

Hengqin university town to cost 18 billion yuan

Tony Wong

The Macau government expects to spend 18 billion yuan (21.57 billion patacas) on its Macao-Hengqin International Education (University) Town project, which is being developed in three phases, the Legislative Assembly's (AL) Follow-up Committee for Public Finance Affairs told the media yesterday.

The committee held a meeting yesterday to approve and sign a report summarising the information previously provided by the Macau government about its plan and budget for the university town project. Yesterday's meeting was held behind closed doors, after which lawmaker Becky Song Pek Kei, who chairs the committee, briefed reporters about the meeting.

The university town's first phase consists of transitional teaching and research facilities in Hengqin to be used by three Macau public universities – namely the University of Macau (UM), the Macao Polytechnic University (MPU), and the Macao University of Tourism (UTM) – before the completion of their respective new campuses in Hengqin.

The UM is currently constructing its new, second campus on Zhuhai's Hengqin island. The future new campus will be the university's first campus outside the jurisdiction of the Macao Special Administrative Region (MSAR), making it the



This artist's rendition downloaded from the University of Macau's (UM) website yesterday shows a part of its future campus in Hengqin, i.e., the second phase of the Macao-Hengqin International Education (University) Town.

university's second campus. Geographically, both campuses are located in Hengqin, but the first, current one is under the MSAR's direct jurisdiction on a plot of land covering one square kilometre, leased from the Chinese mainland.

Dezhi Plaza (德智廣場) in Hengqin, a property development project consisting of about a dozen high-rise and low-rise buildings, was initially slated to operate as a "German City" commercial complex,

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

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

During yesterday's media briefing, Song noted that the university town's first phase in Dezhi Plaza will start operating later this month. The transitional teaching and research facilities in

Dezhi Plaza shared by the three universities cover a gross floor area of 65,000 square metres, she noted.

Song also noted that the university town's second phase is UM's new campus in Hengqin, the partial and full operation of which is slated for 2028 and 2029, respectively. The facilities on the campus will cover a gross floor area of 718,000 square metres.

Song said that the third phase consists of the new campuses



of MPU and UTM in Hengqin, construction of which is slated to start in 2027 and be completed in 2030. Facilities in the third phase are expected to cover a gross floor area of 970,000 square metres, she said.

Song also quoted the government as saying that the university town's three phases are expected to ultimately accommodate over 20,000 students. Construction of the three phases is expected to cost 18 billion yuan in total.

According to Song, the university town's three phases will maintain the same operating standards as the main Macau campuses. Moreover, students from any of the three universities can share facilities such as libraries and sports complexes across the town. ■



"Yangniu," a rescued Asian elephant, is seen at her birthday party at the Asian Elephant Breeding and Rescue Center in Xishuangbanna Dai Autonomous Prefecture, Yunnan Province, on Wednesday. The "short-nose family" of wild Asian elephants captured worldwide attention in 2021 after roaming more than 1,400 kilometers across Yunnan. The herd eventually returned to its traditional habitat with 14 members and, welcoming two new calves born this year, has since grown to 21. Yunnan has developed a comprehensive approach to Asian elephant conservation that combines habitat restoration, connected corridors, scientific monitoring and early warning, community participation, and cross-border cooperation. The province is also home to the Xishuangbanna Asian Elephant Breeding and Rescue Center, which has rescued and rehabilitated more than 30 wild Asian elephants since its establishment in 2009. China has established 11 nature reserves covering a total of 5,098 square kilometers across wild Asian elephant habitats. The country's wild Asian elephant population has risen from about 150 in the 1980s to nearly 400 today. – Xinhua

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The Macau Post Daily

Confucius Institute, Chinese medical team launch martial arts injury prevention and treatment training in São Tomé and Príncipe

– Story on p. 6

Over 110,000 Canadians call for ouster of US envoy

More than 110,000 Canadians had signed a petition as of yesterday calling for the removal of controversial US Ambassador Pete Hoekstra, the latest sign of deepening rifts between the neighbouring countries.

– Story on p. 11

Colombia authorises joint anti-drug operations with US military: Pentagon chief

Colombia has authorised joint military operations with the United States to target drug traffickers, US Defence Secretary Pete Hegseth said on Wednesday.

– Story on p. 12

McDonald's suspends 'Ebi Burger' sales as precaution

Khalel Vallo

McDonald's Macau has temporarily suspended sales of its "Ebi Burger" series as a precaution after McDonald's operations in China's Taiwan region announced that two shrimp burgers there were found to contain synthetic antibiotics that did not meet food safety standards, according to a statement by public broadcaster TDM.

The statement said that McDonald's in Taiwan announced that its "Ebi Burger" and "Double Double Ebi Burger" were found to contain nitrofurantoin* and its metabolites** to exceed permitted standards in the imported shrimp patties used in the products.

The products were removed from sale yesterday morning, with further testing being conducted in cooperation with suppliers and testing organisations, the statement noted.

In response to an enquiry, McDonald's Macau said it had checked with its supplier and confirmed that the shrimp patties used in its "Ebi Burger" series sold in Macau have different formulations and batches from those used by McDonald's eateries in Taiwan.

Nevertheless, McDonald's Macau said it had immediately suspended sales of the relevant products as a precautionary measure to address public concerns. Meanwhile, the statement also said that the media in Hong Kong also reported that the McDonald's there had, as a precaution, temporarily suspended sales of the problematic products.

The suspension in Macau is precautionary, the statement said, with McDonald's Macau noting that the shrimp patty formulations and batches sold locally differ from

those involved in the Taiwan case. ■

*Nitrofurans are a class of synthetic antibiotic and antimicrobial medications primarily used to treat and prevent lower urinary tract infections (UTIs) such as acute cystitis. The most common human medicine in this class is nitrofurantoin, which concentrates in the urine to kill bacteria in the bladder. – Gemini

** Metabolites are the intermediate or end products of metabolism – the chemical processes that occur inside a living cell or organism to sustain life. They are small molecules (like sugars, amino acids, fatty acids, or organic acids) that are created, transformed, or broken down during metabolic reactions. They act as fuel, building blocks for growth, signalling molecules, and waste products that must be removed. – DeepSeek



This image downloaded from McDonald's Hong Kong website yesterday shows the "Ebi Burger" series.

Police arrest salesman for embezzling funds

Armindo Neves

The Judiciary Police (PJ) arrested a local salesman on Monday for the embezzlement of around 450,000 patacas, PJ spokesman Cheong Kim Fong said during a regular press conference yesterday.

Cheong identified the suspect as a 34-year-old local man surnamed Wong.

According to Cheong, Wong was hired by a motorcycle company in Areia Preta in mid-December last year.

Wong owed approximately 200,000 patacas to a friend due to gambling debts, Cheong said. Starting in May, taking advantage of the company supervisor's absence, he privately contacted customers who had already paid deposits, asking them to settle their remaining vehicle payment balances in cash – ranging from 25,000 to 45,000 patacas per transaction.

However, Wong failed to remit the money to the company or place the vehicle orders. By August, a total of 11 customers had been affected. Apart from a portion used to pay off his debts, the remainder was entirely gambled away, according to Cheong.

As customers repeatedly pressed for the delivery of their vehicles, Wong realised he could no longer conceal his actions and surrendered to the Public Security Police Force (CPSP) on the afternoon of August 10. Cheong added that the company involved pledged that it would honour the orders of customers whose payments had been verified, while pursuing criminal liability against the suspect.

Wong has been transferred to the Public Prosecutions Office (MP), where he faces a charge of breach of trust. ■



Judiciary Police (PJ) spokesman Cheong Kim Fong looks on during yesterday's regular press conference at the PJ headquarters in Zape.

– Photo: Armindo Neves

Gongbei Customs finds foreign cash in Macau woman's underwear

Armindo Neves

Zhuhai's Gongbei Customs announced in a statement yesterday that its officers seized US\$80,000 (646,933 patacas) and 40,000 euros (372,936 patacas) in cash – totalling roughly 1.01 million patacas – at the Gongbei Port checkpoint on July 30.

Gongbei Customs identified the suspect as a female Macau resident surnamed Wong.

According to the statement, Wong was exiting Zhuhai en route to Macau via the "green channel" (nothing to declare) in the passenger inspection hall. Customs officers noticed that she was walking hurriedly and avoiding eye contact by looking down. They stopped her for inspection and, upon further examination, discovered 12 bundles of cash concealed around her waist and inside her underwear. The cash totalled US\$80,000 and 40,000 euros, equivalent to around 856,000 yuan.

Gongbei Customs reminded travellers that they are permitted to

carry foreign currency only up to the equivalent of US\$5,000 when exiting the Chinese mainland for the first time within a 15-day period. Passengers leaving the mainland for a second or subsequent time within a 15-day period may carry no more than the equivalent of US\$1,000, while those leaving multiple times

within a single day are limited to the equivalent of US\$500 each time.

Amounts exceeding these limits will not be cleared by Customs unless the traveller has obtained an official permit from foreign exchange authorities or an authorised bank, according to the statement. ■



This undated handout photo provided by Zhuhai's Gongbei Customs yesterday shows 12 bundles of cash seized by its officers at Gongbei Port (checkpoint) on July 30.

2 girls bitten by dog near Ilha Verde: CB

Armindo Neves

The Fire Services Bureau (CB) said in a statement yesterday that two girls were bitten by a dog near a social housing estate in Ilha Verde district.

A CB spokesman confirmed to the *Post* by phone that the victims are sisters. One suffered abrasions on her knee, while the other sustained injuries to her leg. Both were taken by ambulance to the public Conde de São Januário Hospital Centre (CHSCJ) for treatment.

When firefighters arrived at the scene, they were unable to locate the dog that bit the girls, the spokesman said, adding that the incident has been reported to the Municipal Affairs Bureau (IAM) for follow-up.

Mainland girl hurt by falling concrete

Meanwhile, the bureau said in a separate statement yesterday that a girl from the Chinese mainland was injured by falling concrete in the city's central district.

The CB spokesman told the *Post* by phone that the incident occurred at around noon yesterday when a piece of concrete fell from the exterior wall of a commercial building. The girl passing by was struck by the falling debris and suffered minor injuries. She was rushed by ambulance to the CHSCJ for medical care.

The girl sustained a forehead injury but remained in stable condition, the spokesman said yesterday evening.

The spokesman added that Public Security Police Force (PSP) officers have cordoned off the scene and notified the Lands and Urban Construction Bureau (DSSCU) to investigate. ■



The official logo of the Fire Services Bureau (CB)

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Macau Weather

CLOUDY.
SHOWERS, HEAVY AT FIRST.
OCCASIONAL THUNDERSTORMS.
FORCE 3 TO 4 SOUTHWESTERLY
WINDS WITH GUSTS.
RELATIVE HUMIDITY WILL RANGE
BETWEEN 80% AND 98%.



26°C~29°C

Source: SMG

Lawmakers pass bill granting concessions or permits for coastal waters use

Tony Wong

The Legislative Assembly (AL) yesterday passed a government-initiated bill establishing a legal system to formally govern the use of the Macao Special Administrative Region's (MSAR) coastal waters.

The new law, which takes effect on December 1 this year, includes a system for granting private entities concessions or permits to use designated maritime areas for specified periods of time.

The legislation is officially titled the Law on the Use of Maritime Areas.

The outline of the bill was passed during a plenary session in April, after which it was reviewed by the legislature's 3rd Standing Committee. It was resubmitted to yesterday's plenary session – attended by Secretary for Transport and Public Works Raymond Tam Vai Man – where it was voted on article by article in its second and final reading.

Under the new law, concessions will be granted to private entities to use maritime areas for infrastructure requiring long-term operations. Concessions will last between 2 and 15 years and can be renewed for up to five years each time.

Maritime projects permitted under a concession include:

- 1). Facilities to serve the nation's overall interests, particularly safeguarding

national security;

- 2). Facilities to ensure the provision of essential public services, such as telecommunications, electricity, fuel, and tap water;
- 3). Facilities determined by the chief executive as making major contributions to Macau's socioeconomic development;
- 4). Facilities used for vessel docking and their respective navigation channels.

In general, public tenders will be required to grant concessions. However, tenders will be exempt for projects under categories (1) and (2). Furthermore, the government may decide whether to exempt tenders on a case-by-case basis for projects under categories (3) and (4).

In contrast, a "temporary permit" will be granted to private entities using a maritime area for short-term projects. Temporary permits will last up to two years and can also be renewed for up to two years each time.

Under the new law, private entities will be required to pay for the use of maritime areas.

Once a concession is terminated or revoked, facilities set up in the maritime area will generally revert to the MSAR without compensation, free of liability, and free of encumbrances. However, the chief executive may instead require private entities to remove the facilities.



Secretary for Transport and Public Works Raymond Tam Vai Man addresses yesterday's plenary session in the Legislative Assembly's (AL) hemicycle.
– Photo courtesy of TDM

Conversely, after a temporary permit is terminated or revoked, private entities must generally remove their facilities. However, the chief executive can require that facilities remain, in which case they will revert to the MSAR without compensation, free of

liability, and free of encumbrances.

During yesterday's plenary session, Tam noted that the government is still drafting criteria to determine usage fees for maritime areas. Under the law, these fees will be set via an executive order issued by the chief executive.

