State and Government, held on July 19 in Lungi, Sierra Leone, Niang said.

The ECOWAS summit

appointed Senegal as facilitator to support dialogue toward an inclusive and orderly restoration of constitutional rule in Guinea-Bissau. It also urged the transitional authorities to ensure transparency and inclusiveness in a constitutional referendum scheduled for August 30 and general elections set for December 6.

Niang was accompanied by Senegalese Armed Forces Minister Yankhoba Dieme and other government officials.

Guinea-Bissau’s Foreign Minister Fatumata Jau said the visit reflected continuing dialogue among ECOWAS member states and reaffirmed the transitional government’s commitment to the electoral timetable.

Guinea-Bissau has been under military-led transitional rule since a coup in November 2025 disrupted presidential and legislative elections before the results were announced.

– Xinhua

Portugal approves major electricity grid investment plan through 2030

LISBON – Portugal’s Council of Minister has approved a national electricity distribution grid development and investment plan for 2026-2030, with a total projected investment of 1.58 billion euros (US\$1.82 billion), to modernize infrastructure and accelerate the energy transition.

The plan, known as PDIRD-E 2026-2030, aims to increase grid capacity, ease bottlenecks in connecting new renewable energy generation, consumption and storage projects, and improve the

security and quality of electricity supply.

The government said after Thursday’s cabinet meeting that the investments will also accelerate projects under the Portugal Transformation, Recovery and Resilience (PTRR) program.

Portugal has been expanding its renewable energy generation in recent years, driving demand for grid upgrades to accommodate new renewable and energy storage projects.

– Xinhua

US sanctions Cuban armed forces minister, military procurement network

WASHINGTON, DC – The United States announced new sanctions on Thursday that target Cuban Armed Forces Minister General Álvaro López Miera, seven other individuals and five state-owned entities over their alleged role in foreign military cooperation and arms procurement.

“These actions target state-owned entities, military enterprises, and Ministry of the Revolutionary Armed Forces (MINFAR) officials involved in foreign military cooperation and the procurement of military equipment intended for the Cuban regime,” the US State Department said in a statement.

The other individuals sanctioned include the chief of general staff of the Cuban armed forces, the heads of the military’s foreign relations and economic wings, and its military attaches to China and Russia.

The state-linked entities targeted by the new sanctions are alleged

to aid in Cuban procurement of weapons from countries deemed to be US adversaries.

“These designations follow the Department’s July 20 report ‘Cuba: The Capital of 21st Century Communism,’ which chronicles the Cuban regime’s continuing partnerships with Russia and China, both of which have supplied Cuba with military hardware, surveillance technologies, and other security capabilities,” the State Department said.

US President Donald Trump has ramped up pressure on Cuba in recent months, cutting off vital fuel supplies and threatening to take over the island.

Earlier on Thursday, UN experts warned that US sanctions risked pushing the island nation into “full-blown crisis.”

Washington’s imposition of an effective oil blockade and other sanctions has worsened economic conditions, led to major shortages

and contributed to widespread power outages.

Energy, transport, irrigation and basic services are failing, disproportionately affecting women, children, older persons and other vulnerable groups, the UN experts said in a statement.

The Trump administration has issued a slew of new sanctions targeting the country, with Washington saying the measures are meant to ramp up pressure on the country’s ruling Communist party and government.

Trump has taken an increasingly aggressive stance on Latin American countries since taking office.

In January, US military forces launched a raid into Venezuela to capture the country’s then president Nicolás Maduro.

Trump has also openly backed right-wing candidates in several Latin American elections, with several subsequently coming to power. – AFP

Pilot killed as plane crashes in Portugal

LISBON – A pilot was killed on Saturday morning when a light aircraft crashed at the Portimão aerodrome in Portugal’s southern Faro district, according to the civil protection authorities.

The victim, a 28-year-old man,

was the only one aboard the plane. No other casualties were reported.

Aeronautical sources were quoted as saying that the pilot was carrying out aerial work when the crash occurred.

The Aircraft and Railway

Accident Prevention and Investigation Office (GPIAAF) confirmed it had been notified, and its civil aviation team went to the site to gather evidence and investigate the cause of the incident.

