

Macau-based Key One vows to drive GBA auto integration via cross-border finance

Armando Neves

Guangzhou Automobile Group Co., Ltd. (GAC Capital) hosted a forum and local launch ceremony for its subsidiary, Key One Investment Fund Management Limited, at the Crowne Plaza Macau hotel yesterday.

The event was co-hosted by the Securities and Funds Industry Association of Macao.

Key One Investment Fund Management Limited (祺澳投资基金管理股份有限公司) is a fund management company based in Macau, formally authorised by Executive Order signed by Chief Executive Sam Hou Fai and gazetted last month, according to a recent announcement by the Legal Affairs Bureau (DSAJ).

The announcement said that the company is incorporated specifically for the exclusive management of private investment funds.

Qiu Jiazhi, manager of GAC Capital*, said in a speech that the successful establishment of Key One in Macau represents a strategic deployment by GAC Capital to build a dual-circulation “mainland + Macau” capital framework with a global outlook.

Qiu also noted that the fund will focus on three key missions: first, creating a connectivity channel between Greater Bay Area (GBA) industries and global capital to direct international investment towards hard technology sectors; second, deepening equity investment in hard technology fields such as new energy vehicles and artificial intelligence



GAC Capital Co., Ltd. Manager Qiu Jiazhi (centre), Securities and Funds Industry Association of Macao Acting Chairman Deng Hong (third from left), Commerce and Investment Promotion Institute (IPIM) Acting President Jacinto Luiz (third from right) and other representative cut the ribbon during yesterday's launch ceremony at the Crowne Plaza Macau hotel in the northern district.

— Photo: Armando Neves

(AI), thereby promoting industrial synergy between Guangdong and Macau; and third, upholding compliance standards to safeguard the healthy development of Macau's asset management industry.

Deng Hong, acting chairman of the Securities and Funds Industry Association of Macao, said in a speech that the

establishment of Key One marks a landmark breakthrough in the integration of the Guangdong-Macau automotive industry via cross-border finance.

Deng added that Macau is becoming a key hub for GBA enterprises seeking to connect with markets in Portuguese-speaking countries, expressing hope that the fund will

drive the international expansion of new energy and smart manufacturing industries while enriching the local private equity ecosystem. Deng said his company will continue to build communication bridges to support the implementation of Macau's economic diversification strategy.

Continued on p. 5

Colombia quake rescue efforts enter 'final phase'

BOGOTÁ—Colombia yesterday declared three days of mourning for victims of an earthquake that killed at least 239 people, as rescuers entered what officials called the final phase of the search for survivors.

Monday's magnitude 7.4 quake, the strongest to hit Colombia this century, devastated towns across the coffee-growing west, leaving at least 3,700 families homeless, according to the national disaster management agency.

The government said flags would be lowered to half-staff on official buildings and at Colombian embassies abroad “in honour of all the dead.”

In the cities of Pereira and Cali, emergency crews laboured through

the night with cranes, dogs and heavy machinery in the hunt for survivors, while volunteers formed human chains to clear debris by hand.

Rescuers pulled 32-year-old Daniela Largo alive from the rubble of a Pereira hotel after 35 hours trapped, offering a rare sign of hope as the window for finding survivors narrowed.

“We're entering the final phase of the first 72 hours,” Cali Mayor Alejandro Eder said yesterday, referring to the period when survivors are most likely to be found alive beneath rubble.

“That doesn't mean there won't be survivors afterwards, but it is more difficult,” he said.

— AFP

Sam expresses deep condolences over passing of former premier Zhu Rongji

Statement by the Macao Government Information Bureau (GCS)*

Former premier of the State Council Zhu Rongji passed away in Beijing yesterday.

Chief Executive Sam Hou Fai, on behalf of the Macao Special Administrative Region (MSAR), expressed deep condolences over Zhu's passing and extended sincere sympathies to his family.

Sam stated that Zhu was an outstanding leader of the nation who made significant contributions to the country's reform, opening-up, and modernisation. On December 20, 1999, Zhu, then premier of the State Council, attended the return ceremony held by the Chinese and Portuguese

governments in Macao. Subsequently, at the establishment ceremony of the MSAR, he administered the oath of office for the first chief executive and principal officials of the MSAR – a moment that remains an everlasting shared memory for the people of Macao. Zhu always cared deeply about the cause of “One Country, Two Systems” and the development of the MSAR. As he has passed away, we will forever remember his care and support for the MSAR, as well as his contributions to the country and its people.

*Unabridged translation from Chinese, arranged and edited by the Post

Macau's most popular English-language newspaper – Your trustworthy source of news & views

The Macau Post Daily

'Ne Zha 2' wins top prize at China's audience-voted film awards amid animation boom

“Ne Zha 2,” the Chinese animated feature that shattered global box office records, was the biggest winner at the 38th Hundred Flowers Awards, becoming the first animated film in the ceremony's history to claim the Best Picture Award. — Story on p. 6

New space object 'black hole star' discovered by astronomers

Astronomers announced yesterday that they had discovered a new type of astronomical object called a “black hole star”, potentially solving a mystery involving strange red dots spotted in the early universe. — Story on p. 11

Renowned Chinese opera singer Guo Lanying dies at 97

Guo Lanying, one of China's most celebrated opera singers hailed as a “People's Artist,” died at the age of 97 on Tuesday, the China National Opera and Dance Drama Theater said in an obituary yesterday. — Story on p. 15

Macau's Associations: A Reform Worth Discussing Carefully

Commentary by Manuel Silvério

*Independent Analyst on Public Policy and Regional Development
(Former public-sector official with international experience and a long-standing involvement in public policy and sports development)*

In recent days, several association leaders have asked me what I think about the proposed reform of Macau's Legal Regime for Associations, now under public consultation by the Macao Special Administrative Region (MSAR) Government.

Their questions were not simply a matter of curiosity. I sensed genuine concern, particularly among people who have devoted years of their time to associations, often on a voluntary basis, and who now want to understand what may change and what new responsibilities they may be expected to assume.

I understand those concerns, perhaps also because I witnessed a very different period in the development of Macau's associative movement.

Following the political and administrative changes set in motion by Portugal's Carnation Revolution in 1974, sport in Macau gradually acquired greater organisational autonomy. I lived through a period when it became necessary to establish territorial sports associations representing the different disciplines, both to organise local sporting activity and to enable Macau to participate in its own right in regional, Asian, and international organisations and competitions.

Those associations were not created simply to increase their number or add names to a register. They were created because they were needed.

Macao subsequently changed, and its associative movement changed with it.

Activities multiplied, participation and competitions increased, and exchanges with associations and clubs in neighbouring cities became more frequent. Numerous sporting, recreational, cultural, social, and other associations and clubs emerged.

Many were a natural product of that growing vitality and continue to serve the community today. Others gradually became less active, while some may have ceased operating altogether.

But behind these associations, there have always been people.

Many have served voluntarily as association leaders, organising

activities after work, supporting young people, promoting culture and sport, and keeping small organisations alive simply because they believed their work was worthwhile.

That human dimension should not be forgotten when we discuss legal reform.

At the same time, public support for associations increased over the years, while associations also came to play a role in different mechanisms of social and political representation. Macau's associative landscape consequently became both broader and more complex.

It would be unfair to generalise or question the valuable contribution made by thousands of association leaders. But it would be equally unrealistic to regard every association as having the same origins, size, level of activity, or social purpose.

It is against this background that the figures deserve attention.

Macao had fewer than 2,000 associations before the establishment of the MSAR. Today, there are more than 12,000. According to the consultation document, only around 60 per cent maintain some level of activity, while approximately 40 per cent have long been inactive or never truly began operating.

The document itself uses a particularly telling expression to describe some of them: "dormant associations".

There are, therefore, objective reasons for reviewing the system.

A necessary reform

I believe the Government's decision to undertake this reform is both timely and necessary.

Precisely because I recognise that need, I also believe the public consultation should be used not only to discuss the problems the new legislation seeks to address, but also to consider how the proposed solutions will work in practice.

My position is straightforward: I am not against reform; I am in favour of good reform.

The consultation document states that the reform seeks to better safeguard freedom of association and the legitimate rights and interests of associations, while promoting their orderly and sustainable development.

It also seems reasonable to simplify procedures currently spread across different public entities and to centralise responsibilities for the establishment, registration, and

supervision of associations under the Identification Services Bureau (DSI).

Less bureaucracy, clearer procedures, and more up-to-date information can benefit both the Public Administration and associations themselves.

A careful reading of the document, however, shows that this goes beyond administrative reorganisation.

The DSI would have broader powers concerning the operation of associations. It could request information, require irregularities to be remedied, and, in circumstances provided for under the new regime, decide on the dissolution of an association.

The important point is to distinguish between different situations.

For certain irregularities – such as failure to elect or appoint new office-holders or failure to hold a general meeting to approve the annual accounts – the proposal provides for a remedial procedure. An association would first be notified and given an opportunity to put matters in order before any eventual dissolution.

Being required to remedy an irregularity does not necessarily mean dissolution.

A good law should be able to distinguish between a mistake that can be corrected and an association that has effectively ceased to function.

12,000 associations, different realities

An association that regularly organises activities for hundreds of people, a small recreational club, a neighbourhood organisation, a professional body, a cultural association, and one that ceased operating 20 years ago may all share the same legal status.

But they do not represent the same reality.

Legislation intended to regulate more than 12,000 associations should, as far as possible, be capable of recognising those differences.

It is understandable to address the situation of associations that survive only on paper. Requiring governing bodies to be kept up to date, statutes to be observed, and greater transparency is equally reasonable.

But modernisation cannot simply mean more supervision.

Genuine modernisation should also be measured by the simplicity of procedures, clarity of rules, proportionality of obligations, and the certainty provided to those trying to comply with them.

I can also see another possible benefit in obtaining a clearer picture of Macau's associative landscape, although this is not necessarily an objective of the proposal now under consultation.

Knowing more accurately which associations are genuinely active could, in future, help make the allocation of government subsidies and other forms of public support fairer and more objective.

Public resources are not unlimited. Actual activity, continuity of operation, the relevance of projects,

the number of people genuinely benefiting from them, and the proper use of previous public support could reasonably help guide decisions on the allocation of public funds.

This should not mean favouring large associations while overlooking smaller ones. A small organisation may perform extraordinarily valuable work for a neighbourhood, a group of young people, a particular sport, or the preservation of a cultural tradition.

The point is simply to understand the reality better in order to make better decisions.

A better-organised associative landscape could therefore serve not only to improve supervision, but also to improve support.

National security

There is another dimension of the reform that should not be overlooked.

Macao is a Special Administrative Region of the People's Republic of China (PRC), and its reality must be understood within the country's constitutional framework and against an international environment that is now considerably different from the one in which the current legal framework for associations was conceived.

National security has become an increasingly prominent concern in a world marked by greater geopolitical competition and new forms of interference. It is therefore understandable that this dimension should also be reflected in the reform of Macau's Legal Regime for Associations.

The proposal provides for the involvement of the Committee for Safeguarding National Security in certain situations relating to the establishment or dissolution of associations.

Safeguarding national security is a fundamental responsibility of the MSAR, and I do not question the need for appropriate mechanisms where national security is genuinely at stake.

Nor do I regard freedom of association and national security as necessarily conflicting principles.

What matters is that the rules should be clear and proportionate, so that association leaders understand their responsibilities while organisations operating legitimately can continue their normal activities.

One political association yet to be identified

The consultation document contains another point that may perhaps be clarified during the public consultation.

The Government refers to the existence of one political association established before Law No. 2/99/M came into force and proposes transitional arrangements allowing it to continue to exist.

The document does not identify the association.

I do not regard this as a central issue in the reform. But since the association's existence is the reason for a specific arrangement under the

proposed regime, it seems natural to ask which association it is.

That, too, is part of the purpose of a public consultation: to clarify doubts, listen to concerns, and help the community better understand legislation that will affect thousands of organisations and many more people.

Reforming in order to strengthen

Macao has changed profoundly, and its associative movement has changed with it. Growth from fewer than 2,000 associations to more than 12,000 naturally justifies a review of the legal framework.

But numbers never tell the whole story.

Behind those figures are organisations with decades of history and deep roots in the community; small clubs that continue to organise activities; groups working with children and young people; cultural and professional associations; institutions serving residents; and others that have long ceased to operate.

Above all, behind the numbers are people.

A good reform should be capable of recognising these different realities: regulating more effectively those associations that genuinely function; giving those with remediable problems a reasonable opportunity to put matters in order; addressing the situation of associations that remain on the register but have effectively ceased operating; and avoiding unnecessary burdens on those seeking to fulfil their obligations.

If a more accurate picture of associations' actual activities can also contribute, in future, to a fairer and more effective use of public resources, that would be an additional benefit for the whole community.

Associations have played an important role in building Macau's civil society – in sport, culture, education, youth affairs, social welfare, and many other fields.

Reform should not erase that history. It should help that tradition continue under rules that are clearer, more responsible, and better suited to Macau today.

That is why I believe reform is necessary.

And precisely because it is necessary, it deserves to be discussed carefully.

There is, however, another dimension that deserves a separate reflection.

Many Macau associations have long maintained links with organisations in the Chinese mainland, Hong Kong, and overseas, some through membership of regional and international bodies. The new obligations proposed in this area raise a different set of practical questions: transparency, compliance, external funding, national security, and coordination among public services.

That will be the subject of my next article.