On December 20, 2015, marking the 16th anniversary of the establishment of the MSAR, the Central People's Government granted Macau formal jurisdiction over 85 square kilometres of its surrounding coastal waters. Previously, unlike Hong Kong, Macau did not have formal jurisdiction over its coastal waters. Macau's current land area stands at 33.4 square kilometres.

Subsequently, in July 2018, Macau enacted its framework law on coastal water management, officially known as the Maritime Areas Management Framework Law.

The 2018 framework law stipulates that Macau's coastal waters are state-owned and that the Central People's Government authorises the MSAR government to exercise administrative power over them. The framework law required the local government to draft specific laws and regulations for managing these waters, enabling the MSAR government to grant concessions, permits, or other official approvals – a mandate fulfilled by the bill passed yesterday. ■

4 public libraries add 'Group Discussion Rooms'



This undated handout photo provided by the Cultural Affairs Bureau (IC) on Wednesday shows its Seac Pai Van Library's new Group Discussion Room.

By Khalel Vallo

The Macao Public Library, under the Cultural Affairs Bureau (IC), has expanded its online reservation services, allowing residents to book "Group Discussion Rooms" at four public libraries via the Macao One Account without needing to visit in person or call ahead, according to a statement released by the bureau on Wednesday.

The new feature is available on both the Macao One Account website and mobile application for the Sir Robert Ho Tung Library, Patane Library, Bairro da Ilha Verde Library, and Seac Pai Van Library. The statement noted that residents can check real-time availability, venue status, and rules of use before completing

their bookings online.

Successful applicants must arrive on time for their reserved sessions and adhere to the library system's guidelines.

The bureau said that these rooms are ideal for group discussions, reading clubs, association meetings, and study exchanges. The bureau added that it will monitor usage demand and implementation to continuously optimise facilities and digital services, aiming to make cultural resources more accessible to the public.

For more information, residents can visit the official Macao Public Library website, use the "My Library" mobile app, or contact library staff on 2837 7117 or 2825 9220 during operating hours. ■

Lawmakers pass bill adding 13 new substances to drug law

Tony Wong

The Legislative Assembly (AL) yesterday unanimously passed a government-initiated bill that will add various substances to the drug list of Macau's anti-drug law, including seven analogues of etomidate*.

Etomidate is the primary active ingredient in a new illicit substance known by the street name "space oil".

The law is officially titled the Law on the Prohibition of the Illicit Production, Trafficking and Consumption of Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances.

Secretary for Security Chan Tsz King introduced the outline of the amendment bill during yesterday's plenary session in the legislature's hemicycle.

As the government had requested an urgent procedure for the bill's debate and vote, it was not assigned to any of the legislature's standing committees for review. Consequently, once the outline was

approved, lawmakers immediately proceeded to the final article-by-article debate and vote, passing the bill in full.

The amendment will take effect the day after its promulgation in the Official Gazette (BO).

During the session, Chan noted that the United Nations Commission on Narcotic Drugs (CND) decided at a meeting last year to place an additional six substances under international control. As these six substances are not currently listed in Macau's anti-drug law, the local government drafted the amendment bill to include them.

Furthermore, Chan pointed out that etomidate and three of its analogues – metomidate, propoxate, and isopropoxate – were added to the anti-drug law last year.

The amendment bill passed yesterday adds seven other analogues of etomidate to the law, even though they are not yet under international control, to address

Macau's specific circumstances. None of the seven substances are currently used for medical purposes, Chan said.

Chan underlined that although no cases involving these seven substances have been detected in Macau yet, preventive measures are necessary given the risks of abuse and their existing ban in the Chinese mainland. Alignment with neighbouring regions will help control abuse risks and safeguard public health and safety.

Judiciary Police (PJ) Director Sit Chong Meng added that since etomidate was listed under Macau's anti-drug law in June last year, police had busted three cases involving the substance as of the end of June this year. ■

**Etomidate is a short-acting intravenous anaesthetic commonly used to induce general anaesthesia and procedural sedation due to its rapid onset and stable cardiovascular profile. – Gemini*



Secretary for Security Chan Tsz King (left) speaks during yesterday's plenary session in the Legislative Assembly's (AL) hemicycle as Judiciary Police (PJ) Director Sit Chong Meng looks on.
– Photo: GCS



‘Porcelain Echoes’ explores Macau’s East-West cultural exchange through porcelain

Khalel Vallo

The “Porcelain Echoes: The Fusion of East and West” exhibition by local visual artist Wan In Fan explores Macau’s role as a meeting point between Eastern and Western cultures through porcelain fragments and contemporary painting techniques.

Held at the Ho’s Clan Association Exhibition Hall (何族崇義堂盛荷堂展廳) on Rua de S. Paulo, the exhibition draws inspiration from porcelain unearthed from the UNESCO World Heritage-listed Ruins of St. Paul’s site, resulting from Macau’s centuries-long history as an East-West entrepôt along the Maritime Silk Road, according to an information board at the entrance.

The exhibition is part of the Macau Artist Society’s (MAS) “Inheritance of Art” series.

According to the introductory text, the exhibition examines how ceramics travelled between regions and became carriers of cultural exchange. Decorative elements from Chinese, Islamic, and Western traditions are brought together, reflecting the interaction of different artistic styles, beliefs, and aesthetic traditions in Macau.

Wan uses broken porcelain as a central visual medium, combining the fragments with raw timber, silver-ink paper, shell pieces, mineral pigments, and metal foil, the text notes. Traditional aesthetic elements are arranged within contemporary compositions, while checkerboard patterns depict mountains and waterways, connecting themes of history, geography, trade, and cultural memory.

The works also draw attention to the evolution of ceramics from practical objects and trade goods into cultural symbols, the text adds, noting that the exhibition references the development of export porcelain – including Kraak porcelain* and European armorial/family crest porcelain – highlighting how designs were repeatedly adapted as they travelled

along maritime trade routes.

Wan graduated from the Macao Polytechnic Institute (renamed Macao Polytechnic University) in 2009 with a bachelor’s degree in Visual Arts (Education), majoring in Chinese painting, according to a statement by MAS. In 2024, she participated in the China National Arts Fund’s training programme on cultivating creative talents in Chinese traditional fine arts for Macau art teachers, the statement noted.

A visual arts educator in Macau, Wan primarily works in gongbi** painting. Her works have been selected for the Macao Art Exhibition, the Collective Exhibition of Macao Artists, and the 11th National Fine Arts Exhibition (Hong Kong, Macau, and Taiwan Invitation Exhibition), the statement added.

“Porcelain Echoes: The Fusion of East and West” is open daily from 10:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. (closed Mondays) at the Ho’s Clan Association Exhibition Hall on Rua de S. Paulo near the St Paul’s Ruins. The exhibition runs until September 4, inviting visitors to explore Macau’s maritime history and the cultural connections preserved in porcelain fragments.

*“Kraak porcelain” is a specific category of Chinese blue-and-white export porcelain made primarily during the late Ming Dynasty (around 1573–1640). The name most likely comes from the Portuguese trading ships called carracks, which transported this kind of porcelain to Europe. The Dutch word for these ships was *kraken*. The term was used as early as 1638 in Dutch East India Company documents. The Kraak style is easily recognised by its decorative design, which is divided into distinct, radiating panels around a central scene. – DeepSeek

**Gongbi is a precise, highly detailed realist style of traditional Chinese painting using fine brushlines and delicate layers of colour. – Gemini

Photos taken by Khalel Vallo yesterday at the Ho’s Clan Association Exhibition Hall



Nation's air, water quality improves in Jan-July

BEIJING — China's air and water quality continued to improve in the first seven months of 2026, as the country strengthened efforts to curb air pollution and protect water resources, the Ministry of Ecology and Environment said yesterday.

The average density of PM2.5, a key indicator measuring air pollution, dropped by 1.8 micrograms per cubic meter in the first seven months of the year compared with the same period last year, a decrease of 6.2 percent, Huang Runqiu, China's ecology and

environment minister, told a press conference.

In the same period, the proportion of days with good air quality rose by 3.9 percentage points year on year.

The ministry also revealed that during this period, 86.5 percent of the surface-water sections and sites monitored by the country were graded Class I to III, indicating good quality, up 2.4 percentage points from the same period last year.

China classifies surface water quality into five grades, with Class I being the best quality.

The country recently issued the 15th Five-Year Plan for Building a Beautiful China, which sets higher standards for controlling air and water pollution.

The plan aims to cut average PM2.5 concentration nationwide to below 27 micrograms per cubic meter by 2030, a 10 percent reduction from the baseline of 30 micrograms per cubic meter set for the 15th Five-Year Plan period (2026-2030).

It also calls for extending remediation efforts to address "black and odorous" water bodies

in county-level cities and rural areas, while raising the target for the proportion of waters rated as "favorable-quality" to 85 percent.

The new "favorable-quality" indicator differs from the previous metric of "surface water meeting or exceeding Grade III in the country's five-tier water quality system" by adding ecological criteria on top of water quality standards.

During the 15th Five-Year Plan period, China will also upgrade its digital and intelligent technologies to better protect air and water quality.

The country will scale up the application of artificial intelligence forecasting models and upgrade its air quality prediction platforms. By 2030, the accuracy rate of 72-hour forecasts for PM2.5 exceedance days nationwide will be raised to above 80 percent.

On the water front, China will build a new batch of automatic sampling stations and deploy a fleet of unmanned surface vessels for marine monitoring, shifting away from the current model that relies primarily on manual sampling.

— Xinhua

Jordan ready to expand economic cooperation with China, says investment minister

Interview

AMMAN — Jordan regards China as a strategic partner in advancing investment, industrial cooperation and economic transformation, Jordan's Minister of Investment Tareq Abu Ghazaleh has said.

"We look forward to elevating Jordan's economic partnership with China to broader and more diversified levels in a way that serves our shared interests and supports sustainable development in both countries," Abu Ghazaleh said in a recent interview with Xinhua.

Recalling his visit to China in June, Abu Ghazaleh said the trip provided him with an opportunity to gain first-hand insight into China's development experience and the progress it has achieved in infrastructure and long-term strategic planning.

China has established itself as one of the world's leading industrial, technological, and trading economies, the minister noted, adding that its continued development creates broad opportunities for cooperation with Jordan, particularly in the fields of investment, industry, and trade.

The importance of this partnership continues to grow in light of China's leadership in a number of sectors that are national priorities for Jordan, "including advanced industries, electronics, renewable energy, energy storage technologies, electric mobility, railway systems, logistics, agricultural technology and pharmaceuticals," he added.

Investment is a key pillar of Jordan's economic development, underpinning efforts to diversify the country's productive base and foster sustainable growth. In recent years, Jordan has introduced a comprehensive package of reforms aimed at creating a more competitive and attractive investment environment.

These efforts contributed to a nearly 25 percent increase in foreign

direct investment inflows in 2025, which exceeded US\$2 billion.

According to the minister, Chinese investment in Jordan has expanded steadily, particularly in the renewable energy, manufacturing, and logistics sectors. These investments have helped create employment opportunities, support local suppliers, and introduce advanced production technologies to the Jordanian market.

Describing China as an important partner in supporting Jordan's economic growth, the minister said bilateral cooperation is evolving toward a more advanced stage.

Referring to the partnership between Chinese investors and Jordan's Arab Potash Company as a successful example of economic cooperation between the two countries, Abu Ghazaleh said the partnership has strengthened production capacity, expanded exports, and enhanced Jordan's position as a leading global supplier of fertilizers and agricultural inputs.

As regards Jordan's advantages in attracting investment, he added that the Kingdom is connected to more than 50 global markets through an extensive network of free trade agreements, supported by a highly skilled workforce and advanced infrastructure, logistics and digital capabilities.

These advantages complement China's industrial and technological capabilities, creating broader opportunities to develop investment and industrial partnerships that generate added value for both sides, Abu Ghazaleh noted.

"With its competitive investment environment, strategic location and modern legislative framework, Jordan is well positioned to serve as a trusted partner and a regional platform for Chinese companies seeking to expand into regional and international markets," he said.

— Xinhua

IPIM receives 194 new projects in H1 2026

Macao's Commerce and Investment Promotion Institute (IPIM) said yesterday that it had attracted 194 new investment projects from enterprises in the first half of the year, up 7.0 percent year-on-year.

More than 60 percent of the

projects were in the "1+4" industries, up more than 40 percent year-on-year, according to IPIM. Projects in modern financial services, high and new technology, and the big health industry recorded particularly strong growth.

The institute said 133 investment

projects were completed during the period, including projects involving listed and high-growth companies setting up operations or venture capital funds in Macao, reflecting international investors' confidence in the city's market prospects.

— Xinhua, MPD

HK heatwave persists as thundery showers draw near

HONG KONG — Hong Kong has sweltered through a prolonged heatwave, with maximum temperatures reaching 33 degrees Celsius or higher for nine consecutive days as of yesterday, according to the

Hong Kong Observatory.

The observatory forecast that the high temperature weather will be alleviated, as areas of thundery showers gradually edge closer to the coast.

Occasional showers and squally

thunderstorms are expected today.

The observatory urged the public to pay attention to the latest weather information and be aware of the weather before going to work or school.