– Xinhua



Brazilian singer Maria Bethânia, 80, performs during the 2026 Doce Maravilha Festival in Rio de Janeiro on Saturday. The Doce Maravilha Festival (“Sweet Wonder”) is a major Brazilian music festival held annually in Rio de Janeiro. It focuses on exclusive artistic collaborations, nostalgic reunions, and special anniversary sets. Artists are given the freedom to create unique, one-off performances designed specifically for the festival. – AFP, MPD

Lionel Messi's father Jorge dies aged 68

Football

ROSARIO, Argentina – Jorge Messi, the father and agent of Lionel Messi, has died aged 68, the eight-time Ballon d'Or winner's childhood club Newell's Old Boys announced on Saturday.

Argentine media reported Jorge Messi had passed away on Friday in a hospital in his hometown of Rosario.

"His constant companionship and behind-the-scenes leadership were essential in backing every step of Lionel," Newell's Old Boys said in a social media post.

The 39-year-old Argentine star arrived in his home country on Saturday alongside his partner, Antonela Rocuzzo, and their children, with most dressed in black, an AFP journalist reported from the airport.

The funeral was held yesterday in a private ceremony in the town of Perez, near Rosario, local administrative sources said.

Messi's family asked the media for "humanity" during the recent World Cup amid persistent rumours over Jorge's health.

The Spanish Football Federation (RFEF) sent its "condolences" to the Messi family.

"On behalf of Spanish football, we wish to convey all our love and affection to Lionel and his loved ones during this time of deep sorrow," the RFEF said in a statement.

Inter Miami said in a statement, "Our hearts are with our captain, Leo, and the entire Messi family."

A former metal factory worker, Jorge Messi was his son's first coach in Argentina and his sole companion when he first moved to Barcelona as a child, before later becoming his agent.

"My father helped me enormously. He is very critical of me. That made me always want to push myself further," Lionel Messi told DirecTV Sports in 2022.

In 2000, Jorge left behind a stable job in Argentina, his wife



Argentina's football star Lionel Messi (second left), his wife Antonela Rocuzzo (third right), and relatives, attend the funeral of his father, Jorge Messi, at El Prado cemetery, on the outskirts of Rosario, Santa Fe province, Argentina, yesterday. - AFP

and three other children to move to Spain with his 13-year-old son.

"When we arrived in Barcelona, I used to lock myself in my room to cry alone, and my father did the same - either without me seeing him or thinking I didn't see him. We pretended we were both fine, but we were struggling," Messi later said.

"When things were tough, my father even asked me what I wanted to do, whether I wanted to keep going or go back home. I wanted to continue, so he stayed with me."

Subsequently, Jorge finalised his son's first contract with Barcelona, becoming his agent and sole representative with the Spanish club

and later at Paris Saint-Germain and in Miami.

A private man, Jorge Messi rarely gave interviews, but on the few occasions he spoke publicly of his unbreakable bond with his son.

"The day Leo stops playing, I think a dream will shatter for me, and I won't watch football anymore," he told German magazine *Kicker* in 2013.

However, his life was not without controversy.

In 2013, Spanish authorities accused both father and son of using a network of companies across the UK, Switzerland, Belize and Uruguay between 2007 and 2009 to collect the footballer's image rights and evade Spanish taxes.

The case was resolved in 2017 following multi-million-euro fines.

In 2019, Jorge and Lionel - along with the Leo Messi Foundation - faced new allegations in Spain involving suspected tax offences, fraud and money laundering.

This second case was dismissed in 2021. - AFP

Man Utd boss Carrick being 'careful' with Mount as Man Utd draw with PSG

Football

GOTHENBURG, Sweden – Michael Carrick said he had to be "careful" with Mason Mount after the England midfielder was involved in an injury scare during Manchester United's 1-1 friendly draw with Paris Saint-Germain in Gothenburg on Saturday.

Mount, who joined United from Chelsea in 2023, has been hampered by injury problems since arriving at Old Trafford and he lasted less than 20 minutes after starting against PSG.

The 27-year-old appeared to suffer a foot injury in Sweden and, following discussions with coaches on the touchline, left the field to be replaced by Tyler Fletcher.

"He (Mount) got kicked," United manager Carrick told reporters. "We just wanted to be careful and look after him."

"We've been lucky with injuries so far, so we wanted to be careful."

Post-match video footage showed Mount walking on to the United bus without any form of visible knee support or a protective boot.

United, who will be competing in the 2026/27 Champions League alongside title-holders PSG next term after finishing third in the Premier League, were 1-0 down at the time of Mount's injury.