End Item

Macao SAR, August 12, 2026

Published since Aug 2004

- Director & Chief Editor – Harald Brüning
- Office Manager – Sally Chong
- Marketing Manager – Kevin Cheung King Lok
- Managing Editor – Maria Cheang Ut Meng
- Editors – Lesley Wells, Johnny Un
- Senior Reporters – Tony Wong, Rui Pastorin
- Reporters – Khalel Vallo, William Chan, Ida Cheong, Armino Neves
- Chief Graphic Designer – Simon Wang
- Graphic Designer – Colin Zhong
- Administrative Assistants – Ester Mak, Carl Leong
- Printed by Tipografia Welfare Lda., 82-86 Rua dos Pescadores
- Ai tools: DeepSeek, Gemini
- Wire services – AFP, Xinhua

MACAU POST

Macau Weather

**VERY HOT.
CLOUDY APART FROM SUNNY
PERIODS.**

**A FEW SHOWERS LATER.
POSSIBLE THUNDERSTORMS.
FORCE 3 TO 4 SOUTHWESTERLY
WINDS.**

**RELATIVE HUMIDITY
WILL RANGE BETWEEN
65% AND 95%.**



27°C~33°C

Source: SMG

Judiciary Police warn against ‘Credit Card Annual Fee Waiver’ scam

Armindo Neves

The Judiciary Police (PJ) warned yesterday that scammers have been sending phishing text messages to the public under the guise of Macau banks, with the aim of stealing personal and credit card information.

According to a PJ statement, scammers posing as a Macau bank have been sending SMS messages falsely claiming that recipients are eligible for a “full refund of the 1,050 pataca annual fee paid in 2025”. This is an attempt to lure victims into clicking a link provided in the message to apply for the refund. Scammers then steal the personal and credit card details entered on the fraudulent website to carry out unauthorised,

large-sum transactions.

The Judiciary Police remind the public that banks in Macau will never send text messages containing links. Regardless of who the sender appears to be, do not click on any links attached to text messages without first verifying their authenticity. In any situation where a credit card is used for online transactions, always carefully check the merchant details and the transaction amount to prevent scammers from taking advantage.

If residents have any doubts, they should use the PJ’s Anti-Fraud Programme to check the fraud risk level, or call the Judiciary Police anti-fraud hotline on 8800 7777 or the emergency hotline on 993 for assistance. ■



This poster provided by the Judiciary Police (PJ) on Saturday warns members of the public against the “Credit Card Annual Fee Waiver” scam. Translation from Chinese arranged by the Post.

Olive oil likely contains mineral oils: IAM

Ida Cheong

The Municipal Affairs Bureau (IAM) announced in a statement that it was notified by Hong Kong’s Centre for Food Safety – which had been alerted by Belgium’s Federal Agency for the Safety of the Food Chain – that two bottled olive oil products may contain mineral oils, specifically mineral oil aromatic hydrocarbons (MOAH).

The affected products, under the brand “Olitalia,” comprise Olitalia Pomace Olive Oil in 1-litre and 5-litre capacities across all batches, and were packaged in Italy, the statement said.

The bureau has issued an immediate food alert to the local food sector and dispatched inspectors to conduct market checks, the statement added.

Mineral oils can migrate into food through environmental contaminants, packaging printing inks, processing aids, or machinery lubricants. Long-term or high-volume intake of these substances may pose health risks, according to the statement.

The bureau urged consumers to immediately stop consuming the affected products, regardless of whether they were acquired online, via proxy purchasing agents, or through other channels. Businesses in possession of the items should immediately halt their supply and sale, and contact IAM’s Department of Food Safety on 2833 8181. The bureau added that it will continue following up on the incident to prevent the products from circulating in the local market. ■



This undated handout photo download from Olitalia’s official website yesterday shows its problematic product ‘Olitalia Pomace Olive Oil’ (1L capacity, all batches).

Studio City unveils immersive flying attraction ‘Studio City Stardust’

Khalel Vallo

Melco Resorts & Entertainment’s Studio City Macau integrated resort in Cotai launched “Studio City Stardust” yesterday, a new 4D immersive attraction that combines dynamic motion seating, visual effects, sound, and multi-sensory technology to create a simulated flying experience.

Yesterday’s technical rehearsal was officiated by Lawrence Ho Yau-lung, chairman and chief executive officer of Melco Resorts & Entertainment; James Chui (崔贊捷), co-chairman and chief executive officer of Dynamic Entertainment; and Kevin Benning, senior vice president and general manager of Studio City Macau.

Developed with Canadian entertainment experience creator Dynamic Entertainment, Studio City Stardust integrates advanced hardware, visual content, and special effects into a retro-futuristic setting inspired by the glamour of mid-20th-century travel, according to a statement by the integrated resort operator yesterday.

The attraction features a dynamic motion seating system with multi-axis movement, the statement said, adding that seats can move forward and backward, raise or lower by up to one metre, and tilt forward or backward by up to 10 degrees to simulate the sensation of flight. The statement also noted that a 23-speaker stereo sound system accompanies the experience, while wind, fog, and scent effects are synchronised with the visuals.

Each session accommodates up to 72 guests, with the full experience lasting about 15 minutes, including check-in, safety briefing, boarding, and screening. Two experiences will be available at launch: “Alpha Flight” takes guests on a high-energy journey through alien canyons, while “Mysterious Island” transports them to an ancient world inhabited by dinosaurs.



This handout photo provided by Studio City Macau yesterday shows Melco Resorts & Entertainment Chairman and Chief Executive Officer Lawrence Ho Yau-lung addressing the “Studio City Stardust” technical rehearsal at the integrated resort in Cotai.



Guests preview the “Mysterious Island” immersive 4D flying experience at Studio City Stardust in Cotai. – Photo: Khalel Vallo

Addressing the ceremony, Ho said that “Studio City Macau has always been committed to delivering on its brand promise of ‘Fun Never Ends’ through distinctive entertainment and leisure experiences. The opening of Studio City Stardust marks another important milestone in the development of Studio City Macau,” adding that the entertainment attraction not only introduces a “highly anticipated experience” to the integrated resort, but also “further enriches our entertainment portfolio. It strengthens Macau’s appeal to international visitors, supports the

city’s economic diversification, and aligns with the Macau Government’s vision of building Macau into a ‘World Centre of Tourism and Leisure’.”

Studio City Stardust is located on Level 2 of the West Wing of Studio City Macau and operates daily from noon to 8:00 p.m. Standard admission is 150 patacas, while Melco Beyond members receive a 10 percent discount and Studio City Macau hotel guests receive a 20 percent discount. The attraction is open to visitors between 100 cm and 195 cm in height. ■

Flyover to Guia Hill Tunnel to close for 4 days for expansion joint repairs

Tony Wong

The one-way flyover leading to Guia Hill Tunnel from Avenida de Horta e Costa will close to traffic from 10:00 a.m. this Saturday until 4:00 p.m. next Tuesday to allow for the repair of worn expansion joints* on the road surface, according to a joint statement by the Public Works Bureau (DSOP) and the Transport Bureau (DSAT) on Tuesday.

DSOP officials concluded during a recent routine inspection that the flyover’s expansion joints required repair, the statement said. New materials will be used to enhance the joints’ durability and ensure traffic safety.

The repair work will not affect the flyover leading from Guia Hill Tunnel to Avenida de Horta e Costa, which will remain open to traffic throughout the period, the statement said.

The statement noted that



This undated handout photo released yesterday shows the flyover leading to Guia Hill Tunnel from Avenida de Horta e Costa. – Photo DSOP/DSAT

motorists can enter Guia Hill Tunnel via Avenida de Sidónio Pais during the closure. ■

*Expansion joints are structural gaps and flexible assemblies designed to safely absorb thermal expansion, ground settling, seismic

movements, and vibrations in civil structures and piping systems. Without them, natural material movement creates severe internal stress, leading to concrete cracking, structural buckling, or pipe rupture. – Gemini

Photos: Rui Pastorin



Tropical Cyclone 'Dolphin' intensifies heat as trough brings more showers

Khalel Vallo

Macau has experienced several days of intense heat under the influence of Tropical Cyclone "Dolphin," with maximum temperatures averaging 37°C at urban stations and reaching 38.3°C at the Outer Harbour station, according to a statement released yesterday by the Meteorological and Geophysical Bureau (SMG).

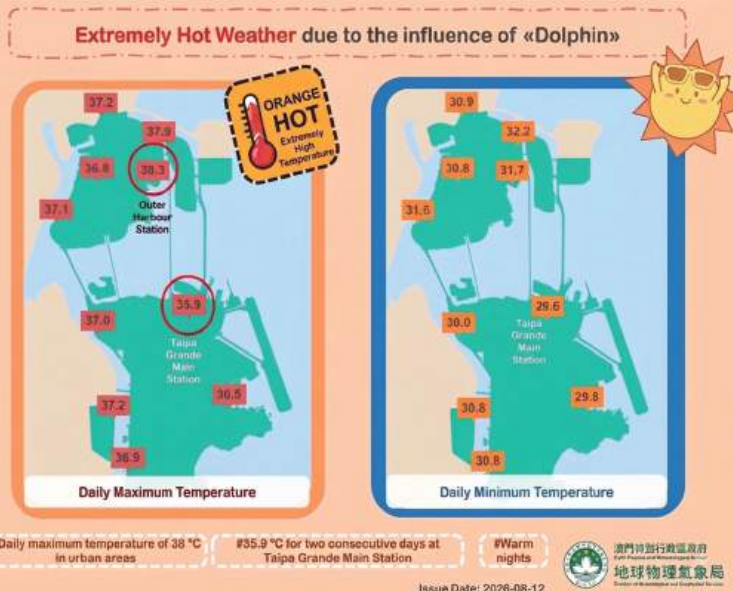
The bureau attributed the prolonged sunny and extremely hot weather to the continued subsidence associated with Dolphin's outer circulation, which prompted the issuance of the Orange Hot Weather Alert for several consecutive days.

The Orange alert signifies "extremely hot" weather and is typically issued by the local observatory when maximum temperatures are forecast to exceed 34°C or 35°C. The Yellow alert denotes "very hot" conditions and is activated when temperatures are

expected to reach or exceed 33°C in certain areas.

According to the SMG statement, the Taipa observatory recorded a maximum temperature of 35.9°C for two consecutive days – the highest reading at that station so far this year. Overnight, the minimum temperature only dropped to 29.6°C, marking the sixth most intense "hot night" recorded in Macau since records began in 1952.

A trough of low pressure is expected to affect the coast of southern China towards the end of the week, bringing increased showers and thunderstorms to Macau from today through Sunday, the observatory forecast. While this unsettled weather should help ease the oppressive heat, it urged the public to remain vigilant and monitor the latest weather advisories, as summer conditions can shift rapidly between intense heat and heavy rain. ■



This infographic provided by the local observatory yesterday shows the highest and lowest daily temperatures recorded during the period in which the Orange alert was in force in the past few days.

Children's puppet show to present 'Stone Wolves'

Ida Cheong

Organised by the Cultural Affairs Bureau (IC), the 3rd Macao International Children's Arts Festival (MICAFA) will feature "Stone Wolves", an original children's puppet show created and produced by Portuguese company Trupe Fandanga, from tomorrow through Tuesday at the Macao Cultural Centre (MCC) in Nape.

The show uses wood, metal, and various curious objects to construct an ever-changing islet setting, paired with deft, whimsical puppets to portray the different emotions and imaginations within the main character Pedro's heart as he gradually grows through his journey of self-discovery, according to an IC statement yesterday.

The performance runs for about 40 minutes and is available in Cantonese and Portuguese versions. Suitable for audiences aged six and above, it invites children and adults alike to step into the inner world of young Pedro, the statement added.

The organiser held a media briefing at the MCC yesterday, inviting Stone Wolves Artistic Director Sandra Neves to discuss the creative concept and distinctive features of the work.

During the meeting, Neves told reporters that while most contemporary children's theatre tends to directly instil fixed values and provide explicit narrative answers, Stone Wolves advocates for children to actively explore and question rather than be subjected to one-way lecturing.

Rather than dictating a child's life path or imposing adult values, adults are encouraged to step back



'Stone Wolves' puppetry Artistic Director Sandra Neves poses with her puppets during yesterday's media meeting at the Macao Cultural Centre (MCC) in Nape.

– Photo: Ida Cheong

and offer support, allowing young audiences to identify problems independently, think critically to find solutions, and unlock their infinite potential along their own unique growth paths, Neves said.

Neves added that the production features a highly open-ended narrative that encourages diverse interpretations. With no single standard answer, viewers form distinct understandings based on their own personal experiences.

'Peace and Future' show

Meanwhile, a large-scale children's variety show, "Peace and Future", will be performed on Sunday at the Macao Cultural Centre, featuring Peking opera, dance, folk music, choral singing, and martial arts, the statement added.

Moreover, "Where Culture Flourishes, Happiness Happens" community flash mobs for the "Peace and Future" show will take place at 5:00 p.m. today at the Ruins of St. Paul's, and at 6:30 p.m. tomorrow at Anim'Arte Nam Van. The statement noted that the "MICAFA Fun Day" arts carnival will be held from Friday through Sunday during the last two weekends of this month at the Macao Cultural Centre Plaza, featuring interactive performances, handicraft workshops, game booths, a "splash party", and a "foam party".

Tickets for the children's arts festival are now available through Enjoy Macao Ticketing (ticketing.enjoymacao.mo). Registration for workshops is available through the Macao One Account. Some activities charge an entrance fee. ■

Macau-based Key One vows to drive GBA auto integration via cross-border finance

Continued from p.1

Commerce and Investment Promotion Institute (IPIM) Acting President Jacinto Luiz expressed his hope that the fund would attract upstream and downstream enterprises in the automotive industry to Macau, thereby driving local technological development.

He noted that, with the implementation of the Investment Funds Law and the ongoing preparation of a 20-billion-pataca Government Guidance Fund, Macau is accelerating the introduction of industrial funds and leading enterprises. Efforts are being focused on attracting investment in priority industries under Macau's appropriate economic diversification strategy, while making use of the China-Portuguese-speaking countries platform to help enterprises expand into overseas markets, Luiz said.