— Xinhua, MPD

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

Confucius Institute, Chinese medical team hold martial arts injury prevention training in São Tomé and Príncipe

SÃO TOMÉ – The Confucius Institute at the University of São Tomé and Príncipe and the 20th Chinese medical team to the country on Wednesday launched a training program on the prevention and treatment of martial arts injuries at the university.

The program, aimed at local martial arts coaches, athletes and sports practitioners, covers injury prevention, rehabilitation and on-site first aid.

Chinese instructors and doctors are providing training on the prevention and treatment of

common sports injuries, including muscle strains, ligament injuries and joint overuse injuries, based on the characteristics of different martial arts disciplines. The program also introduces traditional Chinese therapies such as acupuncture, massage and physiotherapy, as well as traditional fitness exercises including Baduanjin, or Eight-Section Brocade.

Hao Ganghua, a martial arts instructor at the Confucius Institute, said the program is the first systematic specialized training of its kind in São Tomé and Príncipe

to cover multiple martial arts disciplines.

Chinese martial arts, judo, karate and taekwondo have a certain following in the country. Still, professional capacity in sports injury prevention and medical support for competitions remains relatively limited, creating a practical need among coaches and athletes for related expertise, Hao said.

Pan Hui, a doctor with the 20th Chinese medical team, said the training focuses not only on the treatment and rehabilitation of

injuries but also on prevention.

Through systematic instruction and practical exercises, the program is designed to help participants identify and manage common sports injuries, improve training techniques and body mechanics, strengthen awareness of scientific training and injury prevention, and apply what they learn in daily training and competitions, Pan said.

Jilmei da Costa Neto da Costa, head of the São Tomé and Príncipe Martial Arts Association, said bringing together coaches and athletes from different martial arts

disciplines to learn about injury prevention and treatment would help promote safer and more scientific training.

He also expressed appreciation to the Confucius Institute and the Chinese medical team for providing professional training to local martial arts practitioners.

The five-week program includes two sessions per week and is attended by around 20 coaches and key practitioners from the country's martial arts association and disciplines including judo, karate and taekwondo. – Xinhua



Tourists watch a dragon dance at a historic and cultural district in Yiyang City, Hunan Province, on Wednesday. The old district dating back to the Ming and Qing dynasties (1368-1911) is home to 41 cultural heritage sites. As the nighttime economy continues to gain momentum during the summer vacation, the district is attracting large numbers of visitors with its diverse tourism offerings. The passenger flow at night now accounts for 65 percent of the district's total daily visits, while nighttime spending makes up 70 percent of total consumption. – Xinhua

Namibia eyes China's zero-tariff policy to diversify exports: official

WINDHOEK – Namibia is eyeing China's zero-tariff treatment for African countries as a strategic opportunity to diversify its exports and expand shipments of agricultural, fishery and horticultural products to the Chinese market, a senior investment official has said.

Speaking at a public-private dialogue on Wednesday in Windhoek, Julia Muetudhana, acting chief executive officer of the Namibia Investment Promotion and Development Board, said the preferential treatment could help boost exports of beef, mutton, goat meat, seafood, table grapes and blueberries.

She said the opportunity aligns with Namibia's Sixth National Development Plan, which seeks to raise the combined contribution of livestock and crop value chains to gross domestic product (GDP) from 4.6 percent to at least 8 percent by 2030.

The plan also aims to increase manufacturing's share of GDP from 10.6 percent to 18 percent and raise the share of manufactured goods in total exports to 60 percent.

"Our goal is not just to access the Chinese market; it is to establish a permanent, reputable and high-value presence there, well beyond the two-year tariff period," Muetudhana said.

She urged the private sector to identify bottlenecks affecting exports so that its concerns could inform national trade and investment policies and improve implementation.

Muetudhana warned, however, that tariff removal alone would not guarantee commercial success, as Namibian exporters would face strong competition from established suppliers.

She said Namibia must strengthen sanitary and phytosanitary compliance, traceability and quality-control systems, while investing in cold-chain logistics, processing and packaging to meet Chinese market requirements and ensure reliable supply.

Muetudhana also called for greater policy certainty to support long-term investment in export-oriented industries, noting that projects in agriculture, processing

and logistics often require investment horizons extending well beyond two years.

On May 1, China expanded zero-tariff treatment to all 53 African countries with which it has diplomatic ties. For Namibia and 19 other African countries not classified as least developed countries, the current preferential arrangement runs through April 30, 2028.

Namibia and China have concluded export protocols for beef, mutton and chevon.

During Namibian President Netumbo Nandi-Ndaitwah's state visit to China in July, the two countries signed a phytosanitary protocol for fresh table grapes, while China introduced a regional market-access arrangement for eligible wild aquatic products from Africa.

China was Namibia's second-largest trading partner and second-largest export market in 2025, absorbing 18.1 percent of Namibia's exports, most of which were minerals, according to the Namibia Statistics Agency. – Xinhua

China to boost industry of equipment for safety, emergency response

BEIJING – China released a five-year plan to spur the development of the safety and emergency equipment industry yesterday, stressing the role of leading enterprises in enhancing the country's emergency response capabilities.

The plan, jointly issued by the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology and the Ministry of Emergency Management, aims to significantly raise the industry's scale, technological capabilities, product quality and application levels by 2030, with output in key areas reaching 1.4 trillion yuan.

It also calls for breakthroughs in key technologies, the development of more application scenarios and the cultivation of internationally competitive leading enterprises by 2030.

China's safety and emergency

equipment industry has grown rapidly in recent years, with output in key areas surpassing 1 trillion yuan in 2025.

New technologies and equipment have been increasingly deployed in frontline rescue and relief operations. During this year's flood season, drones and satellite communications systems were used to detect risks at dams and ensure communications during emergencies, making flood control and disaster response more precise and efficient.

In January, a guideline on promoting innovation in emergency management equipment set out targets for breakthroughs in more than 20 key technologies, the development of over 20 types of innovative equipment and the wider application of more than 30 types of advanced equipment by the end of 2027. – Xinhua

Chinese, Thai police bust cross-border credit card fraud ring

BEIJING – The Ministry of Public Security (MPS) in Beijing said yesterday that Chinese and Thai police recently worked together to bust a major cross-border credit card fraud ring targeting Chinese citizens, arresting nine suspects.

The operation, jointly carried out by the MPS and Thailand's Royal Thai Police headquarters, resulted in the arrest of four Chinese nationals and five Thai nationals, the ministry noted in a statement.

The two sides coordinated the timing of the crackdown and dismantled several criminal sites, arresting the suspects, the ministry said.

According to the statement, Chinese police uncovered the transnational criminal ring in 2025 and promptly shared information about the case with their Thai counterparts and sought their assistance.

Investigations found that two of the suspects had conspired, with one allegedly operating a

shop in Thailand as a front for illegally obtaining victims' credit card information, while the other allegedly used the stolen data to make counterfeit cards and recruited people to use the cards for fraudulent transactions and launder the illicit proceeds for profit. Authorities have so far identified more than 5 million yuan (US\$736,500) in financial losses linked to this case.

The operation marked the first coordinated joint law enforcement action by police from the two countries in recent years targeting economic crime, the ministry said.

It added that the two sides will explore establishing a regular cooperation mechanism to combat cross-border economic crimes, with plans to deepen collaboration in areas including information sharing, exchange of expertise, joint analysis, the pursuit of suspects, and the recovery of illicit proceeds. – Xinhua

From cave exploration to cafés: China's karst 'cool resources' fan summer tourism

Analysis

GUIYANG – With summer heatwaves sweeping across China, the country's southwestern karst areas are getting creative, offering unique tourism experiences in the depths of the cool caves.

Following a guide, tourist Chang Ting ducked into a natural cave in Guizhou Province. After trekking about 100 meters along a narrow rocky path, her mobile signal disappeared.

"It felt like stepping into a crack in time, and all the noise faded away," said Chang, from Xi'an, capital city of northwestern Shaanxi Province.

This unique summer escape has emerged as a brand-new travel fad among young Chinese people during summer vacations. The fresh approach to cave-based sightseeing gives tourists more to explore while boosting summer spending.

Viral videos tagged "Guizhou cave exploration" have gained over 5 million likes on major lifestyle and short-video platforms, with related topics racking up hundreds of millions of views.

More than 60 percent of the mountainous Guizhou Province is covered by karst landforms, and a total of 42,800 karst cave entrances have been identified.

Leveraging these resources, the province has developed diverse experiential forms of cave tourism to cater to different groups of visitors. Options include outdoor cave adventures with challenging sports, in-depth underground river tours with social media-friendly photo ops, and relaxing cave visits featuring themed dining spaces.

Song Yuanqiao and Zhao Fei, two veteran cave exploration lovers with rich cave rescue experience, run a cave adventure project in Yanzidong, or Sparrow Cave, in Guiding County. Relying on the original natural cave passages, they have designed outdoor challenge activities such as zip lines, tightrope bridges, and via ferrata climbing.

To turn this niche hobby into standardized commercial operations, Song and Zhao visited Hungary, Spain and other countries to learn cave route design, industrial codes and safety management standards.

Song recalled that back in 2018, cave exploration drew little public attention. In 2023, inquiries saw a dramatic spike as inexperienced tourists began asking about cave routes. "We never imagined it would become so popular now," Song said.

A café now stands at the cave entrance while thrilling rock climbing routes stretch deep inside. Since its trial operation in late April this year, the site has drawn more than 2,000 visitors.

The booming cave tourism has brought new job options for local young people. "Sports graduates like me only had jobs as ball coaches before, but now we have more choices," said Lei Yinggui, 23, a cave tour instructor.

The cave exploration trend has also inspired many migrant workers to return home and start their own businesses.

Returning from the southern metropolis of Shenzhen last year, Peng Wei opened a cave café with his former classmates in Xiuwen County.

"The longer I work away, the more I miss my hometown's scenery," Peng said.

They left the cave's natural landscape mostly untouched, adding minimal decoration. Now, tourists line up for their unique, waterfall-cooled coffee. The café sells up to 600 cups of coffee daily at peak time.

Beyond Guizhou's cave resorts, the northernmost Heilongjiang Province has developed forest summer getaways, the plateau region of Xizang rolled out high-altitude eco-retreats, and Xinjiang in the northwest launched grassland and mountain sightseeing, translating their distinctive cool climate resources into sustainable revenue through tourism.

The booming summer tourism aligns with the broader national top-level policy guidance to boost consumption.

Last month, China released the plan for expanding consumption for the 15th Five-Year Plan period (2026-2030), which encourages local governments to enrich distinctive tourism products such as summer cooling retreats, winter warm-weather getaways and coastal vacations.

To balance cave tourism with ecological protection, Guizhou has introduced a new management plan for its karst caves, covering cave classification and filing, ecological red line setting, orderly development and full-chain supervision.

"Karst caves are nonrenewable geological heritage. Proper resource management is the key to turning underground wonders into local benefits, and we must adhere to development within protection," said Zhang Zaijie, director of the green development strategy research institute at Guizhou University of Finance and Economics.

— Xinhua

New evidence reaffirms Japan's germ warfare crimes in China

HARBIN – A new collection of historical records about Unit 731, the notorious Japanese germ warfare division during World War II (WWII), has unveiled more evidence of Japan's war atrocities in China.

Released on Wednesday by the Exhibition Hall of Evidences of Crime Committed by Unit 731 of the Japanese Imperial Army in Harbin, Heilongjiang Province, the records confirm that the Japanese military buried large quantities of chemical shells in China on the eve of its defeat.

The 70-minute oral testimony from Hitoshi Tanizaki, a former medic at the Hailar branch of Unit 731, provides first-hand evidence useful for further research into Japan's abandoned chemical weapons in China.

The testimony was collected in 2016 when researchers from the Exhibition Hall visited Japan. Tanizaki, whose original name was Hitoshi Ozaki, said in the video that he was 21 when he joined the military. Before enlistment, he had assisted a doctor and attended a night commercial school.

Tanizaki said that after being assigned to the Hailar branch, he realized that it was a military unit that violated international law. The Hailar branch was under the direct command of Unit 731's headquarters in Harbin, the provincial capital. Its First Section was responsible for cultivating bacteria, while its Second Section conducted toxicity tests on water sources, among other duties.

Of particular significance, Tanizaki disclosed that the Japanese military had destroyed evidence of its crimes and buried chemical shells when it was defeated. He confirmed that, during the retreat, the Hailar branch set fire to all its facilities, while the Japanese military's chemical warfare unit secretly buried large quantities of chemical shells.

"It wasn't bacteria, but poison gas," said Tanizaki. He added that

there was a chemical warfare unit, based in the Fulaerji district of Qiqihar, Heilongjiang.

Jin Shicheng, a researcher at the Exhibition Hall, said the testimony directly corroborates that the Japanese military had abandoned chemical weapons in China when it was defeated. It also sheds light on the historical origins of the harm caused by abandoned chemical weapons after the war, giving it contemporary significance.

Jin also introduced the personal information registration files of the Unit 731 Hailar branch, another piece of evidence disclosed on Wednesday to Xinhua.

The files were military service records that Japanese military personnel were required to complete as individuals when they were demobilized after the war at the request of Japan's then Ministry of Health and Welfare. The records released this time comprise 185 pages and contain key information on 156 members of the Hailar branch, including their names, ranks, dates of enlistment, duties, transfers and whereabouts after the war.