They had fallen behind in the second minute through an Ibrahim Mbaye goal even though French giants PSG were missing many of their star players.

But Bryan Mbeumo equalised for United in the 32nd minute, with Amad Diallo playing him in after

winning the ball back.

There were more injury concerns for United early in the second half when their 40-year-old goalkeeper Tom Heaton suffered a right hamstring problem while rushing out to make a clearance.

Mbeumo might have doubled his tally but for the fine form of PSG's Matvey Safonov.

The goalkeeper, however, left the pitch to jeers after escaping punishment for clattering into Joshua Zirkzee way outside of his area - an incident that may well have seen him sanctioned in a competitive match.

At the other end, there were late chances for Fletcher, Shea Lacey and captain Bruno Fernandes, who linked up well with new arrival Youri Tielemans in an encouraging sign for Carrick.

"I enjoyed it," Carrick told MUTV, United's in-house television station. "Good challenge. Slightly different with the way they play. We should've scored more goals."

The former United and England midfielder added: "It's good for the boys sometimes to have to problem solve and find their own way and I thought we did that. That prepares them for the season as well. In that respect there were a lot of things that maybe people don't always see that we were quite happy with. There were some good signs there."

United have two more friendly fixtures, against bitter rivals Leeds in Dublin on Wednesday and AC Milan in the Polish city of Wroclaw three days later, before launching their Premier League campaign away to newly-promoted Hull on August 22. - AFP



Arsenal's Spanish goalkeeper Kepa Arrizabalaga (right) dives but cannot stop a shot from Dortmund's Greek midfielder Konstantinos Kareltsas (unseen) making it 0-2 during the pre-season friendly between Arsenal and Borussia Dortmund at the Emirates Stadium in London yesterday. Dortmund won the game 3-2. - AFP

S Korean FA apologises after sex scandal adds to controversies

Football

SEOUL – South Korea's under-fire football association has apologised over a series of controversies ranging from accusations of using unfair practices to appoint a coach to allegations that it provided sexual entertainment for foreign referees.

The Korea Football Association (KFA) has been under heavy fire since South Korea crashed out of the World Cup at the group stage, despite high expectations for a "golden generation" captained by Son Heung-min.

Head coach Hong Myung-bo resigned immediately after a shock 1-0 defeat to South Africa sealed his team's early exit from the showpiece in the United States, Mexico and Canada.

But his departure did little to quell public outrage over the disappointing campaign and added fuel to pre-existing questions about how Hong was hired.

It emerged in local media last

week that the KFA had provided foreign referees with sexual entertainment in 2011 and 2012, citing a 2016 government audit that had not previously been made public.

"We sincerely apologise for the deep disappointment and concern caused by the various controversies surrounding the association in the wake of the 2026 World Cup," the KFA said in a statement posted on its website Saturday.

Facing mounting criticism, the KFA said it found itself "in a truly deplorable situation", acknowledging that it had "lost sight of our fundamental role".

The apology followed a police raid on KFA headquarters as part of an investigation into the appointment of the former defender Hong, 57, who played at the 2002 World Cup on home soil.

Questions had already dogged the KFA over Hong's appointment in 2024, but scrutiny intensified after the team failed to reach the last 32.

South Korean MPs summoned Hong and former and current KFA officials to a parliamentary hearing on July 30, questioning them about the hiring process and Hong's annual salary.

Then came the allegations of foreign referees being provided with sexual entertainment in 2011-12.

The 2016 government audit, reported by local broadcaster JTBC, found that the KFA had provided "inappropriate hospitality" on eight occasions to foreign referees and officials from the Chinese Football Association.

Social media users have since circulated a list of foreign referees who officiated South Korea's matches during that time.

The KFA's apology said many within the association had been "unaware" of the incidents, but did not deny they happened.

"The association wishes to make clear that such improper conduct... is no longer taking place," it said.

- AFP

Raul Fernandez wins British MotoGP Grand Prix



Winner Trackhouse MotoGP's Spanish rider Raul Fernandez (centre) celebrates his victory with his team members and Trackhouse Racing team owner Justin Marks (far right) at the end of the MotoGP British Grand Prix at Silverstone circuit, central England yesterday. — AFP

MotoGP

SILVERSTONE — Aprilia-Trackhouse's Spanish rider Raul Fernandez won the British MotoGP Grand Prix yesterday, claiming just the second race victory of his career.