Monetary Authority of Macao (AMCM) President Vong Sin Man and other senior government officials and business community leaders attended the event.

A forum was also held at the same venue, featuring a roundtable dialogue with representatives from regulatory bodies, investment institutions, and universities.

Key One operates under the direct supervision of AMCM

* GAC Capital Co., Ltd. is the corporate venture capital arm and wholly owned investment subsidiary of Guangzhou Automobile Group Co., Ltd. (GAC Group), a major state-owned automaker. GAC Group produces vehicles under its own proprietary brands, such as GAC Motor and GAC Aion, as well as through major joint ventures with global automakers, such as GAC Toyota and GAC Honda. - Gemini

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

'Ne Zha 2' wins top prize at China's audience-voted film awards amid animation boom

Xinhua writers Li Yue and Wang Xiaopeng

BEIJING – “Ne Zha 2,” the Chinese animated feature that shattered global box office records, was the biggest winner at the 38th Hundred Flowers Awards, becoming the first animated film in the ceremony’s history to claim the Best Picture Award.

The award was presented at the 38th edition of the ceremony in Beijing on Monday night. Audience representatives from various sectors cast their ballots at the event to select winners from a shortlist of 20 finalists.

The film, a bold reimagining of the centuries-old myth of Ne Zha, a rebellious child deity who defies fate, offers a fresh take on a classic Chinese legend.

Wang Changtian, chairman of Enlight Media, the film’s major producer, accepted the trophy at the ceremony and called the win “a collective honor for Chinese animation.”

“I hope Ne Zha will not stand alone, but that Chinese animated films will flourish like flowers in full bloom,” he said in his acceptance speech.

Founded in 1962, the Hundred Flowers Awards are among China’s major film awards and are distinctive for being determined by audience choice rather than by industry juries. To be eligible for the awards, a film must have attracted at least 1 million cumulative theatrical admissions. This year’s edition of the awards was held from Aug. 7 to 10.

While the winners are ultimately decided by audience representatives voting at the ceremony, the finalists are determined in advance by a panel of cinema managers, media representatives and industry experts.

The victory of “Ne Zha 2” reflects the country’s growing enthusiasm for homegrown animation in recent years, a trend that has been mirrored at the box office. In 2025, animated films generated more than 25 billion yuan in box office revenue – a record for China’s animation sector while also amounting to roughly half of total ticket sales for the entire year.

“Ne Zha 2” had grossed over US\$2.26 billion worldwide by April 8 this year, making it the most successful animated film in global box office history and the fourth highest-grossing film of all time across all genres.

“The strong performance of animated films in 2025 clearly signals the emergence of a ‘new’ form of animation,” said Gui Lin, a professor at the University of Chinese Academy of Social Sciences. Chinese animation, she noted, has moved beyond its traditional child-oriented positioning to embrace all-age storytelling and contemporary social concerns.

Recent animated films, Gui observed, often feature rebellious yet adorable characters who challenge convention while foregrounding family bonds, especially parent-child relationships, which is a new approach to family narratives that has driven their broad, cross-generational appeal.

Behind these innovative narratives lies the growing maturity of China’s animation industry ecosystem. “Ne Zha 2” features more than 1,900 visual effects shots and represents the collaborative



Theatrical release poster of 'Nezha 2' – Image courtesy of IMDB

effort of nearly 140 animation studios and over 4,000 animators, a scale of production rarely seen in China’s film industry.

This ecosystem is increasingly concentrated in purpose-built creative hubs. In a digital cultural and creative industrial park in Chengdu, southwest China’s Sichuan Province, more than 6,000 digital cultural and creative enterprises have gathered, with the sector exceeding 140 billion yuan in scale.

The park has helped nurture animation hits such as the “Ne Zha” series and “All Wishes Come True,” which has emerged as a box-office success this summer.

“All Wishes Come True,” based on the Chinese legend of the eight Taoist immortals, has grossed over 1.48 billion yuan in cinemas since it was released almost four weeks ago. The film takes a humanizing approach to its mythic subjects, portraying the immortals as ordinary, flawed individuals before they ascend to divinity.

Chinese moviegoers’ enthusiasm for animation goes well beyond homegrown titles. Disney’s “Zootopia 2” was a major success during its theatrical run in China, grossing more than 4 billion yuan and becoming the second-highest-grossing film of 2025, trailing only “Ne Zha 2.”

Meanwhile, Chinese cultural products, including films, are increasingly reaching overseas audiences in more accessible and engaging forms, said Zhang Yiwu, a professor of Chinese literature at Peking University, adding that this will help foster cross-cultural dialogue and bring new development opportunities to the global cultural industry.

– Xinhua

China urges relevant countries to stop abusing multilateral arms control mechanisms: FM spokesperson

BEIJING – A Foreign Ministry spokesperson yesterday said the so-called joint statement by the United States and relevant countries at the Conference on Disarmament was driven solely by political motives, adding that China urges relevant countries to stop abusing multilateral arms control mechanisms.

According to media reports, at the Conference on Disarmament on Tuesday, the United States and relevant countries made a joint statement, alleging that recent missile testing activity in the Pacific area did not follow the “standard practices” to provide advance notice, which increases the risk of miscalculation and undermines stability in the region, and that relevant countries should implement the Hague Code of Conduct Against Ballistic Missile Proliferation. It is believed that the

joint statement is directed at China’s test fire of a submarine-launched ballistic missile in July.

When asked for comments, spokesperson Guo Jiakun said the so-called joint statement by the United States and relevant countries at the Conference on Disarmament, which brandished the Hague Code of Conduct Against Ballistic Missile Proliferation and alluded to China’s missile test launch, was driven solely by political motives and fully reveals their hypocrisy and double standards.

China urges relevant countries to stop abusing multilateral arms control mechanisms, replace irrational confrontation with sincere dialogue and create conditions necessary for enhancing dialogue and exchanges in the area of arms control, Guo added.

– Xinhua

C919 jet makes first int’l commercial flight

BEIJING – China’s homegrown C919 jet completed its first international commercial flight yesterday, a symbolic step towards Beijing’s goal of challenging the decades-long aerospace dominance of Boeing and Airbus.

The narrow-body jet has been billed as a potential competitor to Boeing’s 737 or Airbus’s A320, though the aircraft has yet to receive approval from American or European regulators.

Beijing hopes the domestically produced plane will reduce China’s reliance on foreign technology and help it gain a foothold in the global market.

The C919 jet, produced by the state-owned Commercial Aircraft Corporation of China (COMAC) and operated by Air China, departed Beijing at 3:17 p.m. on Wednesday.

It landed in Mongolia’s capital Ulaanbaatar at 4:58 p.m., according to public flight data.

Checking in for the flight at Beijing Capital International Airport, passenger Hu Yuan told AFP he felt “a sense of pride” flying an international route on a domestically produced plane.

“I hope our domestic planes continue to improve in terms of comfort and overall passenger experience – even outperforming Boeing and Airbus,” said the 40-year-old.

The C919 is made in China but sources components from countries including the United States.

The Air China route will connect Beijing and Ulaanbaatar with one round-trip flight per day, Xinhua reported in July.

The C919 completed its first commercial flight in May 2023, flying from Shanghai to Beijing.

Since then it has been regularly used for domestic commercial routes, as well as those between the Chinese mainland and Hong Kong. The jet made its debut landing in Macau on November 7, 2024, when Air China flew a C919 to the city for display at the 13th Macao Business Aviation Exhibition.

COMAC also sent the C919 to be presented at the Singapore airshow in 2024 and 2026, and to the Dubai airshow in 2025.

COMAC has already made its foray into foreign markets with its smaller C909 jets, which seat 78 to 97 passengers.

– AFP, MPD

China, Indonesia wrap up naval navigation exercise in waters east of Taiwan

NANJING – The Chinese and Indonesian navies successfully completed a naval navigation exercise in waters east of China’s Taiwan region yesterday, according to Chinese military authorities.

The exercise involved the Chinese naval vessel Honghe and Indonesian Navy frigate KRI I Gusti Ngurah Rai, a military statement said.

During the exercise, the two warships formed a naval formation and conducted practical drills covering maritime communications, formation

maneuvers and underway replenishment.

Following a pre-arranged exercise plan, the two sides maneuvered flexibly, coordinated closely and successfully fulfilled all scheduled objectives, the statement said.

It added the exercise demonstrated the two navies’ willingness and capability to conduct practical cooperation and jointly contribute to regional peace and stability.

– Xinhua, MPD



China's domestically developed C919 large passenger aircraft lands at Chinggis Khaan International Airport, Mongolia, yesterday. The aircraft landed safely at Chinggis Khaan International Airport yesterday afternoon, marking the completion of its first international commercial flight. The flight from Beijing marked the opening of C919's first international route since the aircraft entered commercial operation.

– Xinhua

Former premier Zhu Rongji passes away at 98

BEIJING – Former Chinese premier Zhu Rongji died of illness at the age of 98 in Beijing at 11:06 a.m. yesterday.

Zhu had served as a member of the Standing Committee of the Political Bureau of the 14th and 15th Central Committees of the Communist Party of China (CPC).

An obituary, jointly issued by the CPC Central Committee, the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress, the State Council and the National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, extolled Zhu as an excellent Party member, a time-tested and loyal communist fighter, and an outstanding proletarian revolutionist, statesman and leader of the Party and the state.

Zhu was born in October 1928 in Changsha, central China's Hunan Province. He studied in the Department of Electrical Engineering at Tsinghua University from 1947 to 1951. He joined the CPC in October 1949.

From 1951 to 1983, Zhu worked at various places and held a series of posts related to economic affairs in regional and central government departments and institutions. He served as deputy director of the now-defunct State Economic Commission from 1983 to 1987.

Between 1987 and 1991, he served successively as deputy secretary of the CPC Shanghai Municipal Committee, mayor of Shanghai, and secretary of the CPC Shanghai Municipal Committee.

In Shanghai, he urged the municipality to readjust its industrial structure, cultivate new development strengths, enhance its international competitiveness, and pursue an export-oriented development path.

In 1991, Zhu was appointed vice premier of the State Council.

In October 1992, Zhu was elected a member of the Political Bureau of the CPC Central Committee and its standing committee, and took charge of the State Council's day-to-day work.

In June 1993, he concurrently served as

the governor of the People's Bank of China.

He actively championed the implementation of the principles outlined in Deng Xiaoping's remarks during Deng's 1992 southern China tour and worked hard to promote reform and opening up as well as China's modernization drive.

He organized campaigns to resolve the problem of debt chains known as the "triangular debts."

Also, he studied and developed approaches and measures to strengthen and improve macroeconomic regulation, making significant and effective contributions to curbing an overheated economy, reining in inflation and achieving an economic "soft landing."

He pushed forward efforts to rectify and restore order in the fiscal and taxation sectors, accelerated fiscal and tax reforms and helped improve China's financial regulation system.

In September 1997, Zhu was re-elected a member of the Political Bureau of the CPC Central Committee and its standing committee.

In March 1998, Zhu was appointed premier of the State Council. Facing the impact of the Asian financial crisis and the catastrophic flooding in China, he implemented the plans of the Party Central Committee to shift from a moderately tight fiscal and monetary policy to a proactive fiscal policy and a prudent monetary policy, expand domestic demand and deepen reforms in key areas, thereby sustaining steady and rapid economic growth.

He introduced a series of policies and measures to broaden opening up and encourage exports, while firmly preventing the devaluation of the renminbi. He also took measures to actively attract foreign investment and better utilize both domestic and international markets and resources, and firmly safeguarded the prosperity and stability of Hong Kong as an international financial center.

Zhu worked to establish the basic living security system for laid-off workers from state-owned enterprises, the unemployment insurance system, and the minimum living guarantee system for urban residents. He



Undated file photo of former Chinese premier Zhu Rongji – Xinhua

also made great efforts to address issues such as wage arrears and the re-employment of laid-off workers.

During Zhu's tenure as vice premier and premier of the State Council, China was in a critical period of transitioning from a planned economy to a socialist market economy.

Under the firm leadership of the CPC Central Committee with Jiang Zemin at the core, Zhu spearheaded reform of the fiscal and taxation systems, carrying out a major overhaul of the tax regime centered on fairer tax burdens and a simplified tax system. He introduced a tax sharing system based on a rational division of fiscal responsibilities between the central and local governments, and launched pilot reforms of taxes and fees in rural areas. He actively promoted the reform of the financial system, further regulated the functions of the central bank, deepened reforms of commercial banks, the foreign exchange system, and the securities and futures markets, and promoted the establishment of a nationally unified and open financial market system with orderly

competition and strict regulation.

Zhu took the reform of state-owned enterprises as the central link of economic structural reform. He stressed that every effort must be made to promote the re-employment of laid-off workers and strengthen the social security system.

He advanced housing reform, gradually replacing the allocation of housing to employees with monetary housing benefits. He helped establish and improve a multi-level urban housing supply system with economically affordable housing as the main component.

He also promoted the establishment of the basic framework for a socialist market economy, oversaw the completion of the arduous negotiations for China's accession to the World Trade Organization, and advanced the country's opening up in both scope and depth.

Zhu had deep affection for the people. He emphasized that government officials must always bear in mind that they are public servants and should have the courage to speak the truth, not fear giving offense, and refrain from seeking special privileges, the obituary said.

He stressed the need to take the initiative, with a strong sense of responsibility, to shoulder heavy burdens, take on tough problems and go all out to deliver real results for the people, it added.

In March 2003, Zhu no longer served as premier of the State Council.

After retiring from leadership posts, he steadfastly upheld and supported the CPC Central Committee with Hu Jintao as general secretary, and then the CPC Central Committee with Xi Jinping at its core. He continued to care about the great cause of socialism with Chinese characteristics and firmly supported efforts to improve conduct, promote integrity and fight corruption.

Zhu's life was a revolutionary, fighting and glorious one. His death is a great loss to the Party and the state, the obituary said.

