

Locals can use Home Return Permit both ways at all 3 Macau-mainland joint checkpoints

Tony Wong

The Macau government announced yesterday that from today Macau residents returning from the Chinese mainland to Macau can choose to present their Home Return Permits when using e-channels at the three Macau-mainland joint checkpoints – the Macau-Zhuhai checkpoint of the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge (HZMB), the Hengqin checkpoint, and the Qingmao checkpoint.

Nevertheless, they can choose to continue presenting their Macau ID cards (BIR).

The new measure to be implemented at the three checkpoints from today was announced in a joint statement by the Public Security Police Force (PSP) and the Macao Public Security Forces Affairs Bureau (DSFSM) yesterday.

Previously, Macau residents returning from the mainland to Macau were required to present their Macau ID cards when using e-channels at the three joint checkpoints.

Under the new measure, which starts today, Macau residents, when either travelling to the mainland or returning to Macau, can present their Home Return Permits when using



This undated handout photo released yesterday shows border crossers using e-channels at the Qingmao joint checkpoint.

– Photo: PSP/DSFSM

e-channels at the three checkpoints.

A Home Return Permit is a card-sized travel document for Hong Kong residents or Macau residents to travel to and stay in the mainland. The document, issued by the Chinese mainland authorities,

is officially known as the Mainland Travel Permit for Hong Kong and Macao Residents.

Three of Macau's land border checkpoints with Zhuhai are Macau-mainland joint checkpoints, where the "joint inspection and one-time

release" system is operating, namely the HZMB Macau-Zhuhai checkpoint, the Hengqin checkpoint, and the Qingmao checkpoint.

While the Hengqin checkpoint and the Qingmao checkpoint operate 24/7, the HZMB Macau-

Zhuhai checkpoint opens between 8:00 a.m. and 10:00 p.m. Qingmao is a land border checkpoint for pedestrians only.

The "joint inspection and one-time release" model is a joint Macau Special Administrative Region (MSAR)-Chinese mainland immigration clearance system adopted at Macau-mainland joint checkpoints where border crossers are required to pass border controls only once when completing their departure and arrival formalities.

Before today, Macau residents using the three joint checkpoints' e-channels were required to present different documents depending on the direction of their travel. When travelling from Macau to the mainland, they had to present their Home Return Permits. When returning to Macau from the mainland, they were required to present their Macau ID cards.

Yesterday's PSP-DSFSM joint statement said that from today Macau residents can pass through the three joint checkpoints' e-channels by presenting their Home Return Permits in either direction: travelling to the mainland or returning to Macau.

Continued on p.6

Chinese automaker Geely reports record H1 sales, revenue growth

HANGZHOU – Chinese automaker Geely Automobile Holdings Limited reported record-high sales and revenue growth in the first half of the year, according to its interim report released yesterday.

The company announced record sales of more than 1.42 million vehicles, with revenue growing 15 percent year-on-year to 173.6 billion yuan during the period.

Marking its sixth consecutive year of positive H1 revenue

growth, the company also reported a 46 percent rise in core profit attributable to owners of the parent, reaching 9.68 billion yuan for the period.

Geely Auto's overseas sales rose 158 percent year on year to over 474,000 units for the period, exceeding its total export volume for the whole of 2025.

The automaker, based in Hangzhou, capital of Zhejiang Province, operates in 114 overseas markets.

– Xinhua



This photo shows the 30-gram round gold coin issued by China's central bank to mark the 100th birth anniversary of late Chinese leader Jiang Zemin. China's central bank (PBOC) yesterday issued four commemorative coins to mark the 100th birth anniversary of the nation's late leader Jiang Zemin. The coins comprise one ordinary commemorative coin, two gold coins and one silver coin, all of which are legal tender in the Chinese mainland, according to the PBOC. (Story on page 7) – Xinhua

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The Macau Post Daily

Xi urges advancing socialism with Chinese characteristics on centenary of late leader Jiang Zemin

President Xi Jinping yesterday hailed the "indelible contributions" of late leader Jiang Zemin and urged the Party and people to continue advancing socialism.

– Story on p. 7

Trump threatens to bomb Oman if it gets in way of Iran deal: report

US President Donald Trump yesterday threatened to bomb Oman if it "gets in the way" of a US deal with Iran on the Strait of Hormuz and called for Iran to surrender.

– Story on p. 10

Mexico's indigenous chief justice hits back at discrimination

Mexico's Supreme Court chief justice told AFP he faces discrimination on a daily basis over his indigenous roots.