Championship leader Jorge Martin started on pole but was outpaced from the flag by his 25-year-old compatriot. Martin finished second with Italian Marco Bezzecchi rounding off the podium.

"I'm happy and this win is special because we got three consecutive podiums and this one was a victory," Fernandez said.

"Now we want more."

After crashing out of contention in the sprint on Saturday, Fernandez said he was "an idiot".

But yesterday, he led all 20 laps of the Silverstone circuit from start to finish after Martin got off to a poor start, possibly due to a mechanical problem following a shower of sparks from the rear.

Fernandez is the 12th different winner at Silverstone in 12 Grand Prix races on the legendary course, which also hosts Formula One Grands Prix.

It was nonetheless a fine weekend for 2024 world champion and Silverstone sprint winner Martin as he grew his lead in the overall standings to 31 points.

"This result gave us a big, big boost for our motivation," Martin said.

"Today I wanted that victory so badly. I was really focussed, but I did a small mistake in the first corner and I lost a lot of places."

Japan's Ai Ogura, who had started second on the grid and was sitting second overall, slid off midway through the race and now trails Martin by 37 points.

Instead Martin's Aprilia teammate Bezzecchi is now his principal challenger for the title following a heroic weekend after he had spent the summer break recovering from a collarbone fracture suffered in qualifying at the Germany MotoGP last month.

Spain's Alex Marquez of Ducati-Gresini finished fourth, ahead of KTM's Spaniard Pedro Acosta and Italy's Fabio Di Giannantonio of Ducati satellite team VR46.

Reigning world champion Marc Marquez of Spain, on his factory Ducati, finished only seventh. — AFP

Top-ranked Sabalenka, Pegula stunned in Toronto 4th round

Tennis

TORONTO — World number one Aryna Sabalenka and Jessica Pegula were both upset in fourth-round matches on Saturday at the Toronto Masters.

Four-time Grand Slam winner Sabalenka suffered a blow to her preparations for a tilt at a third consecutive US Open title, beaten 7-6 (7/3), 4-6, 6-4 by Russian 16th seed Ekaterina Alexandrova.

"I wasn't trying to think about the score or anything like beating number one," said Alexandrova after ousting the Belarusian in 2hr 29min.

"I was just trying to do my best."

"I just tried to play every single point as if it was the last one because with her, you don't get a lot of chances during the match," Alexandrova said.

"I had a lot today, but I couldn't realise some of them. I'm super happy that I could win because after the second set, I thought (winning) was already past me."

Alexandrova moves on to a quarter-final against Ukraine's

Elina Svitolina, who dispatched American Amanda Anisimova 6-2, 6-4 in 78 minutes.

Russian 15th seed Shnaider upset world number three Pegula 6-3, 6-3 to book a last-eight date with Poland's Iga Swiatek.

The 22-year-old left-hander took only 73 minutes to defeat Pegula.

"This week I've been very comfortable on both defending and just firing some winners," Shnaider said.

"It was working well. I was choosing a bigger target today but sometimes ripping the ball."

Sabalenka dropped the first set on a tiebreak as her Russian opponent won five of the last six points.

"I was trying to play super aggressive, the way I didn't play for a long time. It worked," said Alexandrova.

"I had the feeling I have some kind of power and I can create something and it helped me mentally."

Sabalenka levelled the match but in the decider faced match points on her serve in the 10th game.

She saved the first on a service

winner and the second with an ace.

But, after sending a backhand beyond the baseline, the Belarusian made her sixth and final double fault to lose the match.

"I didn't have any expectations before the match," Alexandrova said. "I knew it was going to be super difficult when I walked on the court."

"I was trying to risk as much as possible because it felt like it was the only way to create some chances. It caused many more mistakes but at the same time I created many more opportunities."

Former world number one Swiatek, the seventh seed, rallied to defeat Ukraine's 10th-seeded Marta Kostyuk 3-6, 6-1, 6-2.

Swiatek, a four-time French Open champion, saved nine break points in the last two sets without dropping serve.

"In the second I came out... playing a bit faster and more heavy and pushing Marta a little bit more," Swiatek said.