Eternal glory to Zhu, it added. – Xinhua

China's experience in desertification control offers inspiration for Saudi Arabia: Saudi official

RIYADH – Saudi Arabia is strengthening cooperation with China in combating desertification and expanding vegetation cover, drawing on China's decades-long experience as the kingdom advances its ambitious environmental goals under the Saudi Green Initiative, a Saudi official has said.

Ahmed AlAnazi, general manager of the National Greening Program, told Xinhua in a recent interview that Saudi Arabia's rehabilitation of its first 1 million hectares of degraded land was the result of long-term strategic planning, drawing on international experience, particularly that of China, as well as lessons from countries such as Pakistan, Ethiopia, Mexico and Türkiye.

AlAnazi said the kingdom has benefited significantly from China's decades of experience, particularly in understanding sand encroachment dynamics and approaches to rehabilitating arid land.

"China has provided a practical example of how desert areas can be transformed into productive environments through scientific planning and phased implementation," he noted.

AlAnazi said environmental

cooperation between Saudi Arabia and China has witnessed notable progress, with memorandums of understanding signed with Chinese research institutions specializing in desertification control.

"The two sides have also carried out joint training programs and workshops and exchanged expertise in areas including vegetation monitoring, seed banks and soil improvement technologies," he added.

According to the official, cooperation between the two countries is extending beyond conventional knowledge exchange to the application of modern technologies, including advanced satellite technologies and artificial intelligence.

Saudi Arabia faces significant environmental challenges, particularly water scarcity and limited rainfall, which make land rehabilitation more complex than in many other countries.

To address these challenges, the kingdom is taking a series of measures to restore degraded land and expand its green cover.

Under the Saudi Green Initiative, the kingdom earlier announced that it had rehabilitated its first 1 million

hectares of degraded land and planted more than 159 million trees, as part of its long-term goal of planting 10 billion trees.

"The integration of scientific planning, lessons from international experience and local community participation provides a strong foundation for the success of the kingdom's ambitious environmental efforts," AlAnazi said, noting that the kingdom has mobilized more than 100,000 volunteers for tree-planting campaigns.

Over the past several decades, China has also made significant strides in combating desertification. AlAnazi said China's experience offers hope that tangible results can be achieved.

"China's achievements over the decades demonstrate that desert areas can be transformed into greener environments through science, perseverance and community participation," he stressed.

Looking ahead, AlAnazi said environmental cooperation between Saudi Arabia and China is expected to expand further, particularly in green technologies and environmental monitoring, enabling both countries to better address climate challenges and advance sustainable development. –AFP

Central bank to strengthen financial support for key areas

BEIJING – China will strengthen financial support for key areas, including expanding domestic demand, promoting technological innovation and supporting small and micro enterprises, according to a report released by the People's Bank of China (PBOC) yesterday.

Since the beginning of the year, the PBOC has continued to implement an appropriately accommodative monetary policy, creating a supportive monetary and financial environment for high-quality economic development, according to the PBOC's second-quarter 2026 monetary policy report.

The central bank has also continued to optimize structural monetary policy tools and further improve the financing structure.

By the end of June, the growth rates of loans to the technology, green, inclusive finance, elderly care and digital economy sectors all exceeded the growth rate of total loans, the report said.

Supply and demand in the foreign exchange market remained broadly balanced, while the RMB exchange rate remained largely stable at a reasonable and equilibrium level, the report showed.

Going forward, the central bank said it will continue to implement the monetary policy and calibrate the intensity, pace and timing of policy implementation based on domestic and international economic and financial conditions, as well as financial market operations.

It will also work to guard against the risk of exchange rate overshooting, maintain the stable operation of financial markets and resolutely prevent systemic financial risks. – Xinhua

One dead, 172 rescued as 2nd ferry in days catches fire in Indonesia

LEMBAR, Indonesia — One woman died and more than 170 were rescued after a ferry caught fire off the Indonesian tourist island of Bali yesterday, a rescue official said, in the second such incident in days.

A navy vessel and other ships evacuated 172 people from the stricken passenger vessel, including two Australian tourists, search and rescue official Muhamad Hariyadi told AFP.

A 19-year-old Indonesian woman was declared dead, said Hariyadi, an official on Lombok island, where the ferry had been headed from Bali.

An AFP photographer at Lembang on Lombok's west coast saw one person brought ashore in a body bag.

Survivor Kiky Okta Pradika, 25, told reporters in Lembang he had grabbed a life jacket before jumping overboard with several other passengers.

"There were a few hours before there was any help," he said.

Hariyadi said passengers were evacuated on at least three different vessels, including a navy ship and another ferry that rushed to help in the early morning hours.

Search and rescue vessels were



Medical personnel collect data and conduct medical examinations on the passengers of the Putri Yasmin passenger ferry, which caught fire in waters off Bali, at Padang Bay Port in Karangasem, Indonesia yesterday. — AFP

at the scene and a helicopter was conducting surveillance from the air.

Hariyadi earlier said there were no passengers or crew left on the blazing ferry.

There was no immediate information on people injured or missing.

Five people died last week when a ferry caught fire off Java island.

Marine accidents are a regular occurrence in Indonesia — an archipelago of more than 17,000

islands that relies heavily on boat connections for daily transport and tourism.

Lax safety standards and unpredictable weather are the main reasons for the disasters.

A ferry transporting more than 70 people sank while sailing near Selayar, a small island south of Sulawesi, last month.

Four bodies were recovered, but the search operation ended with 14 others still officially missing.

— AFP

Japan brushes off Australian PM's melon drama

TOKYO — Tokyo yesterday played down comments by Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese about melons gifted to him by his Japanese counterpart that have triggered a row Down Under, stressing the leaders' good relationship.

"We are aware of the reporting in the media. We have been informed by the Australian side that Prime Minister Albanese did not make the comments in the way that has been reported," a Japanese government statement said.

"In any case, the dinner hosted by Prime Minister Albanese during the Prime Minister's visit to Australia this May was held in a very relaxed atmosphere, and we believe it helped build a personal trust relationship between the two leaders," the statement added.

Albanese had already apologised over comments made during an interview last month with the comedy podcast Bush Deep in

which he named Kylie Minogue as someone he would "shag".

But separate comments in the interview about the "strange" present of Japanese melons by Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi in May — when asked about his "most crap" diplomatic gift — this week sparked further uproar.

When the host asked if she'd "smuggled" the expensive fruit through Australian customs, Albanese held his hands up adjacent to his chest and said he "got a couple of melons".

"She came in looking like Pamela Anderson," the often provocative podcast's host Nikki Osborne replied, referring to the US actor and "Baywatch" star.

Australia's opposition leader has called for Albanese to apologise over the "insulting" comments.

Asked whether he would say sorry for his "disrespectful behaviour" in parliament on Tuesday, the Australian leader said: "I reject the assertion in the question."

The comments prompted some outrage on social media in Japan, where Takaichi became the country's first woman prime minister last year.

"I'm not a supporter of the Liberal Democratic Party or a defender of the current government, but this is really awful. It's disrespectful towards our prime minister," said one X user.

"Sure this guy's remarks are unbelievable. On top of that, it suggests how he thinks it's OK to treat Takaichi — or Japan for that matter — this crudely," said another.

Some were also offended by the perceived insult to Japanese fruit, with the variety of melon in question costing upwards of 30,000 yen (US\$190).

"Don't you dare think the Australian fruit and ours are the same. Ignorance is pathetic," said one social media comment.

Albanese for his part qualified his comments, saying that the fruit "ended up being quite good". — AFP

11 French nationals detained in Thailand for drug trafficking: police source

PARIS — At least eleven French nationals have been held in Thailand since the start of the summer after being arrested with several kilogrammes of cannabis in their luggage, a police source told AFP on Tuesday.

According to accounts from relatives of some of the young people interviewed by AFP and the French daily *Liberation*, they might have been duped by traffickers to act as drug mules in exchange for free holidays in Thailand.

Thailand is a major hub for illegal drug trafficking in southeast Asia.

In recent years, cannabis trafficking from Thailand to France has surged, particularly since the southeast Asian country decriminalised the drug in 2022, officials say.

"The situation of our fellow citizens is being closely monitored by the relevant departments of the foreign ministry in Paris, which are in contact with their families," a diplomatic source told AFP.

"Consular services in Thailand and Hong Kong have been mobilised," the source added.

According to *Liberation*, the holiday offer allegedly came from the manager of a smartphone trading company.

According to relatives of some of the young people, the French nationals were unaware of the suitcases' actual contents.

The daily identified at least five young people aged 18 to 26 who

were arrested at airports in Thailand and Hong Kong.

AFP spoke to a woman whose 20-year-old brother-in-law was arrested in mid-July as he was preparing to travel from Thailand to Paris with another Frenchman.

In their locked suitcase, for which they did not have the combination, customs officers discovered "16.8 kilogrammes of cannabis".

"They were shocked. They really weren't expecting it," the woman said.

She said he was contacted through Snapchat by someone who claimed the courier run was "100 percent legal" and involved transporting phones.

"Everything was covered: flights, accommodation on site," she said. "So he took it seriously."

"He was the victim of a 'Thailand plan.' He was snared," she added.

The French prosecutor's office tasked with combating drug crime said investigations were under way.

"Our objective is to identify the organisers and potential networks involved, and to understand how these operations work: how these young people are recruited, looked after, whether other individuals are involved, and so on," the prosecutor's office said.

In a report published last year, the European Union Drugs Agency (EUDA) expressed concern about an increase in cannabis seizures originating from Thailand. — AFP



Senator Joel Villanueva (left), sitting as senator judge, rubs his eyes during the impeachment trial of Philippine Vice President Sara Duterte at the Senate in Pasay City, Metro Manila yesterday. — AFP

Philippine health authorities warn of water-borne diseases amid floods

MANILA — Philippine health authorities have issued an alert on water-borne diseases after floods hit the northern Philippines, local media reported yesterday.

The local health center in the Ilocos region, northwest Philippines, has warned residents of rising health risks as enhanced southwest monsoon rains continue to trigger flooding across the region, according to the Manila Bulletin.

Residents were urged to guard against water-borne illnesses such

as influenza, leptospirosis and dengue, which commonly spread during the rainy season, according to DOH Ilocos Regional Director Dr Helen D. Tobias.

She warned that leptospirosis can be contracted through exposure to floodwater contaminated with animal urine, and advised those who waded through floods to wash exposed body parts with soap and clean water and seek medical attention.

— Xinhua

Garbage chokes Metro Manila waterways after floods

MANILA — Massive volumes of garbage have clogged waterways and drainage systems in Metro Manila following days of heavy rains, local media reported yesterday.

Public Works Secretary Vince Dizon described the problem as a "garbage crisis," noting that clogged waterways exacerbated flooding amid continuous rains brought by the enhanced southwest monsoon.

Much of the garbage was not from the immediate area but had been carried from Manila Bay, with high tide and floodwaters contributing to its accumulation around pumping stations, according to the reports.

At the Baclaran River, Metropolitan Manila Development Authority (MMDA) General Manager Nicolas Torre III said clearing operations had so far

hauled 45 dump truck loads, equivalent to about 500 tonnes of garbage, from the river since the operation started.

The government would continue clearing operations and dredging waterways to keep critical drainage infrastructure operational. The public were urged to refrain from throwing garbage into waterways, according to the reports. — Xinhua



Two elephant calves play at the Pinnawala Elephant Orphanage in Sri Lanka, on Tuesday. August 12 marks World Elephant Day, an international annual event to bring attention to the threats facing elephants and promote their protection. – Xinhua

UN says 2 staff arrested by Afghan intelligence agency

KABUL – Two staff members of the United Nations mission in Afghanistan have been arrested by the country's intelligence agency, the world body told AFP on Tuesday, adding that it had no access to them for two days.

"We confirm that two Afghan UNAMA male staff members were detained by officials of the de facto General Directorate of Intelligence on Sunday, 9 August," in the western province of Herat, the mission said in a statement.

The Afghan government did not immediately respond to an AFP request for comment.

The office of UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres called for the staff members' special status to be respected.

"We have not been informed of the charges against them or permitted to see them," Guterres' spokesman Farhan Haq said. "We call on the de facto authorities to ensure compliance with the privileges and immunities of the UN and its officials."

The arrests come just days before the fifth anniversary of the Taliban's return to power, following the capture of Kabul on August 15, 2021.

Multiple UN agencies operate across Afghanistan in a host of areas including health and humanitarian response.

This week, UNAMA published a report in which it recommended the authorities clarify "the rules

governing the use of force, arrest, detention" by the security institutions and "strengthen accountability".

The country has been governed for almost five years by the Taliban authorities, which rule according to a strict interpretation of Islamic law.

Afghan women are banned from UN premises, including those who are staff, as well as a host of other places.

About 20 aid workers were arrested in June near the Iran border in Herat province by Afghanistan's morality police, because their beards were not long enough.

They included staff working for organisations that partner with the UN, according to an internal memo seen by AFP, and were subsequently released.

Dozens of women were also detained by the Taliban government's morality police in early June on accusations they were violating official dress codes by not wearing the body-cloaking chador or burqa.

That included a hospital worker employed by Doctors Without Borders (MSF), which strongly condemned the detention.

A rare protest against the restrictions was violently dispersed with at least two people killed, according to the United Nations.

Afghanistan has been hit hard by international aid cuts and faces multiple challenges, including the arrival of millions of its citizens from Iran and Pakistan in recent years. – AFP

North Korea fires ballistic missile ahead of US-South Korea drills

Kang Jin-kyu

SEOUL – North Korea fired a ballistic missile off its east coast towards Japan early yesterday, Seoul's military said, days before the planned start of massive US-South Korea joint drills.

The 11-day exercises due to begin on Monday are a regular fixture of the summer calendar, designed to steel the United States and South Korea for defence against the nuclear-armed North.