Jin said research into these files yields two major findings. First, it exposes how the Japanese military concealed its biological warfare crimes by recruiting personnel under the names of regular infantry units.

For example, personnel were recruited under the names of standard infantry units, before receiving three months of training at Unit 731 headquarters and being assigned to the Hailar branch.

Such recruitment was clearly deceptive and was intended to conceal Unit 731's secret criminal activities, including human experimentation, Jin said.

Second, the records confirm the continuity of postwar investigations into Japanese biological warfare crimes.

The records reveal that 145 of the 156 unit members were captured

by Soviet forces after the war and detained in the Soviet Union, while four of them were tried in Khabarovsk between April and September 1950.

Jin said the findings confirm that Soviet investigations and judicial accountability for Japanese biological warfare criminals had continued after the public trials held in 1949.

Jin noted that the disclosed records will deepen research into the branches of Unit 731 and, together with previously obtained oral testimonies from former members, form a solid evidence chain of Japan's gruesome war crimes during WWII.

Unit 731 was a top-secret biological and chemical warfare research base established as the nerve center for Japanese biological warfare in China and Southeast Asia during WWII. At least 3,000 people were used in human experiments conducted by Unit 731, and more than 300,000 people in China were killed by Japan's biological weapons.

This year marks the 81st anniversary of the victory in the Chinese People's War of Resistance against Japanese Aggression and the World Anti-Fascist War.

Yang Yanjun, a researcher at the Exhibition Hall, said that during the past eight decades since the war ended, the world outside of China and Japan has remained relatively unaware of the medical atrocities committed by Unit 731.

"Today, the international community has largely reflected on the Doctors' Trial during the Nuremberg Trials and Nazi Germany's medical crimes. However, awareness of Japan's wartime medical atrocities remains insufficient," Yang said.

Yang called on scholars worldwide to further enhance the academic rigor and objectivity of studies on the crimes committed by Unit 731, and help foster a correct historical understanding in the international community. — Xinhua



Tourists visit Wenchang Spaceflight Science Center in Wenchang, Hainan Province, on July 24, 2026. Hainan is stepping up efforts to build a world-class destination for international tourism and consumption as a key component of Hainan Free Trade Port, and to explore a new path toward high-quality development in its tourism-led consumer economy with distinctive local characteristics. Hainan is projected to receive 154 million domestic and international visits annually by 2030, with tourism-related revenue reaching 363 billion yuan.

— Xinhua

Former Nepal premier Deuba returns home, faces graft probe

KATHMANDU — Nepal's former prime minister Sher Bahadur Deuba, who faces arrest in a corruption case, returned to the country yesterday nearly six months after leaving for medical treatment abroad.

The veteran leader of the opposition Nepali Congress party waved and smiled as hundreds of supporters lined the streets leading to Tribhuvan airport in the capital Kathmandu.

In April, police issued an arrest warrant for Deuba over money laundering charges, making him the latest high-profile figure targeted under the current government of Prime Minister Balendra Shah.

Deuba, 80, who left Nepal in February, has denied the allegations against him.

The five-term prime minister is set to attend a three-day assembly of his party starting today.

Gita Chaudhari, a Deuba supporter, said the former premier "is our guardian and a guardian of this nation".

"We are grateful for the freedom and rights he gave us," she told AFP, as she waited to welcome him back to Nepal.

"With a heart full of gratitude and an open mind ready to embrace the possibilities of change, I have returned to you after five months of medical treatment," Deuba said in a Facebook post after his arrival.

"I return with a deep sense of respect for our shared national responsibility," he added.

"I have returned not to gain power, but to strengthen the national unity."

Nepal police spokesman Abi Narayan Kifle said Deuba's case — including any decision to arrest him — is being handled by the Department of Money Laundering Investigation.



Nepal's former prime minister Sher Bahadur Deuba (second right) waves to supporters outside the airport upon his arrival in Kathmandu yesterday. — AFP

"We are giving security for him at the airport and to his rally because he is a former prime minister," Kifle told AFP.

Authorities have also issued a warrant for Deuba's wife, former foreign minister Arzu Rana Deuba.

Crackdown

The warrants were issued a month after Shah won a landslide victory on a platform of youth-driven political change, in the first elections since deadly protests in September 2025.

Shah's administration has launched a sweeping crackdown on high-profile political figures since coming to power.

Former prime minister KP Sharma Oli and ex-home minister Ramesh Lekhak were arrested briefly in March for their alleged roles in last year's protests.

The youth-led uprising was triggered by a brief social media ban but tapped into longstanding frustration over corruption

and economic hardship in the Himalayan nation.

Protesters set fire to the parliament building and offices, eventually toppling the government.

Deuba's home was among the buildings torched, and videos of protesters attacking the couple circulated widely online. Bundles of cash were reportedly discovered at the property.

In his testimony to a commission investigating the protests, Deuba dismissed videos circulating on social media as potentially fabricated.

"This is a conspiracy, although I do not know who is behind it," he said.

The commission has recommended further investigation into the cash allegedly found at Deuba's home and other properties.

Deuba's tenure as president of the Nepali Congress ended in January, after younger members pushed for a leadership change.

— AFP

Heavy rain soaks eastern Japan, prompting highest-level warning

CHIBA, Japan — Torrential rain pummelled eastern Japan yesterday, triggering landslides and power outages, and prompting the weather authority to issue its highest-level heavy rain warning for the region for the first time.

Footage from public broadcaster NHK showed cars submerged in floodwaters in a residential area in the city of Kashiwa, Chiba region.

"This is shaping up to be an unprecedented level of heavy rain," a Japan Meteorological Agency (JMA) official told a news conference.

In areas hit by the localised rainfall, "lives may be in imminent danger. Please secure your safety immediately," the official said.

More than 100,000 households, mostly in Chiba, but also in the Ibaraki and Saitama regions, were urged to evacuate, according to the disaster management agency.

Hundreds of people were left stranded in Chiba station due to suspended train services, an AFP journalist saw.

In the hour leading up to

9:00 p.m. (local time), approximately 100 millimetres of rain fell in the vicinity of Sakura city, Chiba, NHK reported, citing JMA.

The JMA issued its highest-level heavy rain warning for the Chiba region for the first time ever, the JMA official told reporters.

The agency's top-level warning — issued for more than a dozen cities in Chiba — typically indicates a high likelihood of an imminent disaster due to heavy rain.

NHK said the extreme weather knocked out power for more than 10,000 households in Chiba and that authorities had been alerted to instances of landslides, mudslides and flooded houses in several cities in the region.

"This happened all of a sudden so it was a complete surprise. The power is out so I'm worried whether I can open my business in the next couple of days," a woman in Chiba's Ichikawa city told NHK.

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

— AFP

Air India mandates drug tests for all pilots after mid-air plunge

NEW DELHI — Air India pilots will undergo mandatory drug screening starting yesterday, according to an internal memo seen by AFP, after a captain involved in a serious mid-air incident reportedly tested positive for marijuana.

Existing rules require airlines to randomly test at least 10 percent of their flight crew for psychoactive substances each year.

"We have decided to undertake a full screening of all Group pilots for any substances or medications that are not permitted under prevailing regulations," the memo said.

"Testing is mandatory and will start today (yesterday)."

On August 4, at least 24 passengers were injured when an Airbus A320 lost about 300 feet (91 metres) of altitude shortly after departing from Thailand's Phuket for New Delhi.

Local media reports said the main pilot had smoked marijuana

and had tested positive in a second confirmatory test. Air India said the results have not been shared with them.

Indian investigators have not commented on the reports but said they were closely examining evidence linked to the flight.

The inquiry is being supported by Airbus and France's civil aviation safety agency, the BEA.

The incident came as Air India is seeking to overhaul its operations following a string of setbacks.

Its reputation suffered a major blow in June 2025 when the London-bound Flight 171 crashed shortly after take-off from Ahmedabad, killing all but one of the 242 people on board and 19 people on the ground.

Last week, the airline appointed former Ethiopian Airlines chief Tewolde Gebremariam as its new chief executive.

— AFP

Rescuers comb waters near Bali for 5 missing after ferry blaze

JAKARTA — Rescuers combed the Lombok Strait off Indonesia's Bali island yesterday for five people declared missing after a ferry fire that killed one and sent dozens of passengers scrambling overboard, officials said.

A total of 211 people were rescued alive and brought ashore by vessels that rushed to the scene on Wednesday, including a navy ship and another ferry in the vicinity.

A 19-year-old Indonesian woman was found dead.

By yesterday, the effort had shifted to "the search for five passengers" unaccounted for, the search and rescue office of Mataram on Lombok island said in a statement.

The ferry had been heading from Bali to Lombok when it ran into trouble in the early hours of Wednesday.

"In addition to direct searches, we have also instructed ships passing through the Lombok Strait to provide initial assistance or immediately inform the command post if they find any victims," the statement quoted search and rescue official Muhamad Hariyadi as saying.

Survivor Kiky Okta Pradika, 25, told reporters in Lembar on Lombok island on Wednesday that 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.

Another survivor, 45-year-old Sutrisna, remembered passengers panicking and scrambling for life jackets as lifeboats were lowered from the stricken ferry.

"The evacuation was difficult because the waves were big, and

when the rescue ship came, the waves were even bigger than the ferry we were on," said Sutrisna, who like many Indonesians uses only one name.

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.

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

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 people still officially missing.

— AFP



People march as they protest against Pax Silica, a US-led initiative, in Manila yesterday.

— AFP

Torment of Afghan fathers as daughters deprived of education

Isabelle Wesselingh

Father after father AFP spoke to in Afghanistan about the education ban that stops their daughters going beyond primary school choked up in despair.

The pain and anguish it is causing behind closed doors is clear from interviews AFP conducted across the country, with even deeply religious fathers questioning the ruling.

The Taliban authorities justify the ban – the only one of its kind in the world – on their interpretation of Islamic law.

But “you will never find in the Quran that education is only for men,” said one devout father, while another – who praised the Taliban government for restoring security and reducing corruption – said he couldn’t “find any proper justification for this”.

All the men – whose identities AFP is protecting – described the emotional turmoil the ban is causing, with fathers losing sleep over what to do to help their bright and frustrated daughters.

Nine out of 10 Afghan men questioned in a UN survey last year said it was important for girls to go to secondary school, with nearly two thirds considering it “pious” for a father to support his daughter’s education.

Some men have gone to prison for protecting the ban.

Girls were barred from secondary schools in March 2022 after the Taliban authorities returned to power, with universities closed to young women later that year.

The Taliban government did not respond to AFP questions about the ban.

Officials insist the ban is temporary. But the UN’s education wing UNESCO said Tuesday that an estimated “2.4 million girls have been excluded from secondary education since 2021” as it called for “an immediate and unconditional restoration of their right” to go to school.

Dreaded day approaches

Engineer Ahmad – whose wife is a secondary school maths professor who is no longer allowed to teach – said he never imagined that “one day my daughters would be illiterate”.

The father of four girls said “stopping at the sixth grade” will leave them effectively “illiterate” for the demands of “the 21st century”.

“Every day and every night, my wife and I... are getting closer to the moment when our daughters will have to stay home,” he said.

With his eldest nearing the end of her time in primary school – and clandestine courses in their northern city costing more than half his salary – he sees no option but to leave.

As an ex-employee of an international organisation, he was well on track to get his



This photograph taken on July 21 shows Afghan schoolgirls along with their father walking to a primary school in Kabul. – AFP

family to the United States before President Donald Trump slammed that door shut.

Despite European countries regularly denouncing the restrictions Afghanistan puts on women, Sweden, Denmark and Germany have also refused them visas.

The children “do not know that we are losing our hope,” Ahmad, 40, told AFP, adding that leaving illegally was “too risky”.

“Every day” the children ask, “When do we leave?”

They try to keep their spirits up whatever way they can. Their eldest might fail her final year after breaking a bone during her exams.

“She was sad, but I said to her: ‘If you have to repeat, you’ll have an extra year at school.’”

They can’t go abroad

Mohammad, a doctor in a small town in Kabul province, said he always dreamed of sending his two daughters to one of the best universities.

“For the development of Afghanistan we need women, not only for the home,” he said.

His two daughters – aged 12 and 14 – are in their last year of primary, the older one having started school later.

For the last four years he has been trying to come up with ways around the ban – including sending them to school in neighbouring Pakistan, now impossible since the land border was sealed after hostilities intensified between the two countries.

Then he was told about a school that secretly teaches general subjects alongside its religious curriculum.

“It’s a private school” that charges higher fees of “around 10,000 Afghanis (US\$153)” a month for the two girls because “they are taking more risk”.

And there is no graduation certificate.

But Mohammad is afraid officials might inspect the school and “take my daughters into custody”.

“The most important... is that they go on learning,” the 42-year-old told AFP, adding that he told his daughters: “While I’m alive, I will find a solution for your education.”

‘How can I learn?’

N – who only wanted to be identified by an initial – is from Kandahar province in the south, a bastion of the Taliban movement, where he said girls can be excluded from school even before the end of primary if they are tall.

He has three sons and a 12-year-old daughter. She “is very interested in astronomy. The other day, she did a collage of the solar system. She asked me a lot of questions, on gravity for example, and I told her that... ‘You will learn.’”