"Game by game I felt like it was a good plan and a good choice and I went for it." — AFP

Lion queen Werro focused on Euro medal, not 800m world record

Athletics

Luke Phillips

BIRMINGHAM, United Kingdom — In-form Swiss athlete Audrey Werro said she was focused on winning a medal in a loaded 800m field at the European championships and not on Jarmila Kratochvilova's 43-year-old world record.

Werro has run the world's fastest time this year, becoming the first woman to dip under 1:54 since 1983, when Kratochvilova, of the then-Czechoslovakia, timed 1min 53.28sec.

The Swiss clocked 1:53.98 to win at the Stockholm Diamond League, ahead of Olympic 800m champion Keely Hodgkinson.

Werro then bettered that in Paris to 1:53.80, edging ever closer to Kratochvilova's long-standing and often-contested mark.

When asked if the record could be broken, Werro replied: "I don't know."

"Now it's the European championships, and I don't think it's the best place to do a world record because the goal is to win a medal."

"So I don't know if the race will be fast or it will be a tactical race."

"I don't have the world record now in my head. My goal for the European championships is to do a podium. So this is just my goal for now."

Britain's Hodgkinson, the darling of British media after storming to Olympic gold in Paris two years ago, leads a stacked field in the two-lap race.

Also competing will be Dutchwoman Femke Broeders-Bol, the two-time 400m hurdles world champion busy transforming herself into an 800m specialist.

If the race is a tactical one, it would take a brave pundit to rule out Broeders-Bol, known for her devastating turn of pace with the finish line in sight.

Great density

"Right now we really have a great density on the 800m," Werro said yesterday on the eve of the August 10-16 champs in the

English city of Birmingham.

"For me it's really cool because it's better when we are a lot of athletes."

"It pushes us to be great every day. I really like that because, like that, I think it's easier to achieve a really fast time because we can push each other until the end of the race."

Werro also revealed what was behind her roaring celebrations in victory.

"When I was younger, like maybe 12 years old, my father used to tell me before the race, I have to be a lion, and I should not be shy because I was really shy as a child," she said.

"So it was from there... the sign of a lion."

The 800m will undoubtedly be one of the most hotly-contested events in Birmingham.

Hodgkinson improved her own British record to 1:54.33 behind Werro in Stockholm in June. She then went on to win the London Diamond League.

Hodgkinson had broken the 24-year-old world indoor record in Lievin in February before claiming a first world indoor title in March.

Two weeks later, Hodgkinson pulled out of the 400m final at the British championships, complaining of "a little twinge" moments before the race.

After Werro improved her best time to 1:53.80 in Paris, Hodgkinson went to Eugene, but came in second to world champion Lilian Odira having sustained injuries to both knees in a heavy training fall.

But the English runner also played down expectations of a tilt at the world record, saying it would be a blank slate in Birmingham, with the final scheduled for Friday at 2046 GMT.

"It'll probably be three rounds in three days, which is completely different," Hodgkinson said.

"There's be no pacing, times don't matter, it's all about championship racing and handling pressure." — AFP



Rafael Jodar of Spain runs across the court against Jiri Lehecka of Czechia during their singles Round of 16 match at the ATP 1000 National Bank Open presented by Rogers at Stade IGA on Saturday in Montreal, Quebec, Canada. Jodar defeated Lehecka 6-3, 6-3 to reach the quarter-finals where he will play for a semi-final berth against French 18th seed Arthur Fils, who defeated Britain's Cameron Norrie 6-2, 7-6 (10/8). — AFP

UK clears Paramount's takeover of Warner Bros.

LONDON – Britain has given the green light to Paramount Skydance's US\$110 billion takeover of Warner Bros. Discovery, as the entertainment and media mega-deal still faces a key hurdle in the United States.

The UK government and the antitrust watchdog both cleared the deal after initially raising concerns over media plurality and competition, respectively. They announced the decision on Thursday.

The Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) found that the takeover would not weaken competition in film distribution, children's TV and streaming services.

Britain's culture minister Lisa Nandy, meanwhile, opted not to intervene in the merger, saying she had secured "assurances and further legally-binding commitments" to ensure a diverse range of broadcasting and on-demand services in the country.

"These assurances included a range of commitments on future investment in the UK, maintaining the distinct editorial identities of key services and the editorial independence of news," she said in a statement.

Paramount's bid still faces hurdles across the Atlantic after a

federal judge in California ordered the companies to temporarily pause their merger last month.