Pyongyang calls them rehearsals for an invasion and has staged missile launches before and after them in the past.

"Our military detected at around 6:00 a.m. [local time] a ballistic missile launched by North Korea from the Wonsan area towards the East Sea," Seoul's Joint Chiefs of Staff said in a message to reporters.

The missile flew more than 700 kilometres over the body of water – also known as the Sea of Japan – it said, adding that Seoul and Washington were analysing its specifications.

Japan's defence ministry also described the object as a suspected ballistic missile, adding that it was thought to have "already fallen", without providing further details.

"North Korea has never simply let a South Korea-US joint military exercise pass without a response," Lim Eul-chul, a North Korea expert at Kyungnam University, told AFP.

"This is a message that Pyongyang is closely watching the upcoming drills and could stage a provocation if it deems one necessary."

Japan's Defence Minister Shinjiro Koizumi called yesterday's launch a "threat to peace and security in our region" and said Tokyo had "lodged a strong protest" with North Korea through diplomatic channels in Beijing.

North Korea has recently been hurling criticism at Japan, a former regional colonial power, over what Pyongyang describes as its remilitarisation.

Conflict experience

Japan has long held a pacifist stance, but has been increasing military spending, ramping up defence pacts and deploying missile launchers to its outer islands.

Koizumi said last week that Japan needed to boost its military with a "sense of urgency and crisis".

Pyongyang lambasted Japan's "transformation into a war state", and shortly afterwards fired a short-range ballistic missile off its eastern coast, according to Seoul's military.

Tokyo's governor announced plans last week to convert a 13,000-square-metre subterranean carpark into an underground missile shelter near Tokyo Station.

In the past, North Korean missiles have flown over Japan, triggering sirens, smartphone alerts and special programming on television.

As of April 2025, there were 61,142 shelters across Japan, but less than seven percent were underground, according to government data.

South Korea's national security office convened an emergency

meeting yesterday, where participants called recent launches "provocative acts" and demanded Pyongyang "immediately halt them".

North Korea has been playing a more active role in international conflict, notably backing Russia in its invasion of Ukraine.

Ukraine accused Russia on Tuesday of launching North Korean missiles in an attack that killed 10 and wounded dozens.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky has also warned – without providing evidence – that Moscow has been receiving more ballistic projectiles and troops from Pyongyang.

Experts say North Korea has received financial and military benefits from Moscow in return for its support.

Its troops have also gained crucial experience on modern battlefields.

The US-South Korea "Ulchi Freedom Shield" drills due on Monday will include 18,000 South Korean troops and counterparts from the US contingent of 28,500 in the country.

A spokesman said they will prepare soldiers for a potential fight against North Korean troops battle-hardened from deployment in Europe.

North Korean soldiers have "taken those lessons they learned there and brought them back to North Korea", Colonel Ryan Donald, spokesman for the US and South Korean Combined Forces Command, said on Monday.

"Our training accounts for that threat," he told reporters. – AFP

Australian delivery drivers win 'world-leading' pay rise

SYDNEY – Hundreds of thousands of gig workers* in Australia have been granted a huge pay rise from next week under a decision by the country's workplace relations tribunal lauded as "world-leading".

The order from the Fair Work Commission, issued Tuesday, will see delivery drivers working for online platforms such as UberEats and HungryPanda earn Aus\$31.30 (US\$22) an hour.

Australia's minimum wage currently sits at Aus\$26.44 an hour.

The drivers must also be provided with workplace accident insurance under the new rules, which come into effect on August 17.

The country's Transport Workers Union – which represents gig workers – hailed the new minimum standards.

"Gig workers in Australia were left outside of our workplace systems for far too long," union National Secretary Michael Kaine said.

"From Monday, they will be entitled to an absolute world-leading set of standards that we will build on over time," he added.

The union jointly applied for the new standard along with delivery apps DoorDash and UberEats.

And Employment Minister Amanda Rishworth described them as "a milestone in delivering stronger protections and a fairer safety net for gig economy workers".

The World Bank estimated in 2023 there were up to 435 million online gig workers around the globe who had largely fallen outside regular labour protections.

In June, the International Labour Organisation adopted a

convention aimed at extending job protections to gig workers.

Companies behind the apps control the gig work via algorithms that assign tasks, set pay, evaluate performance and even fire workers.

Despite largely controlling the tasks and pay, the platforms typically classify the workers as independent contractors rather than employees.

This allows them in many cases to ignore things like minimum wage requirements, workplace safety and access to social security.

– AFP/MPD

*Gig workers independent contractors or freelance labourers who complete short-term tasks, projects, or on-demand work, often through digital apps and platforms, rather than holding traditional full-time staff jobs. – Gemini



An Afghan woman and a girl walk past a board displaying slogans by the Taliban administration in Kandahar yesterday ahead of the fifth anniversary marking their return to power. – AFP

Charges dropped against Bondi Beach attack hero

SYDNEY – Australian police dropped assault charges yesterday against a man lauded for his bravery during last year's mass shooting at Bondi Beach.

Fruit seller Ahmed al Ahmed was hailed as a hero after footage showed him disarming a gunman during the December 14 attack, which killed 15 people at a Jewish festival.

Ahmed was earlier this year accused of stalking and assaulting his father, charges he denied.

Both charges were withdrawn after a brief hearing yesterday, court documents showed.

Ahmed ducked between parked cars as the Bondi shooting unfolded, grabbing one of the two gunmen and wresting away his

weapon in an effort to stop the killing.

He sustained gunshot wounds in the attack.

Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese would later meet Ahmed in person, describing him as a "true Australian hero" and an inspiration to all.

– AFP

Israeli settlers keep up siege of Palestinian homes despite army intervention



Young relatives of Palestinian Farouk Ramadan, who was involved and killed in clashes with Israeli settlers on July 24, weep after his home was subject to a controlled-demolition in the Palestinian village of Tell in the occupied West Bank on Tuesday. Israel, whose army has occupied the West Bank since 1967, regularly demolishes the homes of Palestinians accused of carrying out deadly attacks against Israelis. The government defends the deterrent effect of these demolitions, but critics denounce the practice as a form of collective punishment that leaves families homeless.

– AFP

Qusra, Palestinian Territories
QUSRA – Palestinian Territories – The Israeli military failed in an attempt yesterday to remove occupied West Bank settlers who for days have blockaded Palestinian homes, an eyewitness and an AFP photographer reported.

The siege began on Sunday, when a group of settlers set up a makeshift tent near houses in the Palestinian village of Qusra, just south of Nablus, blocking essential supplies from entering.

“We have received no food and no medicine,” Qusai Abu Rida, a Palestinian trapped inside one of the houses, told AFP by telephone, adding that he had only managed to secure electricity thanks to solar panels.

The Israeli military condemned the settlers’ actions and declared the area a “closed military zone”, before yesterday morning removing the tent where the settlers had been staying.

Security forces “are working to evacuate the civilians who were staying there,” the military said in a statement.

By mid-afternoon, an AFP photographer at the scene said the military had left and the tent had been removed, but that the settlers were still at the site.

Abu Rida confirmed the situation remained unchanged, with the settlers still in possession of chairs and blankets.

“The army has withdrawn, and so far we are still besieged, with the settlers at our doorstep,” he told AFP.

Violence by Israeli settlers towards Palestinians in the West Bank has persisted for years, often with little or no legal consequence, but recent months have seen a surge in attacks.

Israel has occupied the West Bank since 1967.

More than 500,000 Israelis live in settlements in the Palestinian territory, which are illegal under

international law, among some three million Palestinians.

The Israeli military said on Tuesday it had received several reports of settlers entering and taking control of Palestinian homes and land in the area.

“This is illegal, reprehensible and unacceptable activity that harms the residents of the areas and disrupts their daily lives,” it said.

It also said that disciplinary action would be taken against security personnel who had been filmed at the site days earlier.

According to an AFP tally based on data from the Palestinian health ministry, Israeli soldiers or settlers have killed at least 1,097 Palestinians, including both militants and civilians, since the start of the Gaza war in October 2023.

Israeli figures show at least 48 Israelis, including civilians and security personnel, have been killed in Palestinian attacks or during Israeli military operations during the same period.

– AFP

Trump says US will ‘keep’ Hormuz strait control

WASHINGTON, DC – President Donald Trump yesterday said the United States is in control of the strategic Strait of Hormuz and will “keep it.”

“The U.S.A. has total control over the Strait of Hormuz. I THINK WE WILL KEEP IT!” Trump wrote on his Truth Social platform. “Our Naval Blockade is being called, by everyone, ‘A WALL OF STEEL,’ and there is nothing Iran can do about it.”

Trump has repeatedly claimed the United States controls the strait, which is vital for the flow of energy and other commodity shipping through the Middle East.

However, Iran says it effectively controls much of the waterway and intends to impose a toll system in

response to the US war launched by Trump on February 28.

On Tuesday, Trump told reporters: “We have total control over the Hormuz Strait right now. They don’t have control. We have total control. We own it.”

US and Israeli forces have heavily bombed Iran’s military and killed a swath of the country’s leadership so far in the nearly six-month war, launched initially with goals including forcing Tehran to abandon its nuclear power program and regime change.

Iran has resisted with missile attacks on US bases in the region, Israel and targets in US-allied Gulf countries.

Its most effective response has been to strike shipping in Hormuz,

effectively snarling the trade route, rattling the world economy.

With his political popularity sinking at home ahead of the November midterm congressional elections, Trump has backed off threats to escalate the war in search of a decisive victory.

That leaves the war in a standoff.

However, Trump says that the United States is prepared to focus on blockading Iranian ports in a strategy that he told Axios was “low-keying.”

“We are only semi-negotiating with them. We are just watching Iran with its huge inflation and the fact they have no money,” Trump told Axios on Sunday.

– AFP

Israel seeking to ‘remove Palestine from world’s agenda’: Erdogan

ISTANBUL – Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan yesterday accused the Israeli government of Benjamin Netanyahu of seeking to “remove Palestine” from the world’s agenda.

“The aim of the Netanyahu government is to remove Palestine from the common agenda of humanity by profiting from chaos and new conflicts in the region,” Erdogan said at a joint news conference with his Palestinian counterpart Mahmoud Abbas.

“No matter what they do, they will not succeed. The Palestinian cause will continue to grow in people’s hearts as they try to destroy it,” he said, vowing Turkey would fight for the establishment of a Palestinian state.

A strong advocate of the Palestinian cause, Erdogan has repeatedly lambasted Netanyahu’s government, accusing the Israeli prime minister of committing “genocide” in Gaza and of pursuing expansionist policies in the West Bank, Lebanon, Syria and beyond.

Abbas arrived in Ankara on Tuesday

accompanied by his diplomatic advisor Majdi Khalidi, intelligence chief Majed Faraj and senior Palestinian official Ziad Abu Amr.

He met Erdogan yesterday with the pair discussing developments in the region in talks the Palestinian leader described as “important and fruitful”.

Last month, Abbas, 90, said Palestinian legislative elections would take place on November 28 followed by a presidential poll early next year.

If the November election goes ahead, it would be the first such ballot in two decades.

“I hope the decision to hold legislative and presidential elections in Palestine after a long time will bring good fortune... [and] will advance the reconciliation process,” Erdogan said, in a nod to the historic rivalry between Abbas’ Fatah movement and Gaza’s Hamas rulers.

Abbas also hailed the August 7 defence pact between Turkey, Saudi Arabia and Pakistan, saying it was “of utmost importance” and expressing hope it would help enhance security and stability in the region.

– AFP

Google unveils finder tag, new AI smartphone features

NEW YORK – Introducing a finder tag, an upgraded watch that checks for respiratory problems and the latest artificial intelligence (AI) superpowers in smartphones, Google yesterday unveiled its newest Pixel offerings.

The tech giant organised a press launch event in New York to present the Pixel Tag, a rival to the AirTag, a tracking device commercialised by Apple since 2021.

The tracking device, which sells for US\$29.99 can be connected to Android devices and used to locate valuables such as a wallet or luggage.

The new gadget can detect, for example, if keys fall behind a sofa.

“Yeah, it has that level of accuracy,” Google product

manager Spencer Boone said of such a scenario.

The tech giant also unveiled Pixel Watch 5, whose functions include monitoring the number of subway stops remaining to destination and pausing an audiobook or podcast at the exact moment when a listener dozes off.

Earlier Pixel Watch versions could call an ambulance after detecting signs of cardiac trouble. The new version extends this capacity to respiratory problems if someone isn’t getting enough oxygen.

The new Pixel 11 incorporates AI advances from Google Gemini and has been “purpose-built to do more for you with less from you,” said Google product leader Justin Savich.

The system could automatically respond to a text message asking about when your flight arrives, or place a restaurant reservation based on a conversation.

Another function is to translate a jumble of oral commands into a clear and concise text message.

The devices can now be ordered and will be in stores from August 20.

The Pixel 11 smartphone begins at US\$899 and is priced up to US\$1,899. The pixel watch begins at US\$399

Having been upstaged by the arrival of ChatGPT in late 2022, Google has emerged as a pacesetter in generative AI since spring 2024 following recent advances.

– AFP



Turkey’s President Recep Tayyip Erdogan (right) shakes hands with Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas during a welcoming ceremony at the Presidential Complex in Ankara yesterday.

– AFP

US Democrats give mixed verdict on party's leftward surge

Frankie Taggart

WASHINGTON, DC — The Democratic insurgent left suffered a surprise setback in Wisconsin yesterday but scored a major victory in neighbouring Minnesota, as US primary voters delivered a mixed verdict on the movement reshaping the party ahead of November's midterm elections.

Milwaukee County Executive David Crowley narrowly defeated democratic socialist Francesca Hong for the nomination for Wisconsin governor, overturning polls that had shown her comfortably ahead and giving the party establishment a badly needed victory.