“How can I learn... if I cannot go beyond grade six,” she told me.”

He moved his family to Kabul to find work and told AFP that “we have to be patient” and explore ways around the “poison” of the ban, like underground schools and online design or computer courses.

“Now I am working, I can afford the education of my children. But the opportunities are decreasing day by day and I may not be able to support that,” with international aid also dwindling, he said.

In the meantime, he tries to shield his daughter, with her school days already numbered. “She does not know that there is this other stress on us,” he said.

‘I hide to cry’

It was a feast day and everyone was

celebrating, but N’s daughter stayed in her room crying. At 13 she could no longer go to school.

“Beside the school (ban), girls are not allowed to go to parks for sightseeing or refreshments, it’s really stressful,” N told AFP, clearly shaken by his child’s plight.

He tries to take her to a restaurant once a week just to get her out.

A devout logistics manager from a poor background, he worked hard to educate and improve himself, and praises the Taliban authorities for restoring security and fighting corruption.

But “I cannot find any proper justification for” barring girls from secondary education, he said.

“Sometimes when she gets so disappointed at home,” he cannot bear it, he admitted. “I go to another room and... I hide to cry.”

N wants his daughter to go to university, and saved every cent so they could move to Iran so she could study there. But the war put an end to that.

So she could have some “social interactions”, he enrolled her in a Quranic school, “because staying at home all the time is stressful.”

However, recently she has refused to go. “Even if I continue, there will be no future for me,” she told him.

Home schooling

“My daughter and her classmates were in a very bad mood” on the last day of primary school. “It was tragic,” said Nasir, who had already witnessed the pain his 15-year-old went through when her education was cut short.

The trophies the girls won for excellence at school sit alongside the books on the shelves of the home library he and his wife, a teacher, have proudly put together for them.

They tutor their daughters at home with second hand high school textbooks they salvaged, making them stick to a strict weekday routine going “early to bed, wake up at the same time as if you were going to school.”

But alone in the living room, Nasir, 47, confided that his younger daughter “is depressed and does not always have strong morale to continue learning on her own at home.”

He gives her novels to soften the blow, as she loves to read.

The girls – who help others in their building with their homework – have recently started going to classes outside in secret.

“We have sleepless nights” about it all, Nasir admitted.

“This regime does not want educated people,” he sighed. “When will we go back to a normal life?” – AFP

2 killed in blast at firecracker factory in India’s Tamil Nadu

NEW DELHI – At least two people were killed yesterday in a massive explosion at a firecracker factory in the southern Indian state of Tamil Nadu, the police said.

The blast took place near Sivakasi area of Virudhunagar district, about 540 km southwest of Chennai, the capital city of Tamil Nadu.

According to the police, an engineer from Gujarat was installing and testing a newly purchased machine at the factory used for mixing chemicals.

“A worker present there was killed on the

spot, and the engineer suffered 95 percent burns. Though he was taken to Sivakasi Government Hospital, he succumbed to his injuries,” the police said.

Following the explosion, a fierce fire engulfed the factory.

Reports said rescue teams were conducting intense search operations inside the factory premises to ensure no workers were trapped in the debris.

The police have ordered an investigation into the incident.

– Xinhua



Supporters of the Markazi Muslim League (MML) take part in a boat rally in the Arabian Sea in Karachi, Pakistan on Wednesday ahead of the Pakistan’s Independence Day celebrations. – AFP

Iran rejects Trump claims of US control over Hormuz as 'lies'



A sculpture overlooking the Strait of Hormuz is seen along the seafront in the port city of Bandar Abbas, in southern Iran on Monday. — AFP

TEHRAN — Iran's military yesterday rejected as "lies" remarks by US President Donald Trump claiming control of the Strait of Hormuz, saying the strategic waterway was fully under Iranian control.

"The false claims of the United States that ships are passing through the Strait of Hormuz normally ... are nothing more than lies and fabrications," said Ebrahim Zolfaghari, the spokesperson for Iran's central military command, Khatam-al Anbiya.

"The Strait of Hormuz is, as in the past, under the complete management and control of the Islamic Republic of Iran, and no commercial ship or tanker without the permission and supervision of the powerful Iranian armed forces has had and will have the possibility of safe passage through this strait," he said in a video carried by state television.

Iran has kept control of Hormuz, a vital energy conduit, since the

outbreak of the war in the Middle East on February 28, requiring vessels to obtain permission and pay transit fees before using the waterway.

In a Wednesday Truth Social post, Trump claimed that the US "has total control over the Strait of Hormuz. I THINK WE WILL KEEP IT!"

"Our Naval Blockade is being called, by everyone, 'A WALL OF STEEL,' and there is nothing Iran can do about it," he added.

Yesterday, the head of Iran's paramilitary Basij forces under the Revolutionary Guards also said that the strait was under Iranian control.

"Today, you see that the Strait of Hormuz is under the management and control of the Islamic republic, and our country continues on its path in complete security," said Hossein Taeb according to state television.

Iran's top diplomat Abbas Araghchi yesterday said the US

makes miscalculations in regard to the waterway.

"The US has long miscalculated due to intelligence failures. Case in point: The war on Iran. Now, an even bigger miscalculation on the Strait of Hormuz," he said on X.

Iranian parliamentarian and member of the national security commission Behnam Saeedi said the strait is closed to US and Israeli ships.

"Ships belonging to the Zionist regime will not have the right to pass through the Strait of Hormuz under any circumstances, whether in war or peacetime," he told state TV, adding that "US military ships will also be barred from passing through the Strait".

Iran and Oman have been in talks to establish a new route through the strait, but negotiations have not yet been finalised.

Tehran, however, says even if the talks produce a new route, that would not on its own open the waterway unless the US meets Iran's demands. — AFP

World 'not on track' to meet biodiversity goals ahead of UN talks

PARIS — The world is not on track to meet its commitments to protect nature, the UN's biodiversity chief warned yesterday, just weeks before a major conference addressing the subject in Armenia.

Because humans pose an immense threat to Earth's land, seas, animals and plants, almost all countries agreed four years ago to protect 30 percent of the planet by 2030 — and for wealthier countries to provide poorer ones with US\$30 billion a year.

National negotiators will meet for the COP17 conference in the Armenian capital Yerevan in October to review how the 196 countries who agreed to these targets are faring.

"Implementation is not yet happening at the pace and scale needed to achieve" these goals, said Astrid Schomaker, executive secretary of the United Nations' Convention on Biological Diversity.

"The task awaiting us in Yerevan in nine weeks will take all the stamina and determination that parties can summon," Schomaker added in a statement issued after nearly three weeks of preparatory talks in Kenya's capital Nairobi.

The "parties recognise the world is not on track to achieve biodiversity targets," the Convention's statement summarised.

While there have been "promising efforts on conservation targets", other areas have been "sluggish, such as resource mobilisation, the repurposing of harmful subsidies or inclusive governance," it added.

The Convention also acknowledged that "differences still remain" in how countries will ramp up their efforts to reach the 2030 targets, including "intense discussions around the Cali Fund".

Established at the COP16 talks in Colombia, this fund is intended to distribute a small share of the immense profits made by companies in rich countries from plants and animals sourced from developing nations.

Almost all UN member states have signed up to the Convention on Biological Diversity, with the most notable exception being the United States.

According to the UN, the world's biodiversity crisis has five human-induced causes, nicknamed the "Five Horsemen of the Apocalypse".

They are habitat destruction, over-exploitation of resources such as water, climate change, pollution and the spread of invasive species.

More than a quarter of all animals and plants are threatened with extinction, according to the International Union for Conservation of Nature. — AFP

Israeli strikes in Gaza kill two including senior policeman: officials

GAZA CITY — Israeli strikes in Gaza killed two people including a senior police officer yesterday, health officials said, the second straight day of bombardment after a lull due to a US peace push.

The Israeli military said it struck a Hamas commander in the Khan Yunis area who it said had been planning attacks against troops, in the second such targeting in as many days.

"The terrorist was struck in an aerial strike in order to remove the threat to IDF [Israel Defence Forces] troops," the military said, adding that "steps were taken to mitigate harm to civilians."

Gaza's civil defence agency, which operates as a rescue service under Hamas, said an airstrike west of Khan Yunis killed one person, with the city's Nasser Hospital confirming the arrival of a body following the attack.

In a separate incident in Gaza City, the civil defence said one person was killed and several others injured in an Israeli strike on a vehicle in the Sheikh Ajlin neighbourhood.

Al-Shifa Hospital said it had received the body of Gaza City's police governor Jamal Abu Kamil.

Gaza's interior ministry confirmed Abu Kamil "was assassinated in an Israeli airstrike targeting his vehicle on Al-Rashid

Street, southwest of Gaza City".

When contacted by AFP, the Israeli military said it was checking the reports.

Israel on Wednesday carried out its first airstrike in Gaza since August 3.

The hiatus in airstrikes came after US President Donald Trump's announcement of a "major milestone" in his plan to end the war.

Hamas had announced that it would disarm by giving its weapons to a nascent Palestinian governing committee.

Trump's "Board of Peace", in charge of implementing the ceasefire deal, had initially announced that Israel in turn would start a phased withdrawal from much of the Gaza Strip.

But Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on Sunday publicly rejected the deal and vowed no Israeli pullout, even after the Board of Peace reassured him that Israel would not have to withdraw until complete Hamas disarmament.

Israeli operations in Gaza have killed 1,260 Palestinians since the ceasefire, according to the territory's health ministry, which operates under Hamas authority and whose figures are considered reliable by the United Nations.

The Israeli army has reported five deaths in its ranks during the same period. — AFP

Iran calls for compensation after Hormuz oil spill

PARIS — Iran warned yesterday of environmental degradation in the Strait of Hormuz after an oil spill reached its southern Qeshm island, calling for compensation from those responsible.

Foreign ministry spokesman Esmail Baqaei said the slick had "degraded the waters" of the Gulf and Sea of Oman, claiming "preliminary evidence indicates a foreign bulk carrier as the source".

TankerTrackers, a US-hosted website that monitors shipping movements worldwide, said however that the spill seemed to derive from an Iranian attack on Omani waters on August 3.

"The spillage then drifted across the strait over to Iran," it said.

Baqaei wrote on X that such spills have in "recent decades imposed trillions of [US] dollars in damage on Iran's coastal areas", calling for compensation.

"Every party that benefits from

commercial shipping through the Strait of Hormuz carries both a legal and a moral obligation to remediate the environmental harm inflicted," he added.

The spill had reached Qeshm island but had been "almost completely cleaned up by Wednesday evening", said Habib Masihi, head of the environmental protection department in Iran's southern province of Hormozgan.

He said about 32,000 square metres of coastal area had been affected along with waters covering 90,000 square metres.

"The oil pollution on the southern coast of Qeshm is just one example of the widespread pollution that has destroyed the region's marine ecosystem over the past few decades," added Sheena Ansari, the head of Iran's Environmental Protection Organisation.

"Who is responsible for compensating for the damage? The countries consuming energy

exports from our region or the aggressors who have made this region a staging ground for military operations?" Ansari posted to X on Thursday.

Iran has maintained control over the Strait of Hormuz since the outbreak of the Middle East war on February 28, blocking the passage of ships carrying energy exports from US-allied countries in the Gulf.

It has said it plans to charge navigational fees from passing vessels to fund services including environmental protection.

The United States and some regional countries have expressed opposition to any fees.

The spill comes after another slick in recent days near neighbouring Oman from a tanker that ran aground.

An AFP investigation previously found the ship had been stranded for weeks near Oman's Al-Qibliyyah island after it was damaged by explosions. — AFP



An Australian New South Wales Rural Fire Service (RFS) CH-47D Chinook water-bombing helicopter drops water over a pine massif during an exercise on the eve of its operational launch, near Captieux, south-western France, on Wednesday. A spate of wildfires has swept across France this summer. — AFP

US-indicted Raúl Castro reappears after months out of public view

HAVANA — Veteran Cuban leader Raúl Castro appeared in public for the first time in months yesterday, attending an event in Havana to mark the centenary celebration of his brother Fidel's birth.

The 95-year-old head of the Cuban armed forces and former president — who was recently indicted by the United States — appeared at the event dressed in olive-green military uniform, AFP reporters witnessed.

He received a standing ovation as he entered the Karl Marx Theatre.

Castro is the last surviving leader of Cuba's 1959 revolution and seen as still wielding power, despite stepping down as president in 2018.

He last appeared in public at

a May 1 event in front of the US embassy in Havana, where he appeared frail, and was shown on state television during another event in early June.

In May, he was indicted by a court in the US state of Florida on four counts of murder.

The charges related to the downing of US civilian planes by Cuban forces on February 24, 1996.

The United States has set up an energy embargo of the communist-ruled island, demanding a change in government and deep economic and political reform.

The crisis and years of poor maintenance have fuelled rolling blackouts and shortages of basic goods. — AFP

UN condemns Turkey's tougher sentencing for children

GENEVA, Switzerland — The UN rights chief yesterday condemned changes to the law in Turkey which could see juvenile offenders receiving lengthy prison terms.

Turkey's parliament passed new amendments to the Child Protection Law last week ordering child offenders to be held in closed juvenile institutions, with transfer to an education-based institution subject to assessment, the UN rights office said.