Paramount agreed to delay the deal until June 2027.

The US judge's order came after 12 states led by California sued to block the deal over competition concerns, despite the justice department approving the merger.

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

The combined company would control a vast array of assets, including CNN, Warner Bros. Pictures and the HBO Max streaming service.

"Paramount is grateful to the CMA for its constructive engagement and its review of the transaction," the company said in a statement on Thursday.

"These conclusions further demonstrate the misguided and gerrymandered market definitions relied upon by the US state AGs [attorney generals] in their antitrust complaint in California," it added.

The European Union gave the deal conditional approval last month.

– AFP

Austrian writer Stefan Zweig, who fled Nazis, honoured in London

Helen Rowe

LONDON – With its grand façade, the 1930s London mansion block looks like countless others. But one flat hides a tale of one of the darkest chapters in 20th century European history.

Famed Austrian writer Stefan Zweig lived in flat number 71, at 49, Hallam Street, for three years until 1939 after fleeing his homeland as Nazi leader Adolf Hitler began his rise to power.

Largely forgotten by modern readers, Zweig – the inspiration for Wes Anderson's 2014 film "The Grand Budapest Hotel" – was a major literary figure who during his lifetime was the world's most widely translated author.

In the event of an invasion of Britain, the writer would have been among the highest profile targets of the Nazi's so-called "black book".

SS units would have been directed to Hallam Street to detain and "neutralise" Zweig.

The address was included in the secret Sonderfahndungsliste G.B. ("Special Search List Great Britain") which contained the names of around 2,820 politicians, writers, scientists, refugees, journalists and others considered enemies of the Nazi regime.

Ninety years after Zweig settled in Hallam Street, UK admirers including the late playwright Tom Stoppard and novelist Julian Barnes, have finally won their bid to have the address officially commemorated.

A round blue plaque, recently mounted on the block's exterior, now alerts passers-by to the building's famous former resident.

Freud eulogy

"Stefan Zweig 1881-1942, Austrian Writer lived in flat 71, 1936-1939," reads the marker erected as part of the English Heritage's Blue Plaques programme.

The scheme, which has been running since 1866, aims to honour the link between notable figures and UK buildings where



A passerby looks at an English Heritage Blue Plaque for Austrian writer Stefan Zweig, displayed on the exterior of a flat on Hallam street, in central London, last Monday. – AFP

they lived and worked.

Blue Plaques historian Susan Skedd said Zweig's mental state appeared to fluctuate during his time in the capital, where he also lived at several other addresses.

"His letters say how much comfort he gets from London, but the fact that the Brits are generally unbothered by the war – that infuriates him," she said.

Gathering material for his autobiography "The World of Yesterday" also caused him to dwell on the lost world of his past life in Vienna, she said. He left the city in 1933.

"He feels that civilisation is lost ... which is profoundly sad," she added.

In September 1939, as war in Europe broke out, Zweig delivered the funeral eulogy for fellow exile, psychoanalyst Sigmund Freud, at London's Golders Green Cemetery.

Cultural loss

According to English Heritage, 30 other blue plaque recipients appeared on the Nazis' list, but Zweig's Hallam Street flat was one of only two locations to be explicitly given, the other being the home of English science fiction author H. G. Wells.

Zweig's works included "Letter from an Unknown Woman" (1922)

and "Twenty-Four Hours in the Life of a Woman" (1927), which were translated into dozens of languages.

His later novel "Beware of Pity" (1939) was written and published during the time he lived in Hallam Street.

Anderson said in a video message to mark the blue plaque that he had "never heard" of Zweig until he chanced upon a copy of "Beware of Pity", prompting him to immediately seek out another of his works, "The Post Office Girl", published posthumously in 1982.

"I sort of stole elements from both these books for 'The Grand Budapest Hotel'," he said, adding that Ralph Fiennes' character in the film was largely modelled on Zweig.

Although he did find refuge in London, there was to be no happy ending for Zweig whose later works drew on his own experiences of displacement and cultural loss.

He left for New York in 1940, and later set up home in Brazil. The worsening situation in Europe, however, left him profoundly depressed.