Hong had ridden months of grassroots momentum into election day, but Crowley benefited from mounting concerns that his far-left opponent could struggle in the closely divided state's general election.

"From day one, this campaign has been about what comes next

for Wisconsin: making life more affordable, strengthening our schools, creating good-paying jobs, and making sure opportunity reaches every corner of our state," Crowley said in a victory statement that focused on local issues.

The result showed the limits of a leftward surge that has already carried insurgent candidates to victories in New York, Colorado and Michigan — and left the argument over how best to defeat President Donald Trump and Republicans far from settled.

But the party's leftist wing had a much better night in Minnesota, where Lieutenant Governor Peggy Flanagan decisively defeated moderate congresswoman Angie Craig for the Democratic nomination for US Senate.

Flanagan, backed by several major figures on the left, had attacked Craig over her support for Republican immigration policies, while Craig argued that her record

winning competitive House races made her the safer general-election choice.

"Together, we proved that Minnesota is not for sale. When we work together, when we organise together, and when we fight together — we are unstoppable," Flanagan posted on X.

Her victory followed Abdul El-Sayed's narrow win over an establishment-backed candidate in Michigan's Democratic Senate primary last week, adding to evidence that leftist candidates can break through beyond safely Democratic urban districts.

Generational change

The stakes are higher in Senate contests, where Democrats are fighting to regain control of the chamber while defending vulnerable seats across the country.

Tuesday's ballots also brought another warning for longtime Democratic incumbents.

In Connecticut, former Hartford mayor Luke Bronin, 47, ousted 78-year-old congressman John Larson, who had represented his district since 1999.

The contest was driven less by a clear left-versus-center divide than by demands for generational change, with Bronin arguing that Democrats needed more urgency in confronting Trump.

Larson became the seventh House Democrat to lose a primary this cycle, joining a growing list of veteran lawmakers swept aside by younger challengers.

Republicans, meanwhile, saw fresh evidence that even Trump's endorsement has limits.

In South Carolina, Senator Darline Graham —appointed after the sudden death of her brother Lindsey Graham — finished first in a crowded Republican primary but failed to secure a majority despite Trump's backing.

She will face hardline

congressman Ralph Norman in an August 25 runoff for the nomination in the safely Republican seat.

Trump told reporters he expected to campaign for Graham but added that he liked the other candidates as well, describing them as "all Trumpers."

His endorsement also failed in Minnesota, where MyPillow founder and prominent election conspiracy theorist Mike Lindell lost the Republican gubernatorial primary — and refused to concede, alleging irregularities in the vote totals.

Lindell, who lost by more than 45,000 votes, has a long record of raising doubts over Trump's 2020 election defeat, claiming that the president's victory was "stolen" from him by Democrats.

"I'm not saying that anything's happened but there's numbers that don't add up and that's what we're going to look at," he told reporters.

— AFP

New space object 'black hole star' discovered by astronomers

Daniel Lawler

PARIS — Astronomers announced yesterday that they had discovered a new type of astronomical object called a "black hole star", potentially solving a mystery involving strange red dots spotted in the early universe.

The object looks like a star the size of our solar system, but produces 100 billion times more energy than any star — a mighty blast of power closer to what is produced by a black hole.

The black hole star, which dates from 660 million years after the Big Bang, was spotted by a US-led team of astronomers using the James Webb Space Telescope (JWST), according to a study published in the journal *Nature*.

Since history's most powerful telescope went online in 2022, it has been spotting many extremely bright cosmic objects dubbed "little red dots" in the early universe that have baffled scientists.

"What exactly these objects are has been one of the most debated topics of the JWST era," lead study author Rohan Naidu of Hawaii University said in a statement.

The team had been trying to find clues for a different mystery: why JWST keeps finding bright galaxies in the universe's infancy, when it was thought to have been too early for them to have become so huge.

But while looking through the images, they spotted a little red dot.

'Pure black hole star light'

"When we see something very red in the universe, we often

assume that it is surrounded by dust, like soot or ash," said Robert Simcoe, a study co-author from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT).

"The same way that the wildfire smoke from Canada recently made the sky in Boston look bright red, astronomical objects can also appear redder than their intrinsic colour when you see them through a veil of dust," he added.

However, when the team sifted through their data, they found that at certain wavelengths, the object's light simply disappeared.

To their surprise, this suggested that it is not dust making this object appear red — it is hydrogen gas.

This explained the object's colour, but not how it could be pumping out so much energy.

"You can't be powering this by nuclear fusion, which is the energy source that sits at the heart of all the stars," Naidu explained.

Using modelling simulations, they determined the most likely scenario was that the object is powered by a central black hole surrounded by a cocoon of gas that makes it resemble a star.

The team named the object MoM-BH*-1. The BH and asterisk is for black hole star — and the number one suggests they believe there are more out there.

"Every little red dot is consistent with being a black hole star," Naidu said.

"What is special about MoM-BH*-1 is, the black hole star is essentially completely outshining its surrounding host galaxy, such that we're seeing pure black hole star light." — AFP



Astronomy enthusiasts make their final adjustments in the hours leading up to the total solar eclipse observation in the hamlet of Lodoso, northern Spain's Burgos province, yesterday. Millions of Europeans contemplated the sky in awe yesterday during a rare total solar eclipse that will plunge a swathe of Spain into an eerie daytime darkness. The shadow cast when the Moon covers the Sun began in Russia's remote Arctic north at around 17:00 GMT and continued in an arc through Greenland and Iceland. Spain is where most people viewed the total eclipse, which crossed the country diagonally from the northern Atlantic coast to the Mediterranean Sea, where it vanished at around 18:30 GMT yesterday. — AFP

Switzerland seeks to tighten rules on bankers' bonuses

ZURICH — Switzerland's government, drawing on the lessons of the collapse of Credit Suisse, yesterday launched consultations on new banking rules that could limit bankers' bonuses.

The Federal Council said the consultations would cover measures designed to "strengthen corporate governance", ensure banks are prepared for crises, and grant greater powers to the financial market supervisory authority (FINMA).

"The aim is to strengthen resilience and confidence in the Swiss financial system whilst protecting our economy, taxpayers and the state," Finance Minister

Karin Keller-Sutter told journalists in Bern.

The proposed measures focus in particular on bankers' bonuses. They propose to withhold or recover bonuses from "the most senior or most highly paid managers at systemically important banks" in the event of rule-breaking or mismanagement.

The goal is to avoid payment packages that encourage excessive risk-taking.

"The Federal Council wants remuneration to be geared towards long-term profit," said Keller-Sutter.

The consultation will start late this month and run until November.

In March 2023, the finance ministry, the central bank and FINMA were forced to find an emergency solution for Credit Suisse as it teetered on the brink of bankruptcy. They opted for a takeover by its domestic rival, UBS.

However, given the size of UBS following this merger, the government is pushing the bank to strengthen its capital base so it can withstand a crisis or market shock.

In particular, it wants to tighten capital requirements for overseas subsidiaries, UBS executives oppose this, arguing it will undermine the bank's competitiveness.

— AFP

Cuba marks Castro's 100th as his revolution faces its toughest test

HAVANA – As Cuba marks 100 years since Fidel Castro's birth, Cubans are questioning the promises of the socialist revolution he led for nearly half a century, and asking whether his successors are up to the job.

Castro was born on August 13, 1926 and passed away on November 25, 2016. He was Cuba's leader from 1959 to 2011.

The Communist Party of Cuba (PCC) has spent the week celebrating the late revolutionary leader with exhibitions, concerts and conferences.

But this August 13 comes amid one of Cuba's worst crises in living memory, with acute shortages of food and water, and chronic power cuts.

For many Cubans, today's hardship highlights the absence of a leader who died a decade ago.

Before placing Castro's portrait in the window, Leonel Suárez gives it a kiss.

The 54-year-old has spent years collecting revolutionary memorabilia and reveres Castro as "the master."

"Fidel would have a strategy at a time like this," he said.

This slow-rolling crisis has hit so hard that when a foreign visitor recently offered US\$100 for a photograph of his communist hero, Suárez felt he had little choice.



Cuban historian Hassan Pérez, 49, one of the collaborators of the late Fidel Castro, speaks during an interview with AFP in Havana last Friday. – AFP

"You have to live," he said.

Castro is remembered by supporters as having guided Cuba through multiple crises – US-backed invasions, embargoes, assassination plots and the intense hardship caused by the collapse of Cuba's main ally and benefactor, the Soviet Union.

In a workshop in Old Havana, amid cracked walls and aging work tools, 54-year-old repairman Rogelio Valdivia describes himself as a bonafide "Fidelista."

"I was born in the Revolution and through it I was able to find my way," he said, lamenting the loss of

Castro's leadership in Cuba today.

"Fidel is no longer here, and nobody has the ability Fidel had."

Testing the faithful

Those who supported Castro throughout his years in power are among those hardest hit today.

One of them is 86-year-old Ángela Gutiérrez, who says she feels "disappointed" by the direction Cuba has taken.

"Why do they keep cutting the power so much?" she asked after visiting several market stalls without buying anything because prices were



Cuban President Fidel Castro delivers a speech on April 24, 2006 during the inauguration ceremony of the III Olympic Sport Games in Havana. – AFP

too high. "They're ruining things."

Gutiérrez belongs to the generation that came of age under Castro and benefited from the free healthcare and education championed by the Revolution.

Today, those things barely exist.

Hassan Pérez, a historian, former student leader and close collaborator of Castro, acknowledged that the centenary was arriving under "the most complex conditions that could have been imagined."

The social contract forged by the Revolution, he said, "has eroded" in recent years.

For decades, Cuba offered social

protections in exchange for strict political discipline. Many Cubans now

question whether that bargain still holds.

Yet for many, affection for Castro survives even as daily life becomes harder.

Mildred Barreto, a 66-year-old cleaner, still calls him "comandante" ("commander").

But she admits life in Cuba today is a struggle.

"We suffer a lot now," she said.

Then she delivered a verdict shared by many of Castro's remaining admirers.

"With our comandante," she said, "it wasn't like this." – AFP

Portugal's data center capacity grows 23 pct, ranks 10th globally

LISBON – Portugal's installed data center capacity has increased by 23 percent since 2024, placing it tenth among the world's fastest-growing markets for the sector, according to data released on Tuesday.

The data, published by the

consultancy Savills and based on market intelligence from DC Byte, showed that Portugal's data center sector is expanding rapidly, although its overall capacity remains relatively small compared with established global hubs.

According to Savills, Portugal has

gained significant visibility among major global data center investors and operators, with ongoing projects and new investment intentions positioning the country as an increasingly important destination for large-scale data centers. – Xinhua

Brazil's exports to EU rise 4 pct in first 60 days of Mercosul-EU deal: official

RIO DE JANEIRO – Brazil's exports to the European Union (EU) increased by about 4.0 percent in the first 60 days since a free trade agreement between the Southern Common Market (Mercosur/Mercosul) and the EU took effect, Brazilian Vice President Geraldo Alckmin said on Monday.

Addressing the 25th Brazilian Agribusiness Congress, Alckmin said the boost in sales to the EU confirms the agreement's effectiveness in expanding Brazil's access to international markets and diversifying export destinations.

The Mercosur-EU agreement, signed in January after 26 years of negotiations and entered into provisional application in May, provides for the gradual reduction or elimination of tariffs on over 90 percent of trade between the two blocs.

Alckmin said it was necessary to further diversify Brazil's trade given the current rise in protectionist measures.

Regarding trade ties with the United States, Alckmin said Brazil will continue to pursue dialogue to reduce the number of restrictions Washington has imposed on its exports.

In the face of trade difficulties with some markets, he stressed that expanding ties with other partners, including the EU, serves as an important strategy to sustain the growth of Brazil's exports.

The Southern Common Market has two official acronyms – Mercosul in Portuguese and Mercosur in Spanish. The latter is the official language of four of its five member states. Guarani is a co-official language in Bolivia and Paraguay. – Xinhua, MPD

Chinese firm completes major construction work on Guinea-Bissau airport control facilities

BISSAU – Chinese infrastructure contractor China Railway 11th Bureau Group said on Tuesday that it has completed the main structure and interior and exterior finishing work on a new technical block and air traffic control tower at Osvaldo Vieira International Airport in Guinea-Bissau.

The undertaking, slated for formal handover next year, are part of a 4.7-billion-CFA-franc (US\$8.4 million) project financed by the Agency for the Safety of Air Navigation in Africa and Madagascar.

The two-story technical block covers

2,734.4 square meters and will house administrative offices, communications services, meteorological monitoring and equipment maintenance facilities.

The 13-story control tower has a floor area of 694.02 square meters, designed to provide a clear view of the runway and aircraft parking areas. Automated air traffic control systems and navigation aids will be installed later by the project owner.

Li Chunqiu, a representative of the Chinese contractor, said the project team maintained strict safety and quality standards despite

high temperatures, heavy rainfall and lengthy material delivery times.

Once operational, the facilities are expected to strengthen aviation safety and flight coordination at the airport and support the opening of new international routes.

Osvaldo Vieira International Airport, located in Bissau, the capital of Guinea-Bissau, is the country's only international airport. First opened in 1955, the airport is undergoing a broader modernization program, with a new passenger terminal recently inaugurated in March. – Xinhua

Solar energy becomes Portugal's largest electricity production for 1st time

LISBON – Solar energy became Portugal's largest domestic source of electricity generation for the first time in July, national grid operator REN reported last week.

According to REN, solar energy supplied 19 percent of Portugal's total electricity consumption, while renewable sources collectively met 53 percent of national demand in July.

Hydropower followed with 16 percent, wind power with 13 percent and biomass with 5.0 percent. Non-renewable sources accounted for 13 percent of the total consumption, with the remaining 34 percent met through imports.