This breaks with the current practice of holding them directly in rehabilitative, education-based institutions, it added.

UN rights chief Volker Türk said he was "alarmed" by the changes.

"While some of the proposals may be positive — such as those that aim to ensure better coordination between child protection and education services and to prevent children from accessing firearms — others raise serious human rights concerns," he said.

"It is essential that the law is amended to ensure that all of its

provisions are fully aligned with Turkey's international human rights law obligations, including on children's rights."

The new measures toughen the severity of prison sentences for child offenders aged 12 to 18.

Those aged 15 to 18 accused of crimes carrying aggravated life imprisonment, such as intentional killing, could now face jail terms of 19 to 27 years.

For other crimes carrying life imprisonment terms, the penalty is 15 to 18 years.

Turk's office said that juvenile justice should combine accountability with rehabilitation and reintegration into society.

Under international human rights law, children can only be imprisoned as a measure of last resort and for the shortest appropriate period of time, it said.

Imposition of life sentences and lengthy detention measures on children "clearly runs counter to the protections enshrined in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child", it added. — AFP

More than 110,000 Canadians call for ouster of US envoy

TORONTO — More than 110,000 Canadians had signed a petition as of yesterday calling for the removal of controversial US Ambassador Pete Hoekstra, the latest sign of deepening rifts between the neighboring countries.

Hoekstra, a relentless defender of President Donald Trump and a former Republican congressman from Michigan, has had a volatile tenure since arriving in Ottawa in April 2025.

A *Globe and Mail* editorial in May described Hoekstra as being "keen to channel his boss's aggressive boorishness."

"Pete Hoekstra doesn't understand why Canadians are so upset," the editorial said.

"The US ambassador seems to think this nation a bunch of inexplicable malcontents for reacting as it has to President Donald Trump's threats and bluster."

The petition, which will

remain open for signature until November 18, accuses Hoekstra of normalising "the Trump administration's threats to annex Canada as the 51st state."

The citizen-led effort calls for him to be declared persona non grata and removed from Canada.

More than 116,000 signatories had been confirmed as of yesterday morning (local time), according to the Canadian parliament website.

After signatures close, the document will be introduced in the House of Commons by lone Green Party lawmaker Elizabeth May.

During his time in Canada, Hoekstra has reportedly levelled a profanity-laced tirade against an Ontario official over an anti-tariff ad that quoted former US president Ronald Reagan on the merits of free trade.

The ad, produced by Ontario's provincial government, infuriated Trump, prompting him to suspend

all trade negotiations.

In June, Hoekstra said the idea of the US annexing Canada would be "a great discussion" for Trump to have with Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney.

He has defended Trump's tariffs and criticised Canadians for referring to Trump's protectionist measures as being part of a trade war.

Canadian trade negotiators are in Washington this week trying to hammer out a deal that will include broad tariff relief in exchange for Ottawa dropping certain countermeasures.

The Dutch-born Hoekstra also faced controversy while serving as US ambassador to the Netherlands during Trump's first term.

He was forced to apologise over 2015 comments in which he falsely claimed that Islamist violence had created "no-go zones" in the Netherlands and that Muslims had "burned" politicians. — AFP



Rescue workers help remove debris in search of survivors in Cali, Colombia, yesterday, three days after the country's 7.4-magnitude earthquake. The confirmed death toll from the temblor that struck western Colombia on Monday has risen to 265, with over 3,500 individuals injured and nearly 500 officially listed as missing. — AFP

Porsche to end production of flagship electric car: report

FRANKFURT AM MAIN — Struggling German sports car maker Porsche plans to end production of the Taycan, its flagship fully electric model, by 2030 after steadily dwindling sales, a report said yesterday.

The manufacturer announced last year a major rollback of its electric vehicle (EV) plans due to weaker-than-expected demand, adding to challenges that range from falling sales in China to penalising US tariffs.

Launched in 2019, the Taycan was supposed to underscore

the Stuttgart-based group's embarkment on a major shift away from combustion engines.

But sales have been declining, from nearly 41,000 in 2023 to just 16,000 last year, and only 6,000 in the first half of 2026.

German business weekly *WirtschaftsWoche* reported that Porsche's works council, which represents staff interests, had agreed in principle with management to end Taycan production.

"The company has decided to phase it out by 2030," the magazine said, citing company sources.

The Taycan is one of Porsche's two fully electric models currently on sale, alongside the Macan Electric SUV launched in 2024.

The entire German car industry, including the major manufacturers like VW and BMW as well as their suppliers, is in crisis as it battles weak demand in Europe, volatile US trade policy, tepid demand for e-vehicles and fierce competition from Chinese rivals.

Porsche's operating profit plunged by more than 90 percent last year and it has announced a series of job cuts. — AFP

Ukraine, Russia exchange bodies of killed soldiers

KYIV — Russia and Ukraine swapped bodies of killed soldiers yesterday, in one of the few areas of cooperation between the warring sides.

"The bodies of 261 deceased persons have been returned to Ukraine, which, according

to the Russian side, belong to Ukrainian servicemen," Ukraine's Coordination Headquarters for the Treatment of Prisoners of War said in a statement.

Citing a Russian lawmaker, the RBC media outlet also said Moscow had handed over

261 bodies, while Ukraine had transferred 24.

The exchange of bodies and captured prisoners of war are some of the only areas where the two sides conduct diplomacy and reach agreements, more than four years since the war began. — AFP

Colombia authorises joint anti-drug operations with US military: Pentagon chief

PANAMÁ – Colombia has authorised joint military operations with the United States to target drug traffickers, US Defence Secretary Pete Hegseth said on Wednesday, expanding Washington’s campaign against cartels in Latin America.

Bogotá “has already requested that the [Pentagon] join Colombia in its fight against narco-terrorism, authorising joint military operations to destroy terrorist and terror networks,” Hegseth said at an anti-cartel conference in Panamá.

“Aggressive and concrete steps like these exemplify the types of active participation, operationally focused, we want to see from our partners,” he added.

Last September the US military launched a campaign of airstrikes targeting alleged drug-smuggling boats in the Caribbean and eastern Pacific Ocean that have killed at least 215 people to date.

US President Donald Trump’s administration has not provided definitive evidence that the vessels it has been striking were involved in drug trafficking.

Legal experts and rights groups

say the strikes could amount to extrajudicial killings because they have apparently targeted civilians who do not pose an immediate threat to the United States.

Colombia’s newly elected President Abelardo de la Espriella meanwhile has promised to crush criminal groups profiting from drug trafficking amid the South American country’s worst wave of violence of the past decade.

The rightwing leader, who replaced leftist Gustavo Petro, has said he will halt his predecessor’s unsuccessful peace negotiations with armed groups and confront “narcoterrorism without respite.”

One way he planned to do so was team up with Washington.

“Colombia is officially joining the Americas Counter Cartel Coalition,” Hegseth said in a post on X accompanying photos of the memorandum signing with Colombian Defence Minister Jorge Mora.

Colombia follows Perú in joining the so-called “Shield of the Americas,” an anti-cartel alliance headed by Trump and made up of pro-US governments across Latin

America, including Argentina, Ecuador, and El Salvador.

Member states exchange information and coordinate judicial and security forces to address transnational criminal activity.

De la Espriella, a first-time political leader who openly admires Trump and El Salvador’s fellow rightwing president Nayib Bukele, has said he will intensify airstrikes against guerrillas and drug traffickers and has offered to host US troops on Colombian soil.

Calling himself “The Tiger,” De la Espriella plans to forge a military alliance with the United States and Israel to aid his war on guerrillas.

His so-called “Plan Colombia II” is a nod to a multimillion-US-dollar agreement with Washington in the 2000s aimed at combating drug cartels and leftist groups.

The US State Department said last week that the Trump administration intends to work with Congress to announce “US\$1 billion in assistance as part of a security package to support” Colombia’s new administration.

– AFP

Total solar eclipse draws crowds in Spain, Portugal



Umbraphiles watch a total solar eclipse in Spain’s capital Madrid on Wednesday. – Xinhua

MADRID/LISBON – Spain and Portugal witnessed a total solar eclipse on Wednesday, with the path of totality sweeping across northern Spain and a small area of northeastern Portugal near the Spanish border.

Viewing events were held in many locations across the two countries, drawing crowds of residents, tourists and astronomy enthusiasts.

According to Spain’s National Geographic Institute (IGN), it was the first total solar eclipse visible from the Iberian Peninsula in more than a century.

The path of totality crossed Spain from west to east, passing through La Coruña, Oviedo, León, Bilbao, Zaragoza and Valencia before reaching the Balearic Islands. Other parts of Spain witnessed varying degrees of a partial eclipse.

In Molina de Aragón, in the central Spanish province of Guadalajara, Xinhua reporters saw nearly 100 tourists and astronomy enthusiasts gathering at a viewing site, including visitors from Germany, Poland and Italy.

Among them was a Chinese couple who chose to mark their wedding anniversary under the total solar eclipse.

At around 8:30 p.m. (local time), the sky rapidly darkened as the Moon completely covered the sun, revealing the solar corona. Cheers erupted from the crowd as many captured the moment with cameras and mobile phones.

About 90 seconds later, sunlight returned, and the crowd burst into applause.

In Portugal, most parts of the country witnessed a partial eclipse, while only a narrow area in the northeastern municipality of Bragança near the Spanish border fell within the path of totality.

According to local media, it was the first time since 1912 that a total solar eclipse could be observed from Portugal.

Thousands gathered at Bragança Airport, one of the main viewing sites in the region. In Lisbon, although the Portuguese capital lay outside the path of totality, the eclipse still drew crowds of residents and tourists.

In the capital city’s Belém district, many watched the phenomenon through protective eclipse glasses, with landmarks including the Belém Tower and the Jerónimos Monastery providing a distinctive backdrop to the partially eclipsed sun.

– Xinhua

Monroe Doctrine video threatens sovereignty: Brazil’s presidential advisor

BRASILIA – A top Brazilian official warned that a recently released US government video claiming dominance over the Americas is an implicit threat to the sovereignty of Brazil and other regional countries.

Celso Amorim, who is Brazilian President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva’s chief advisor on foreign policy, said the video, which touts the 200-year-old expansionist Monroe Doctrine as a guiding principle for present-day foreign affairs, trivializes his country’s independence.

“Anyone who has seen the video that was released yesterday [Tuesday] by the State Department will see that what is being done is just to relativize the sovereignty of Latin American countries in general, including, of course, Brazil,” Amorim told a committee of the Chamber of Deputies on Wednesday. “It is not specifically mentioned, but that’s how it is.”

The video praises the Monroe Doctrine and announces that “American dominance in the Western Hemisphere will never again be questioned.”

According to Amorim, who twice served as foreign minister, the Trump administration is attempting to subordinate Latin America to US interests.

“President Lula has been firm in reiterating that we will not accept unilateral measures used



A worker paints over a graffiti reading “The USA makes war and profits from death” on the wall of the US Embassy in Brasilia yesterday.

– AFP

as a pretext to relativize national sovereignty or impose economic restrictions on our country,” he said.

In a bid to safeguard the upcoming elections from foreign meddling, Brazil has decided not to grant diplomatic visas to foreign representatives from any country until October, Amorim said.

“The United States has been without an ambassador here for more than a year and a half since the ambassador of [Joe] Biden’s government left. Suddenly, with the election approaching, they want to accredit another ambassador in a hurry without our consent,” he said.

Amorim was invited by the

chamber to comment on a US decision to classify Brazilian criminal groups as terrorist organizations, among other matters.

The measure, he explained, must be understood within the current global and regional context, especially in light of actions taken by the United States.

“It can not be ignored that certain extreme interpretations of the classification as terrorist or narco-terrorist have already been used to justify military operations in other international contexts,” he said.

The classification can be manipulated geopolitically to interfere in Brazil’s internal affairs, said Amorim.

– Xinhua

Mozambique approves payment mechanism to secure fuel imports

MAPUTO – The Mozambican government has approved an emergency financing mechanism to help secure fuel imports and maintain domestic supplies during periods of fuel crisis, the Mozambique News Agency (AIM) reported on Wednesday.

Under a resolution approved by the Council of Ministers, the mechanism will operate through state-owned fuel company Petromoc, using an account held by the Ministry of Finance at the Bank of Mozambique, the country’s central bank.

According to the resolution, the finance minister, in coordination with the minister responsible for fuels, may authorize the use of up to US\$50 million under the payment

facility to ensure the import of liquid fuels for the domestic market in the event of a supply crisis.

Under the arrangement, Petromoc will have access to the account, enabling it to make payments to foreign fuel suppliers on behalf of qualifying importers.

The measure comes amid renewed concerns over fuel shortages in parts of the country following supply disruptions in April and May, which led to long queues at filling stations in Maputo and other cities.

Mozambican authorities have attributed the supply difficulties to disruptions in international fuel trade linked to tensions in the Middle East, as well as financial difficulties faced by some fuel distributors and foreign currency shortages.

– AFP

Football shorts

Spanish Super Cup will be held in Turkey in 2027



MADRID—The 2027 Spanish Super Cup will be held in Turkey at Istanbul's Ataturk Olympic Stadium, the Spanish Football Federation said yesterday.

The Final Four tournament will take place from February 2 to 7 and feature Barcelona, Real Madrid, Atletico Madrid and Real Sociedad, the federation said in a statement.