On February 23, 1942, the day after finishing his autobiography, Zweig, then aged 60, and his second wife Lotte, 33, each took a fatal dose of barbiturates. – AFP



Canine lovers and their PAW Patrol-inspired dogs attend the "PAW Patrol: The Dino Movie" Los Angeles Lookalike Contest at Dog PPL on Saturday in Santa Monica, California. Dog PPL ("PPL" stands for people) is a members-only canine social club based in Santa Monica, California. It combines a private, secure dog park with a café, bar, co-working space, and lounge designed for dog owners. "Paw Patrol: The Dino Movie" is a Canadian animated adventure comedy film slated to premiere on Friday.

– AFP

William Orbit, award winning producer to pop greats, dies aged 69

LONDON – Grammy Award-winning British musician and producer William Orbit, who worked with artists including Madonna, Britney Spears and U2, has died aged 69, his family and friends said on Friday.

The London-born musician, who won two of his three Grammys for production work on Madonna's 1998 album "Ray Of Light", died at home on July 23, according to their statement posted on his Instagram page.

"We are deeply saddened by his passing. He will be greatly missed by us and by so many whose lives he touched through his music,

friendship and kindness," it stated.

As well as helping Madonna move into electronica and trip-hop with the 1998 hit album, Orbit also worked with the US star on 2000's "Music" as well as co-writing and performing on her 1999 single "Beautiful Stranger".

The track – which appeared in the film "Austin Powers: The Spy Who Shagged Me" – earned him another Grammy for best song written for visual media.

Orbit was also nominated for Grammys for his work on Pink's song "Feel Good Time", his own 2000 album "Pieces In A Modern Style" and for record of the year

for "Ray Of Light".

He also produced for Britpop band Blur, girl group All Saints and Spice Girls member Mel C.

She paid tribute to Orbit on Instagram, posting that it was "such an honour to have worked with this great man".

Orbit also worked with Britney Spears and Will.i.am on the 2013 album "Britney Jean" and produced two songs that featured on U2's compilation "The Best Of 1990–2000".

He had a solo career which produced 12 studio albums, largely electronic music, and was also a member of the groups Bassomatic and Torch Song. – AFP

World Weather

CHINA	ASIA-PACIFIC	WORLD	LUSOPHONE
Beijing 23°C~34°C	Manila 25°C~29°C	New York 23°C~34°C	Lisbon 18°C~29°C
Shanghai 27°C~29°C	Bangkok 26°C~33°C	London 15°C~27°C	Rio de Janeiro 19°C~23°C
Hong Kong 25°C~33°C	Tokyo 21°C~32°C	Frankfurt 16°C~34°C	Luanda 18°C~22°C
Taipei 25°C~33°C	Singapore 25°C~33°C	Vancouver 13°C~22°C	Maputo 15°C~25°C
Guangzhou 25°C~35°C	Kuala Lumpur 24°C~34°C	Paris 17°C~32°C	Dili 20°C~30°C
Nanjing 25°C~27°C	Jakarta 23°C~33°C	Moscow 14°C~25°C	São Tomé 23°C~30°C
Guilin 22°C~35°C	Seoul 22°C~35°C	Las Vegas 29°C~43°C	Praia 24°C~31°C
Xi'an 20°C~31°C	Sydney 11°C~17°C	Monte Carlo 24°C~32°C	Bissau 23°C~30°C



Rebirth of Smaug

Participants fly their kites during the International Kite Festival in Colombo, Sri Lanka on Saturday. — AFP

Not loo brushes

A commuter walks past candy floss sellers at a railway station in Mumbai on Friday. — AFP



Built to last

A 1927 Bentley 4.5 litre is driven during the Grand Prix Centenary event at Brooklands Museum and race circuit, in Weybridge, south-west of London on Saturday. 2026 marks the 100th anniversary of Britain's first Grand Prix, held at the Brooklands race circuit. — AFP

Standing room only!

Participants attend the Yauzafest SUP stand-up paddle boarding festival on the Yauza river in Moscow yesterday. — AFP



Sculpture shade

A woman poses for photos at the "Gangnam Style" sculpture by South Korean artist Hwang Man-seok, in the style of the horse-riding dance move from the music video of the K-pop song Gangnam Style by South Korean singer Psy, at the COEX Mall in Seoul on Friday. — AFP

New home to roam

Three of the four young brown bears (Anita, Alexandra, Chance and Thomas) from the Libearty Bear Sanctuary in Romania walk after being released into an enclosure at the Sainte-Croix animal park in Rhodes, north-eastern France, on Friday. — AFP