In the first seven months of the year, renewable sources covered 68 percent of Portugal's total electricity

consumption, with hydropower and wind remaining the largest contributors during the period, followed by solar and biomass.

The nation's electricity consumption rose by 3.0 percent year on year in July and 3.5 percent in the January-July period, REN added.

– Xinhua

Tourism contributes 11.8 pct to Portugal's GDP in 2025

LISBON – Tourism contributed 36.2 billion euros (US\$41.6 billion) to Portugal's economy in 2025, accounting for 11.8 percent of GDP, the National Statistics Institute (INE) said last week.

According to INE data, tourism generated 30.4 billion euros in gross value added (GVA), equivalent to 11.4 percent of Portugal's total GVA. Compared

with 2024, tourism-related GDP and GVA increased by 5.3 percent and 5.5 percent, respectively, in nominal terms.

The institute noted that while tourism continued to support real economic growth, its contribution eased gradually, falling from 3.6 percentage points in 2022 to 1.2 percentage points in 2023, 0.4 percentage points in 2024 and 0.3 percentage points in 2025. – Xinhua



Europa League winners Aston Villa's Spanish manager Unai Emery (left) arrives for a pitch inspection on Tuesday, the eve of the UEFA Supercup against Champions League winners Paris Saint Germain (PSG) in Salzburg, Austria.

— AFP

PSG 'want to win everything,' says Luis Enrique



SALZBURG, Austria — Paris Saint-Germain coach Luis Enrique says the European champions "want to win everything" this season, ahead of their first chance of silverware in yesterday's UEFA Super Cup final against Aston Villa.

PSG secured their second straight Champions League title last term, as well as a fifth consecutive Ligue 1 crown, the UEFA Super Cup, the French Champions' Trophy and the FIFA Intercontinental Cup.

Luis Enrique's side get their new campaign under way in Salzburg against Europa League winners Villa.

"We have to show what our level is and that has to be shown on the pitch," the Spaniard told reporters.

"We want to win everything and, if you look at history, it's hard to win all the time. But that's what we want to aim for."

PSG won the Super Cup 12 months ago with a penalty shoot-out victory over Tottenham.

They have a strong recent record against English opposition, including beating Aston Villa in a dramatic Champions League quarter-final in 2024-2025.

"It's difficult to ascertain how they'll be after seeing only a few pre-season games," Luis Enrique said of facing Unai Emery's side.

"We'll see what sort of game it will be and what condition both sides will be in.

"Each opponent we've faced over the last few years have shown how dangerous they can be. We're happy about how we were able to play. Our aim is to prove how unpredictable we can be."

Paris have taken a strong squad to Austria, including winger Bradley Barcola who has been heavily linked with a possible move to Liverpool.

There is no place for recent signing Lucas Digne, though, just two days after the France left-back departed Villa Park to rejoin PSG.

"We shared a big hug yesterday [Tuesday]. He congratulated me on all that I've accomplished at the club and I did the same to him," said captain Marquinhos, who was Digne's teammate during the France international's first stint at the Parc des Princes from 2013-2016.

"He's had a long journey back, but I'm so happy he's back. I'm really happy he's here. He's a good guy and a good friend." — AFP

Man City sign Argentina goalkeeper Rulli from Marseille



MARSEILLE - Manchester City have signed Argentina international goalkeeper Geronimo Rulli from Marseille on a two-year deal, both clubs announced yesterday.

The 34-year-old will serve as City's number-two goalkeeper behind Italian Gianluigi Donnarumma.

"This is an amazing opportunity for me and one I had to grasp," said Rulli, who returns for a second spell at City having spent the 2016/17 season at the Etihad without making a first team appearance.

"When the chance to join Manchester City comes along you have to go for it.

"Everyone knows what an impressive club this is.

"City's success over a long time

has been impressive. Everyone I have spoken to about City said I had to join them because they are a club with incredibly high standards.

"My job now is to train hard, get to know the players and staff and do everything I can to reach my best level."

Rulli has won eight caps for Argentina and was in the squad that won the 2022 World Cup and 2024 Copa America and reached last month's World Cup final in which they lost to Spain.

He previously played for European clubs including Real Sociedad, Villarreal, Montpellier and Ajax.

He famously scored a penalty in Villarreal's 2021 Europa League final victory over Manchester United, before denying opposite number David de Gea to claim the trophy 11-10 in the shootout.

Having been fined 10 million euros for failing to meet UEFA break-even targets, Marseille have to sell players this summer to balance its books.

Marseille's fifth-place finish in Ligue 1 during the 2025-2026 season also means the club will not participate in the lucrative Champions League.

On Tuesday, Marseille announced the departure of another Argentine player, defender Facundo Medina, to Bayer Leverkusen after just one season with the club.

Marseille had previously parted ways with some of its highest earners, such as English forward Mason Greenwood, who left for Fenerbahce, and Gabonese striker Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang, who headed to Spanish side Deportivo La Coruña. — AFP

Football shorts

Chavarria say goodbye to Rayo after sealing Chelsea move



MADRID — Rayo Vallecano have sold left-back Pep Chavarria to Chelsea for a fee of around 19 million euros.

The sale comes just days before Rayo kick off the new season away to Sevilla on Saturday and leaves Jozhua Vertrouwd as the only current option on the left side of defense, although the transfer will provide an important boost to the Madrid club's finances.

The 28-year-old Chavarria joined Rayo from Zaragoza in 2022 and made 125 appearances, playing a major role in helping the club reach last season's UEFA Conference League final.

"I take with me memories that I will cherish forever," wrote the defender in a farewell message to Rayo fans.

"The magical nights in Vallecas, a stadium that always believed in us and supported us, and the shared dream of something as big as a European final. Being part of that journey has been a true privilege," commented Chavarria.

The left-back said he left "with a full heart and the certainty that a part of me will always belong to Vallecas."

"Thank you for everything, Rayo. Forever a Rayo fan," he concluded. — Xinhua

Roma sign Argentina's Molina from Atletico Madrid



ROME — AS Roma completed the signing of Argentina's 2022 World Cup winning right-back Nahuel Molina from Spanish side Atletico Madrid, the Serie A club announced yesterday.

The 28-year-old, who also featured in last month's World Cup final when Argentina lost their crown to Spain, cost Roma a reported 17 million euros (US\$20 million).

The 65-times capped defender has also won two Copa Americas in 2021 and 2024 and made 249 appearances and scored 19 goals in all competitions in Europe while playing for Udinese and Atletico Madrid, Roma said.

Molina could make his debut when Roma, who are back in the Champions League after a seven

year hiatus, play Fiorentina in their Serie A opener on August 24. — AFP

Pogba suffers new injury, raising doubts over future



MONACO — Paul Pogba suffered a new thigh injury on Tuesday during the first day of Monaco's training camp in England, casting doubt on his future in the Principality.

The 2018 French World Cup winner suffered an injury to his left thigh as Monaco trained at the English national football centre at St George's Park after beating Liverpool in a friendly on Sunday.

The 33-year-old midfielder was only returning to group training after a long spell of right-knee problems.

Pogba has played only one half of football for Monaco in this pre-season.

According to several sources close to the matter, the new injury shows Pogba is some way off the level of fitness required to begin the Ligue 1 season.

After serving 18 months of a four-year ban for doping, Pogba played just six Ligue 1 matches for Monaco last season, totalling 115 minutes on the pitch. — AFP



Somalian referee Omar Artan gives a thumb up prior to the start of the UEFA Supercup football match between Champions League winners Paris Saint Germain (PSG) and Europa League winners Aston Villa in Salzburg, Austria yesterday.

— AFP

Chilean veteran Sanchez signs with MLS club Montreal



MONTREAL - Chilean forward Alexis Sanchez, a former Barcelona and Arsenal star, has signed with CF Montreal through at least the 2027 season, the Major League Soccer club announced on Tuesday.

The 37-year-old winger, a two-time Copa America champion with Chile, has also made stops at Manchester United, Inter Milan and Marseille and spent last season with La Liga side Sevilla.

"I'm very happy to join CF Montreal and take on this new challenge," Sanchez said. "I'm grateful to the club for the confidence they've shown in me and I'm eager to put my experience

to work so that we can reach our objectives and create memorable moments for our supporters."

With four wins and four draws from 18 MLS matches, Montreal sit 14th in the 15-team Eastern Conference and are third-worst in the league overall with only Atlanta and Kansas City trailing.

CF Montreal senior director Luca Saputo hopes the deal, which has a club option for the 2027-28 season, will begin a turnaround for the Canadian club.

"The arrival of Alexis Sanchez represents an important step in our sporting project," Saputo said.

"Alexis possesses exceptional technical quality and experience at

the highest level of world football. His personality, leadership and competitive mindset fully align with our club's identity and ambitions.

"We are of firm belief that he will have an immediate impact both on the field and in the locker room."

Sanchez helped Barcelona win the Spanish SuperCup, UEFA Super Cup and FIFA Club World Cup plus a Copa del Rey and La Liga crown.

He helped Arsenal take the 2015 and 2017 FA Cups and won Serie A titles with Inter Milan in 2020-21 and 2023-24 plus two Supercoppas and an Italian Cup.

With Chile, Sanchez helped land Copa America titles in 2015 and 2016. — AFP

Warholm on track in bid for 4th Euro hurdles gold

Athletics

Luke Phillips

BIRMINGHAM, United Kingdom – Karsten Warholm kept his bid for a second gold of the European championships in Birmingham and a fourth 400m hurdles title on track as he sailed through qualifiers yesterday.

Warholm, who set the 400m hurdles world record of 45.94 seconds when winning gold at the Tokyo Olympics in 2021, was part of the Norwegian quartet that won the 4x400m mixed relay on Monday.

He won his semi-final at the Alexander Stadium in 48.01sec, with the final scheduled for 1940 GMT tomorrow [3:40 a.m. Saturday morning Macau time].

Since winning his first world title in London back in 2017, Warholm has been one of the most dominant athletes in the world of track and field.

The 30-year-old has claimed two more world titles, but had to be content with Olympic silver at the 2024 Paris Games.

He is also Europe's leading hurdler, having bagged three back-to-back continental titles in Berlin

in 2018, Munich in 2022 and Rome two years ago.

Warholm equalled German Harald Schmid's haul of three European 400m hurdles titles when he won in a championship record of 46.98sec in Rome and will move out as sole record holder should he win in Birmingham.

Remarkably, since the 2016 Olympic Games when Warholm made the semi-finals in his first full season in the event, he has only been beaten once by a European – France's Wilfried Happio finishing fourth in the final of the 2022 world championships in Oregon, the Norwegian star was seventh on his return from injury.

Warholm also holds the 33 fastest times in history by a European 400m hurdler, including a season's best of 46.61sec for victory in the London Diamond League last month.

Warholm leads the 2026 European list by almost one second from Germany's Emil Agyekum, the only two Europeans to have broken the 48sec barrier this year before the Euros.

Sweden's Oskar Edlund became the third when he set a national record to win the first semi in



Norway's Karsten Warholm celebrates after winning the men's 400m hurdles semi-final 3 during the European Athletics Championships at Alexander Stadium in Birmingham yesterday. – AFP

47.81sec ahead of Germany's Owe Fischer-Breiholz.

Agyekum won the second semi in 48.17sec ahead of Italy's reigning Euro silver medallist Alessandro Sibilio.

English fireworks

There were fireworks in the semi-finals of the men's 800m as Ireland's Mark English set a championship record of 1min 43.49sec in winning

the second semi.

The time beat the previous best of 1:43.84 set by East Germany's Olaf Beyer at the 1978 Prague champs.

"That feels good, it really does," said English, a qualified medical doctor. "The record means more to some other people than to me.

"I saw the record before the race and I thought it would probably be broken by someone at these

championships. It's nice to get it but we'll have another race tomorrow and I'm ready to put on another show."

A two-time European bronze medallist, 33-year-old English roared home to set himself up as one of the favourites for today's final.

Britain's world and Olympic finalist Max Burgin and teammate Ben Pattison also went through to ensure a serious home challenge.

One athlete to miss out, however, was France's defending champion Gabriel Tual.

Tual, the sixth-fastest man and the second-fastest European in the two-lap race, could only finish sixth in the semi won by Burgin.

"I was good enough but I didn't have anything left in the tank in the last 200m," said Tual.

Completing the line-up for the final are France's Corentin Le Clezio, Spain's Mohamed Attaoui, Italian Francesco Pernici – who all broke the 1:44 barrier – along with Croatian Marino Bloudek and a second Spaniard, David Barroso.

"Everyone is in with a shout of getting a medal. It will be a great race, but to finally win gold would mean a lot," English said. – AFP/MPD



Shark's New Zealand fullback Ma'a Nonu (centre) speaks with his teammates during a rugby union tour match against New Zealand at Kings Park Stadium in Durban, South Africa on Tuesday.

After the All Blacks performed a traditional pre-match Haka, 44-year-old former All Black and Sharks substitute Nonu stepped forward and delivered a response. – AFP

Stumps

Bangladesh's Litton fit for Australia Test: cricket board

DHAKA – Bangladesh's experienced wicketkeeper-batsman Litton Das is fit and available for a Test against Australia in Darwin this week, the national cricket board said yesterday.

The 31-year-old had been sidelined since June with a left calf injury and was initially ruled out of the two-match series.

In a further boost for the visitors on their first Test tour of Australia in 23 years, Bangladesh Cricket Board said that left-arm pacer Shoriful Islam had also cleared a fitness test on Monday.

Islam, who recovered from a hamstring injury, was set to fly to Australia yesterday, and would be available for the second Test.

His return provides timely reinforcement for Bangladesh, who have been hit by injury ahead of the tour.

After the Darwin Test starting today, the second and final Test will be played in Mackay from August 22. – AFP

Sri Lanka's Kusal Mendis out of India Tests with injury

COLOMBO – Sri Lanka wicketkeeper Kusal Mendis has been ruled out of two Tests against India due to injury as selectors named the squad for the home series yesterday.