Saudi Arabia has hosted the competition since 2020 but was ruled out as the dates coincide with the Asian Cup, the continent's premier men's international football tournament.

Barcelona are reigning Super Cup champions after beating Real Madrid in the 2026 final.

The Spanish Super Cup features the winners and runners-up of La Liga and the Copa del Rey. — AFP

Juventus forward Vlahovic signs 3-year Besiktas deal



ISTANBUL — Serbian international Dusan Vlahovic yesterday signed a three-year deal with Turkish club Besiktas after an injury-marred final year in Italy with Juventus.

The 26-year-old forward, whose contract with the Serie A giants expired this summer, will earn 7.5 million euros (US\$8.6 million) per season in Istanbul, Besiktas said in a statement.

The 41-times capped player was greeted by a crowd of supporters as he touched down in Istanbul on Wednesday night.

"We want to be champions," the Serb declared on his arrival.

In Turkey he will play alongside Belgian forward Leandro Trossard who joined from Arsenal in mid-July.

Vlahovic joined Juventus from Fiorentina in the summer of 2022 and scored 68 goals in 168 matches for the Turin club.

However, Serie A's second-highest scorer in the 2023-2024 season with 16 goals subsequently fell down the pecking order of strikers.

After returning last April from a long layoff due to a thigh injury, the Serbian suffered a calf problem, finishing the league season with just seven goals to his name.

Last crowned Turkish champions in 2021, Besiktas have since struggled to compete with Galatasaray and Fenerbahce, the city's other two major clubs. — AFP

Lukaku joins Turkish side Fenerbahce from Napoli



ISTANBUL — Former Manchester United striker Romelu Lukaku has joined Fenerbahce, the Turkish Super Lig club announced on Wednesday.

Fenerbahce did not specify the length of the 33-year-old Belgian's contract, nor his transfer fee.

"It's an honour and a privilege to be joining your club and to join this club," Lukaku said in a video on social media addressed to Fenerbahce's fans.

"I'm fit, 100 percent, ready to go."

Lukaku, who has previously played for Chelsea, Manchester United and Inter Milan in a glittering but injury-plagued career, is Belgium's all-time leading scorer with 93 goals.

He signed for Napoli in the summer of 2024, but after a debut season that brought Scudetto glory, he suffered an injury and fell out with the club's management last season, managing just 64 minutes of playing time.

He, nonetheless, was included in Belgium's squad for the 2026 World Cup, netting three times as his country reached the quarter-finals before losing to eventual winners Spain.

His arrival at the Istanbul-based club boosts further their attacking arsenal after the signing of former Man United winger Mason Greenwood.

Fenerbahce, who have finished runners-up to bitter rivals Galatasaray for the last four seasons, are without a Turkish league title since 2014. — AFP

Man City star Doku signs 5-year contract extension



LONDON — Manchester City winger Jeremy Doku signed a five-year contract extension with the Premier League club yesterday.

Doku has developed into one of the most dynamic forwards in the Premier League since joining from French club Rennes in 2023.

The 24-year-old has scored 22 goals and provided 34 assists in 131 games for City, helping the club win the Premier League, the Club World Cup, the FA Cup and the League Cup.

Doku has earned 48 caps for Belgium and featured for his country at the recent World Cup.

Keeping Doku in Manchester until at least 2031 is a major boost for new City boss Enzo Maresca ahead of the Premier League campaign, which starts on August 21.

Maresca has replaced Pep Guardiola at the Etihad Stadium and Doku said the Italian's style of play was instrumental in his decision to commit his long-term future to City.

"I have loved my time at City so far, so to have the opportunity to stay for longer is a fantastic feeling," Doku said.

"This club means so much to me - I have developed as both a player and a person. I feel settled here, and I know I am improving every day because of the work the staff here do.

"With Enzo here now I am really excited about the new season. His style of football is the kind we love, so that's exciting for the players."

City director of football Hugo Viana added: "Jeremy is a huge talent whose improvement since joining us in 2023 is clear for all to see.

"He has a special dynamic. He has the right characteristics for what we are looking for in a winger. He really does bring a special quality to our team.

"He deserves this new deal, and I know he will continue his improvement in the coming months and years." — AFP

Fabien Barthez joins Zidane's new France coaching setup

PARIS — World Cup-winning goalkeeper Fabien Barthez will join the staff of new France head coach Zinedine Zidane, the French Football Federation (FFF) announced yesterday.

The 55-year-old, who was Zidane's teammate when France won the 1998 World Cup on home soil, will be responsible for the national team's goalkeepers.

Barthez, who played for Toulouse, Monaco, Marseille and Manchester United, had previously worked as a consultant for the French national team under coaches Raymond Domenech and Laurent Blanc, but played no role during Didier Deschamps' 14-year tenure.

He was briefly part of the Toulouse coaching staff from 2020 to 2021.

The FFF also announced several other appointments to the France coaching staff.

Among them are assistant coaches David Bettoni and Hamidou Msaïdie, two close associates of Zidane who worked alongside him during his two spells in charge of Real Madrid.

Another recruit, Gregory Dupont, appointed "Strategy and Performance Advisor" also worked with Zidane at Madrid.

Appointed on July 28 to succeed his former teammate Deschamps after France lost in the World Cup semi-finals, 54-year-old Zidane will take charge of his first France training camp in September.

France's first game under his guidance will be a Nations League match away to Turkey on September 25.

— AFP

Infantino future should be decided by election says African football chief

Football

LONDON — Confederation of African Football chief Patrice Motsepe says Gianni Infantino's future should only be decided by elections after Ireland became the latest federation to withdraw their support for the embattled FIFA president.

Infantino is fighting to save his job after a barrage of criticism for his aborted plan to sell stakes in the World Cup to private investors.

The governing bodies of European football (UEFA), North and Central America (CONCACAF) and Asia (AFC) stepped up the pressure on Infantino in a joint letter this week, declaring "trust is broken through deception, when an individual places himself above the collective that entrusted him with authority".

It is believed they want to see Infantino resign before he has the chance to seek re-election in March next year.

But Motsepe, a FIFA vice-president and CAF president, is adamant Infantino's fate should be decided through the ballot box.

"If anybody has got any problem against anybody, whether it's Gianni, whether it is anybody else, follow the process, follow the FIFA process, simple as that," Motsepe told Sky News yesterday.

"If you want to take him out, go for elections; let the 211 member associations decide. Do that and the vote will express whether they've got confidence in him or not.

"You've got to be very careful. There are elections taking place next year. Shouldn't we allow that process to continue?"

Motsepe was in Salzburg at the UEFA Super Cup on Wednesday to hold talks with

UEFA president Aleksander Ceferin, whose organisation are threatening to boycott the World Cup and Club World Cup in protest at Infantino's scheme.

"I've heard so many stories about various issues and am careful to pass judgement on anything," Motsepe said.

"Everybody has a right to be heard. Let's have a hearing, and a proper forum."

CAF had already backed Infantino and Motsepe claimed there was no breach of rules over the World Cup sell-off talks, because the proposals would be submitted to FIFA members for final approval.

"There's a lot that's problematic and negative that they have to fix," Motsepe said.

"But he has apologised and said maybe there's a different way these things should have been done, but we also take advice."

However, there has been no end to the tidal wave of criticism engulfing Infantino.

And yesterday the Football Association of Ireland (FAI) become the latest FIFA member to withdraw its support for Infantino.

The English FA and Welsh FA had already withdrawn their backing for the 56-year-old Swiss.

"Following an FAI Board Meeting, the decision was taken to rescind the letter of support that the Association supplied earlier this year," the organisation said.

"It has since written to FIFA to explain its reasoning. The Association is grateful for the support that FIFA provides to Irish football, but recent events have raised significant concerns regarding governance, transparency and the lack of meaningful consultation." — AFP



Lionel Messi of Inter Miami CF is challenged by Rodrigo Echeverria (right) of Leon during the Leagues Cup Phase One match between Inter Miami CF and Leon at Nu Stadium on Wednesday in Miami, Florida. Messi made an emotional return Wednesday following his father's death and hints at retirement, but it wasn't enough for his Inter Miami side who were knocked out of the Leagues Cup in a 3-2 loss to Mexico's Leon.

The Miami captain flew back to Florida from Argentina on Tuesday night after attending the funeral of his father, Jorge, on Sunday and came on at half-time to a massive ovation. Jorge, who was his son's agent, died last week at the age of 68. — AFP



Cruzeiro's forward Wesley (right) and Flamengo's defender Emerson Leite fight for the ball during the first leg of the Copa Libertadores round of 16 football match between Brazilian teams Cruzeiro and Flamengo at the Mineirao stadium in Belo Horizonte, state of Minas Gerais, Brazil, on Wednesday. — AFP

IOC updates Brisbane 2032 sport and discipline program



GENEVA – The International Olympic Committee (IOC) announced yesterday that it has informed IOC-recognized International Federations (IFs) of the process for the disciplines of each sport to be considered by the IOC as candidate disciplines for the Brisbane 2032 Olympic Games.

International Federations responsible for disciplines included in the Brisbane 2032 Host Contract may propose one additional discipline for consideration.

Other IOC-recognized IFs may be eligible if their discipline was included in the Tokyo 2020, Paris 2024 or LA28 Olympic programs through an Organizing Committee

sports proposal.

The 146th IOC Session in June has approved the methodology for the new evaluation program process, while the Olympic Program Working Group noted that the processes of inclusion of additional sports in the three Olympic Games “involved detailed analysis and review by the IOC, providing a

strong foundation of information for the Brisbane 2032 evaluation process”.

IOC also announced that the approach is specific to Brisbane 2032 “due to the existing timeline”, and will be reassessed by the Olympic Program Working Group for future editions.

The Brisbane 2032 Olympic

and Paralympic Games Organizing Committee also has the opportunity to propose additional disciplines to the IOC.

The Brisbane 2032 Olympic Games will take place from July 23 to August 8, with the Paralympic Games taking place from August 24 to September 5.

– Xinhua



Bangladesh bowler Hasan Mahmud prays after taking six Australian wickets on the first day of the first cricket Test match between Australia and Bangladesh at Marrara Stadium in Darwin yesterday. Mahmud took a career-best 6-55 as Bangladesh bundled Australia out for 198 to take the honours on the opening day of the first Test in Darwin yesterday. At the close Bangladesh were 96-1, 102 runs behind Australia. – AFP

Hodgkinson sets up Werro showdown after Euro 800m drama

Athletics

Luke Phillips

BIRMINGHAM, United Kingdom – Olympic champion Keely Hodgkinson yesterday set up an eagerly-anticipated showdown with in-form Swiss rival Audrey Werro in the women’s European 800m final.

But it was not without drama as Werro was brought crashing down to the track in the opening semi-final and was only included in the final after appealing that she had been clipped from behind coming into the home straight at Alexander Stadium in Birmingham.

Home favourite Hodgkinson, who previously won continental crowns in Munich in 2022 and Rome two years ago, timed 1min 57.38sec to win her semi.

Dutchwoman Femke Broeders-Bol, the former two-time world 400m hurdles champion who has transitioned into a 800m specialist, was second to the Briton, with Italy’s Eloisa Coiro third.

“Another 1:57 so I’m happy. The excitement makes me excited. I love a good challenge and I hope for a clean race with no falling over and no wind please,” said Hodgkinson.

The first semi-final was drama-filled as Werro crashed to the track

as a bunched pack hit the home straight, the Swiss athlete’s foot seemingly clipped by the left hand of France’s Anais Bourgoin.

“I heard the ‘oooh’ which is never a good sign,” said Hodgkinson.

“You can’t worry about what happened to other people, I hope she’s okay and in the final tomorrow (today) for an exciting race.”

The Swiss athlete eventually got to her feet and made it through the finish line.

Her chances of making the final rode on an appeal, which was ultimately successful, as it was for Lithuania’s Gabija Galvydyte, who was also brought down.

“I was feeling great but unfortunately I don’t know, something happened and then I was on the ground,” said Werro.

Jemma Reekie ended up winning the semi in 1:58.61 ahead of Bourgoin, with Switzerland’s Veronica Vancardo nabbing the third automatic qualifying spot.

The clash between Hodgkinson and Werro has been touted as one of the most eagerly anticipated races of the championships.

The pair last met at the Stockholm Diamond League in June, when Werro outpaced Hodgkinson, timing 1:53.98 for the

victory to become the first woman to dip under 1:54 since 1983.

The Swiss runner then bettered that with a blistering 1:53.80 - the third fastest time ever - to win at the Paris Diamond League.

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

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

Given it will be championship racing, which tends to be more tactical and not a pacesetter-led time-based event, it would be a brave pundit to overlook Broeders-Bol, known in her hurdling days for her devastating turn of pace with the finish line in sight.

Broeders-Bol, who has described herself as the underdog, lacks experience in the discipline, meaning she is not in control of race management - something she said was also very exciting.

Both Hodgkinson and Werro have been quick to play down any chance that the oldest world record in athletics history could be broken: the 1:53.28 set in 1983 by Jarmila Kratochvilova of then-Czechoslovakia. – AFP

No-stress Sabalenka won’t fret over lacklustre 2026 results Weary Osaka withdraws

Tennis

CINCINNATI, United States – Aryna Sabalenka was keeping a brave face on Wednesday as she prepped for her final US Open warm-up in Cincinnati, where the former champion is the top women’s seed in the ATP-WTA Masters 1000 event.

The four-time Grand Slam champion, who has claimed all of her major titles on hard courts, won in Cincinnati two years ago to lay the ground work for her first US Open trophy a few weeks later.

But 2026 has been a dud by her world-class standards, with three titles overall but none since Miami in the spring.

She came to the rainy American Midwest after exiting last week in the Toronto fourth round. Her Wimbledon was equally flat, losing at that same stage to Naomi Osaka.

But instead of pouting, Sabalenka, her fiancé and travelling pet dog Ash hit the beach in Mykonos for some VIP-style relaxation.

“I wanted to stay away from tennis for a little bit so I could refresh, restart and be hungry again,” the 28-year-old with a 21-7 record in Cincinnati said.

“I love this time (the lull between Grand Slams)... there are no expectations. I’ll just go out there, compete and fight.”

Like all seeds at the 12-day tournament - which has been unable to get qualifying underway due to heavy rains and storm warnings - Sabalenka has a first-round bye.

She’ll open in the second round against either Australian Talia Gibson or a qualifier.

Her to-do list is simple, she said:

“Compete, fight and enjoy. I have no fear.”

To that end Sabalenka hopes to avoid re-living her recent past.

“Every time I (look back) I get a little bit crazy and emotional. I try to focus on staying present and doing everything I can now.

“This summer, I had huge expectations that I’d succeed in the tournaments, and I desperately wanted to. But my body stopped me from that, and some things didn’t really work my way.”

Weary Osaka withdraws

Osaka withdrew on Wednesday from the WTA Cincinnati Masters citing fatigue, depleting the women’s field at the final major tune-up prior to the US Open.

The four-time Grand Slam champion from Japan had been on a run of hardcourt form, reaching the Washington semi-finals and the last eight at the ongoing WTA 1000 event in Toronto.

As the 11th seed Osaka would have had a first-round bye, but said she was just not prepared to play.

“I’m really sad to have to withdraw from Cincinnati this year due to fatigue,” Osaka said in a statement. “I love playing here and am looking forward to coming back and competing in Cincinnati next year.”

It was her second consecutive withdrawal at Cincinnati. She pulled out last year blaming a change of schedule.

The 28-year-old last competed in Cincinnati in 2024, when she lost in qualifying rounds as she made a comeback after giving birth.

She finished runner-up at the 2020 edition to Victoria Azarenka.

– AFP

Cadillac replace Lowdon with Budkowski as new team chief

F1

LONDON – Cadillac appointed Marcin Budkowski as their new team principal on Wednesday, replacing Graeme Lowdon midway through their first Formula One season.

The American team joined the grid in 2026 having been put together from scratch under Lowdon’s stewardship, with the experienced duo of Valtteri Bottas

and Sergio Perez as drivers.

Cadillac are bottom of the constructors’ standings, with the team yet to secure a single point this season.

Budkowski, a former technical director of Alpine and sporting coordinator for the FIA, the sport’s governing body, brings over 20 years of F1 experience to the Silverstone-based team.

Dan Towriss, Cadillac chief executive, said Wednesday: “From

the beginning, our goal has not been simply to participate in Formula One, but to build a next-generation team capable of competing at the very front.

“Marcin brings exceptional F1 experience, technical expertise and strategic leadership that will strengthen our organisation and help us develop the winning mindset, tools and processes required for long-term success.” – AFP



Lin Shidong (second left) and Wen Ruibo of China greet Alexis Lebrun (first right) and Felix Lebrun of France after the men’s doubles quarterfinal at the WTT Europe Smash Sweden 2026 in Malmo, Sweden, yesterday. Lebrun and Lebrun won the game 11-9, 11-7, 11-6. – Xinhua

Matthew McConaughey on his sweet return to the big screen

Paula Ramón

LOS ANGELES – Matthew McConaughey had plenty of reasons to select “The Rivals of Amziah King,” a honey-themed thriller set in the American Southwest, for his return to the big screen after more than five years away.

“The joy, the soul, the humour, the music, the poetry, the mythology, original time, place, and space,” the Oscar-winning actor told AFP when asked why he had chosen the indie film for his comeback.

Written and directed by Andrew Patterson, “The Rivals of Amziah King” follows McConaughey’s charismatic local honey producer, who splits his time between tending his beehives and playing the banjo in a folk band of friends and neighbours.

“I knew these people. I liked the way they loved each other. I liked the way they fought with each other, I liked the way they cared. I liked the way they use music and humour to survive,” the 56-year-old Texan said.

“Amziah is a guy who really, at the heart of himself, gives people belonging, helps people belong, and that’s part of the thing.



American actor Matthew McConaughey, 56, poses during a dedication ceremony for the venue and a special screening of *The Rivals of Amziah King* on Monday in Austin, Texas. – AFP

“This wasn’t the reason I did it, but in hindsight, I go: ‘That’s a nice thing to put out there into the world, and share with people.’”

‘Strong indigenous woman’

McConaughey stepped away from movies after Guy Ritchie’s 2019 dark comedy “The Gentlemen,” turning his focus to writing

his memoir “Greenlights.”

Although movie-goers saw him last year in “The Lost Bus,” that was filmed after “The Rivals of Amziah King” wrapped.

The Southwestern US tale, which draws on genres like crime, comedy, musical, and drama, sees King’s life take on a new purpose when he reconnects with Kateri –

played by Angelina LookingGlass – a young Native American woman he had first taken in years earlier with his late wife.

With life lessons learned among the bees, communal dinners, and music, King not only helps her gradually integrate into the community, but also passes on his leadership role to her.

However, the young woman soon learns that the world of honey isn’t as sweet as it seems.

For LookingGlass, the role was a perfect fit.

“I really loved playing her,” the 22-year-old told AFP.

“A lot of people would underestimate her just by just looking at her. You know, they wouldn’t expect the things that she does.

“Her being this really strong indigenous woman, and this person that goes under the radar, but then like bites at the end.”

That sting was very intentional on the part of Andrew Patterson, who developed the project after his acclaimed debut film, “The Vast of Night” (2019).

Patterson wanted to centre the film around a Native American

woman who stops at nothing, he told AFP.

“She just uses her intellect and resourcefulness. And I was excited to put that kind of character into the world. That was that was quite literally the germ of an idea that made me want to go, and then eventually the Amziah character came after that,” Patterson said.

McConaughey wasn’t initially in his plans, said the indie filmmaker, who also added Kurt Russell to his cast.

“I was just a guy in Oklahoma writing scripts, making little movies. It had nothing. There was no way that this had any chance to get in front of him.

“And over a number of years, and people getting behind my career, and you know, I think in spirit, Matthew and I were on a collision course for each other. There was no way of knowing that it would happen.”

Patterson said he was “grateful” to have a movie that opens in US cinemas today and delighted that it was with such a stellar talent.

I’m “humbled that I’m getting to put Matthew back in cinema after six and a half years,” he said. – AFP

Rob Reiner son denies grand jury murder charges

LOS ANGELES – The son of legendary US film director Rob Reiner denied new charges of killing both his parents when he appeared in court on Wednesday after grand jury indictments were unsealed.

Nick Reiner pleaded not guilty to two counts of murder, with the special circumstance allegations of multiple murders and murder by means of lying in wait.

The charges supersede the previous ones that were filed over the December 2025 double slaying of his filmmaker father and his photographer mother Michele Singer.

The 32-year-old was arrested on December 14 after his parents’ bloodied bodies were discovered at their home in the affluent Brentwood neighborhood of Los Angeles.

Rob Reiner, 79 – who directed huge hits including “When Harry Met Sally” and “A Few Good Men”

– and his wife, 70, were stabbed to death.

Nick Reiner, who has a history of addiction and remains in jail, was ordered to return to court on September 15.

“This was a profound betrayal by someone who was loved and trusted by the very people he is accused of killing,” Los Angeles County District Attorney Nathan Hochman said.

“The indictment unsealed today [Wednesday] also adds a special circumstance allegation that the defendant committed the murders by means of lying in wait.

“We hope that by having a grand jury return an indictment in this case it will bring us one step closer to a trial and achieving justice.”

If convicted as charged, Nick Reiner could face life in prison without parole, or the death

penalty, although California does not routinely carry out capital punishment.

Nick Reiner, who lived in a guest house on his parents’ property, had attended a party at the home of comedian Conan O’Brien on December 13 with his parents, where some attendees reportedly said he had behaved erratically.

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

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

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



(From left to right) Australian singer and actress Silia Kapsis, US actress Ji-young Yoo, US singer/songwriter Eric Nam and South Korean actress Gia Kim, of the upcoming musical drama film “K-Pop: The Debut”, pose on the sidelines of the HYBE America’s celebration of K-Pop’s biggest weekend at the Grammy Museum in Los Angeles on Wednesday. “K-Pop: The Debut” is set to be released by Paramount Pictures on February 26, 2027. The film follows an Asian-American college student who dreams of becoming a K-pop star despite her family’s disapproval, and ends up competing on South Korea’s toughest K-pop talent show. – AFP

Travis Kelce says wedding to Taylor Swift was ‘best night of my life’

NEW YORK – American football star Travis Kelce described on Wednesday his secretive early July wedding to pop sensation Taylor Swift as “the best night of my life.”

“I appreciate everybody who came out and celebrated and, you know, had fun with us,” the Kansas City Chiefs player told a briefing.

“That’s pretty much all I’m taking away from that night. It was a crazy night. It was full of a lot of celebration.”

The couple, both 36, tied the knot over two days of celebrations at Madison Square Garden in New York on July 2 and 3.

“It’s kind of cool to be able to, you know, live out my childhood dream of

being in that venue and, you know, the mecca of all sports venues, being able to get married in there,” the three-time Super Bowl winner told a briefing.

The event remains shrouded in mystery, as no images have been released. The wedding was only subsequently confirmed by a statement from Swift’s spokeswoman and a message on the giant screens of the storied concert hall and sports venue.

Little is known, other than that the ceremony was officiated by comedian/actor Adam Sandler, the couple were dressed by Jonathan Anderson for Christian Dior, and Swift wore Louboutin shoes.

A thousand people attended including many celebrities, requiring

nearby streets to be blocked off and a heavy police presence.

New York Mayor Zohran Mamdani revealed that the newlyweds paid the city US\$160,000 to cover the resulting costs.

Journalist George Stephanopoulos said it was “so personal and so intimate,” despite the venue’s cavernous size.

The head of the AMC cinema chain, Adam Aron, posted on X and then deleted a message describing the couple’s vows as “long, entertaining, personal, charming, emotional, irreverent and endearing.”

The couple made their relationship public two years ago and got engaged in August 2025. – AFP

World Weather			
CHINA	ASIA-PACIFIC	WORLD	LUSOPHONE
Beijing 21°C~32°C	Manila 25°C~31°C	New York 19°C~31°C	Lisbon 20°C~29°C
Shanghai 25°C~29°C	Bangkok 25°C~33°C	London 19°C~33°C	Rio de Janeiro 21°C~25°C
Hong Kong 25°C~29°C	Tokyo 22°C~29°C	Frankfurt 19°C~36°C	Luanda 18°C~22°C
Taipei 25°C~34°C	Singapore 25°C~33°C	Vancouver 14°C~24°C	Maputo 12°C~23°C
Guangzhou 24°C~30°C	Kuala Lumpur 24°C~32°C	Paris 20°C~39°C	Dili 21°C~32°C
Nanjing 23°C~27°C	Jakarta 23°C~34°C	Moscow 9°C~18°C	São Tomé 24°C~30°C
Guilin 22°C~32°C	Seoul 23°C~32°C	Las Vegas 22°C~33°C	Praia 24°C~31°C
Xi'an 19°C~30°C	Sydney 11°C~19°C	Monte Carlo 25°C~33°C	Bissau 24°C~31°C



Bit of a bust up!

Wild horses gather near a man-made water reservoir on the slopes of Mount Cincar near Livno, Bosnia and Herzegovina, yesterday. Hundreds of wild horses roam the high Krug plateau at the foot of Mount Cincar, relying on artificial watering holes constructed to sustain the herd during periods of summer drought.

— AFP



Purr..fect ending

Vickye Giraldo (right) embraces her cat Polux after being rescued during the search for survivors following an earthquake in Cali, Colombia on Wednesday.

— AFP



Sun & sunflowers in shade

This handout composite image from NASA shows the progression of a total solar eclipse over San Millán de los Caballeros, Spain, on, Wednesday. People in Europe were able to see a total eclipse, while northern parts of the US were able to see a partial eclipse.

— AFP



Playing it safe

A girl observes the total solar eclipse as seen from the sea port of Tarragona, east of Spain, on Wednesday.

— AFP



Celestial fireworks

This photo taken yesterday shows Perseid meteor shower over Tongjiang City, Heilongjiang Province. The Perseid meteor shower, which peaks on August 12 and 13 this year, is an annual meteor shower that occurs from mid-July to late August.

— Xinhua



Walking on the Moon

A woman jumps from the diving platform at Kolovare Beach as the Moon partially covers the Sun during a solar eclipse in Zadar, Croatia, on Wednesday.

— Xinhua