Wicketkeeper-batter Niroshan Dickwella, who could play his first Test in over three years, makes the 16-member squad in place of Mendis.

The opening match will be played at the Galle International Stadium from Saturday. The second will begin on August 23 at Colombo's Sinhalese Sports Club.

Dickwella, 33, a left-hand batter, has not played a Test since March 2023 after disciplinary action against him.

Mendis injured his hamstring in a domestic game.

Pathum Nissanka was unavailable for selection as he recovers from a wrist injury. – AFP

Rybakina ousts Osaka to book Toronto semi-final against Gauff

Tennis

TORONTO – World number two Elena Rybakina came from a set down to defeat four-time Grand Slam winner Naomi Osaka on Tuesday and reach the WTA Toronto Masters semi-finals, where she will face fourth-ranked Coco Gauff.

Rybakina, the reigning Australian Open champion from Kazakhstan, fired 13 aces in a 4-6, 7-6 (7/5), 6-4 victory.

"Super happy. It was a very difficult match," Rybakina said after a tight battle lasting 2hr 33min.

"In the first set (I made) a few mistakes, a poor start.

"It was a really tough one but I'm glad I could turn it around, I don't yet know how, but I think my

serve helped me a little bit."

Gauff, a 22-year-old American, had a walkover into her first Canada semi-final when Switzerland's Belinda Bencic withdrew with a hip injury.

"I'm really sorry to not be able to compete," Bencic said in a statement. "I tried everything possible to be ready. Looking forward to being back in Toronto next time."

Gauff, the 2023 US Open and 2025 French Open champion, defeated Rybakina in their only previous meeting, which came at Toronto in a 2022 third-round match.

"She's a fighter," Rybakina said of Gauff.

"I definitely need to bring my energy and serve well."

Poland's Iga Swiatek and Ukraine's Elina Svitolina met in yesterday's other semi-final.

Osaka and Rybakina staged a dramatic duel in their first ever meeting on tour.

"We practised couple of times before so I more or less knew how the ball was going to come, what to expect," Rybakina said.

"In some moments my energy wasn't there but I'm glad in the end it went my way."

Rybakina is within touching distance of becoming world number one for the first time.

If two-time Grand Slam champion wins the Toronto title she would move to just four ranking points behind Aryna Sabalenka, who lost in the last 16. – AFP

England captain Root tells players to be 'adults' as he ditches curfew

Cricket

LONDON – Joe Root said yesterday there would be no curfew in place during his second spell as England Test captain.

Root will lead the England at his Headingley home ground on August 19 in their series opener against Pakistan for their first Test since former skipper Ben Stokes retired from international cricket and Brendon McCullum was sacked as red-ball coach.

McCullum, who remains in charge of England's white-ball teams, lost his job after a 2-1 home series loss to New Zealand in June, which followed a disastrous Ashes campaign in Australia.

One of the major controversies at the end of the 'Bazball' era was an incident at a London nightclub in June where Stokes and Gus Atkinson were out past a midnight curfew.

The pair missed the second Test against New Zealand at the Oval, with Root taking temporary charge of the team.

England managing director Rob Key established the curfew, which came about after white-ball captain Harry Brook was fined for an altercation with a bouncer in New Zealand last November.

But Root told Sky Sports cricket podcast: "There's not going to be a curfew. I don't think this needs to be a big deal, to be honest.

"My view on curfews is I don't think they work, and if you want guys to take responsibility on the field they've got to be able to feel they can be grown adults off it and make good strong decisions off it.

"That's for us as a team to manage well, and self-police well, for me and 'Flem' (new red-ball coach Stephen Fleming) to manage

well in many ways but ultimately you're grown adults, you know what it takes to play for England, you know what your responsibilities are off the field and we need to make sure we don't find ourselves with any little situations off the field."

Root, 35, holds the record for captaining England in the most Tests (65) and to the most wins (27). He skippered the team from 2017 to 2022.

"We should be known for how we play our cricket and what we do on the field, we should be on the back pages of the newspapers and people reading about that sort of stuff," said Root.

"Be adults, look after yourselves, look after each other, create a good strong culture when you know when the right time is to celebrate and enjoy a win or to have a sensible beer or whatever, but remember you're playing for England." – AFP

Rod Stewart cancels tour dates after heart surgery

LONDON – British rock star Rod Stewart, 81, has cancelled forthcoming US tour dates after having a heart operation, his social media announced.

A message posted on Tuesday on his Instagram page said the raspy-voiced rocker, known for hits such as “Da Ya Think I’m Sexy?”, has “successfully undergone a routine coronary stent procedure”.

This procedure is to widen blocked or narrowed coronary arteries by inserting a tube that allows blood to flow more freely.

He had been due to play a series of US tour dates this month including in Las Vegas.

Now, “on the advice of his doctors, he will take the next four weeks to recuperate and regain full fitness before returning to the stage,” his management said.

“Unfortunately, this means he will be unable to continue his

current tour dates”.

The spiky-haired singer and songwriter, who had a string of megahits in the 1970s and 1980s, has kept up a busy touring schedule despite his age.

He wrote in 2025: “I love what I do, and I do what I love. I’m fit, have a full head of hair and can run 100 metres in 18 seconds.”

Stewart has recently cancelled several US shows over ill health, however, most recently on Sunday in Cincinnati, described at the time as due to “an unforeseen but minor medical procedure”.

In June, he cancelled a concert in California at the last moment after contracting laryngitis, but faced criticism for attending a World Cup match the next day.

Later in June he was seen receiving oxygen during a show in Utah and told the audience he had nearly fainted.

– AFP

California calls Paramount’s threat to leave state ‘blackmail’

LOS ANGELES – California accused Paramount of “blackmail” on Tuesday over a reported threat to pull the company out of the state because of lawsuits aimed at stopping its mega-merger with Warner Bros.

A dozen US states have launched legal action to block a US\$110 billion move that would see the firm swallow the storied Hollywood studio, claiming the debt-laden deal – financed by Middle East oil money – would reduce competition in the movie industry and lead to job cuts.

“In a span of weeks, Paramount agreed to halt the merger until a court decision or until June 2027, asked for a November trial, and is now back with another attempt to blackmail the state into letting an illegal deal through,” California Attorney General Rob Bonta wrote on social media.

“This illegal merger will result in higher costs, fewer options, and

fewer people making movies,” he wrote. “My office remains committed to stopping illegal consolidation and protecting a vibrant California economy for businesses that play by the rules.”

Bonta’s broadside comes as trade media reported Paramount Skydance chief David Ellison, whose ultra-wealthy family is a close ally of US President Donald Trump, told senior executives he will start moving the firm on October 1 if Bonta does not negotiate a settlement to the lawsuits.

Paramount did not immediately respond to AFP requests for comment.

October 1 is significant because it is the date on which a US\$7 million-a-day “ticking fee” begins accruing for Warner Bros. Discovery shareholders if the merger has not closed.

Entertainment outlet *Variety*, citing insiders, said Ellison had devised a five-year plan to move the

company from California, starting with its Los Angeles headquarters.

Any exit from Southern California – the capital of America’s movie industry – would likely spark a wave of resignations from workers unwilling to relocate.

The war of words comes days after Britain gave the green light to the takeover, removing a major international hurdle to a deal that already has approval from the US federal government and from the European Union.

If the merger eventually closes, the new combined company would control a vast array of assets, including CNN, Warner Bros. Pictures and the HBO Max streaming service.

In addition to resistance from Hollywood figures, the deal also worries news media insiders who say Paramount is already remaking CBS News to make it more Trump-friendly, and could do the same with CNN.

– AFP

Jamie Lee Curtis takes charge in new comedy ‘Newlyweds’

LOS ANGELES – Oscar-winning actress Jamie Lee Curtis fulfilled two wishes with her new television project, “Newlyweds”: being the boss and returning to the set of a sitcom.

Starring Tea Leoni and Tim Daly, the comedy, which premieres in October on NBC, centres on an impulsive romance between a middle-aged couple who tie the knot after just a few days together.

Curtis, who has an extensive film and television résumé, said the multi-camera sitcom appealed to her to the point of having previously “begged” her agents for such an opportunity.

“It was my favourite job. I love... every aspect of it. The dance with the cameras, the idea that you actually get to rehearse something and work it and learn a joke and play it,” she told reporters.

“And I just never got to do it. And so I just decided to basically kind of create my own job and met Gail,” she added, referring to “Will & Grace” screenwriter Gail Lerner.

The comedy, in which Curtis plays an ex-wife, also allowed her

to take the reins of a project as a producer, something she had long desired.

“I’ve wanted to be a boss my whole life,” she said. “I’ve been waiting my whole life, literally, to be able to manifest ideas and bring what I love about what I do into the workplace.”

“I like to refer to myself as the HBIC – head bitch in charge,” she laughed.

For Leoni and Daly, who are married in real life, the series also marked a return to the small screen as a couple, after working together in the political drama “Madam Secretary.”

“We’ve done this, this particular medium, and loved it, and we wanted to spend our days together,” said Daly, 70.

“Newlyweds” is part of the lineup for the coming months that NBCUniversal revealed to the media this week in Los Angeles at its “Backlot Pass” presentation.

The event also offered glimpses of “Crystal Lake,” the prequel to the “Friday the 13th” horror franchise, starring Linda Cardellini, which will arrive on Peacock in October.

– AFP

Renowned Chinese opera singer Guo Lanying dies at 97

BEIJING – Guo Lanying, one of China’s most celebrated opera singers hailed as a “People’s Artist,” died at the age of 97 on Tuesday, the China National Opera and Dance Drama Theater said in an obituary yesterday.

Guo, whose powerful yet lyrical voice made her a household name in China and one of the most recognizable figures in Chinese performing arts, left behind a body of work that includes some of the country’s most enduring songs, many of which remain popular decades after they were first performed.

Among her most famous works was the song “My Motherland,” which she sang for a 1950s film set against the backdrop of the battle at Shangganling, one of the most fiercely contested engagements during the War to Resist US Aggression and Aid Korea (1950-1953). With its stirring melody and heartfelt lyrics expressing deep affection for the homeland, the song became a lasting part of the collective memory of generations of Chinese people over the following 70 years and continues to be widely sung today in China.

Guo also won widespread acclaim for her portrayal of the heroine Xi’er in the revolutionary-themed opera “The White-Haired Girl,” a landmark work in modern Chinese opera.

In 2019, Guo was awarded the national honorary title of “People’s Artist,” one of China’s highest national honors. The award citation praised her for her “pioneering contributions to the establishment of China’s national opera performance system and the development of Chinese vocal art.”

– Xinhua



This photo taken on May 19, 2002 shows Guo Lanying singing the song Nanniwan (“South Muddy Bend”) in Yan’an, Shaanxi Province. – Xinhua



This photo taken on Oct. 28, 1989 shows Guo Lanying performing at the Capital Indoor Stadium in Beijing, capital of China. – Xinhua

World Weather

CHINA	ASIA-PACIFIC	WORLD	LUSOPHONE
Beijing 20°C~29°C	Manila 25°C~30°C	New York 21°C~31°C	Lisbon 20°C~31°C
Shanghai 25°C~31°C	Bangkok 26°C~34°C	London 20°C~36°C	Rio de Janeiro 20°C~28°C
Hong Kong 25°C~31°C	Tokyo 22°C~29°C	Frankfurt 18°C~34°C	Luanda 19°C~22°C
Taipei 24°C~35°C	Singapore 26°C~33°C	Vancouver 15°C~25°C	Maputo 12°C~22°C
Guangzhou 24°C~34°C	Kuala Lumpur 25°C~34°C	Paris 22°C~38°C	Dili 21°C~31°C
Nanjing 23°C~29°C	Jakarta 23°C~34°C	Moscow 9°C~15°C	São Tomé 23°C~27°C
Guilin 22°C~32°C	Seoul 24°C~33°C	Las Vegas 25°C~35°C	Praia 24°C~31°C
Xi’an 19°C~29°C	Sydney 8°C~19°C	Monte Carlo 25°C~33°C	Bissau 23°C~31°C



Cuddle time

A worker interacts with an African elephant at Sheldrick Wildlife Trust's Nairobi Nursery in Nairobi, Kenya, on Tuesday.

August 12 marks World Elephant Day, an international annual event to bring attention to the threats facing elephants and promote their protection. — Xinhua



Lone survivor

This photo shows a nearly dried-out sunflower field near the village of Kovilj, Serbia, last week, as a prolonged heatwave continues to affect much of the region.

Scientists say global warming is increasing droughts and causing weather emergencies to become more extreme and more frequent. Prolonged drought and hot weather across Europe have pushed water levels along the Danube river to record seasonal lows, reaching its lowest flow rate in the last 30 years. — AFP



No speed limit

A sports car-shaped boat is available for rent on a beach on Taboga Island, off Panama City, Panama on Saturday. — AFP



2 become 1!

Members of the 'Caravane du Tour' pose prior to the 9th and final stage of the fifth edition of the Women's Tour de France cycling race, 99.2 km from Nice to Nice, southeastern France on Sunday. — AFP

Wishing for the best

Hindu devotees offer prayers as they tie a sacred thread to a "Kalpavriksha", a divine wishing tree, on the occasion of Hariyali Amavasya at a Hindu temple in Ajmer, India yesterday. — AFP



Versatile flowers

This photo taken on July 30 shows handkerchiefs woven from lotus silk in Hanoi, Vietnam. Every summer, lotus flowers bloom across Vietnam. Fresh lotus flowers are widely sold at night flower markets in Hanoi. Lotus stems are also used to make lotus silk, as local artisans extract fibres from stems, spin them into threads, and weave them into handicrafts such as handkerchiefs and scarves. — Xinhua