– Story on p. 12

A Window to the World for Macau's Associations

Responsibility, National Security and External Links in the Reform of the Legal Regime for Associations

Commentary by Manuel Silvério

Independent analyst on public policy and regional development

(Former public-sector official with international experience and a longstanding involvement in public policy and sports development)

In my first article on the reform of the Legal Regime for Associations, I sought to explain why I believe this review is necessary and why the public consultation should be used as an opportunity to understand the practical implications of the proposed changes. I summed up my position in one sentence: not against reform, but in favour of good reform.

There is, however, one dimension that deserves separate consideration: the relations maintained by Macau associations with organisations in the Chinese mainland, Hong Kong and elsewhere, including their regional and international affiliations.

This is an area I know mainly through sport and youth affairs. I do not intend to venture into legal interpretations of matters requiring specialist knowledge that I do not claim to possess. I would rather look at concrete situations and consider how some of the new rules might work in practice.

One of the proposals in the consultation document deserves particular attention. Associations will be required to notify the Identification Services Bureau (DSI), within the legally prescribed period, when they join or leave organisations or groups established outside Macau, as well as when they receive funding from entities outside the Macao Special Administrative Region (MSAR). Failure to provide such notification may result in administrative penalties.

The need for transparency is understandable. What matters now is to understand how these obligations will interact with a reality that has long been part of Macau's associative life.

A reality already envisaged by the Basic Law

The external relations of associations are not merely a matter of established practice. They are expressly contemplated by the Basic Law itself.

Article 133 provides a framework for relations between associations in Macau and their counterparts in other regions of the country. Article 134, in turn, provides that associations in fields as diverse as education, science, technology, culture, the press, publishing, sport, recreation, the professions, medicine and health, labour, women, youth and social welfare, as well as religious organisations, may maintain and develop relations with their counterparts in other countries and regions and with relevant international organisations.

This is not a minor detail. It shows that this external dimension is envisaged within the very framework of the MSAR.

One only has to look around Macau to appreciate the diversity of these relationships.

The Macau Portuguese and English Press Association (AIPIM) is linked to the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ). JCI Macao, China is part of Junior Chamber International (JCI). The Scout Association of Macau is a member of the World Organization of the Scout Movement (WOSM).

The Macau Red Cross, within its own particular institutional framework, maintains cooperative relations within the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement.

The Holy House of Mercy of Macau, in turn, is part of the international network of Misericórdias* and maintains close ties with the Portuguese Union of Misericórdias (UMP), taking part in its congresses and developing cooperation and solidarity initiatives with Portuguese Misericórdias.

Sport provides further examples. The Macau Universitarian Sports Association (ADUM) is affiliated with the International University Sports Federation (FISU).

There is no need to compile an exhaustive list. These examples simply show that external relations can take many different forms: membership, congresses, training, exchanges, development programmes, institutional cooperation or joint projects.

Going international also means following rules

Being part of a regional or international organisation does not bring opportunities alone. It also means following rules, providing information and assuming responsibilities.

We have a recent example in Macau football.

The difficulties surrounding the licensing of local clubs for participation in Asian Football Confederation (AFC) competitions have shown that access to international football does not depend solely on results on the pitch.

The AFC licensing system covers sporting, administrative, legal, financial, personnel and infrastructure criteria. Its requirements include audited annual financial statements, interim financial information where applicable, financial and cash-flow projections, structured youth development programmes, and a range of technical and organisational conditions.

I have written separately about the licensing problems faced by Macau clubs and do not intend to reopen here the discussion over responsibilities.

The conclusion I draw is much simpler: internationalisation brings rights and opportunities, but it also requires the capacity to comply with rules, be accountable and meet the standards of the organisations to which one belongs.

It is precisely here that I see an interesting possibility arising from the proposed reform.

The proposal places the DSI at

the centre of the new regime and provides that it may seek cooperation and opinions from other public services and entities, as well as issue guidance or recommendations concerning associations.

Without replacing the responsibilities of the associations themselves, this centralised role could perhaps also be used to guide and direct association leaders when they face more complex legal, administrative or documentary requirements.

The AFC example is instructive. Auditing, finance, training, youth development, facilities and technical requirements do not all fall within the remit of a single public service. Better administrative coordination could help associations understand where they should turn for assistance and prevent certain problems from being discovered only when it is too late.

Better supervision, but also better guidance.

Protecting those who serve in good faith

There is also a human dimension that should not be forgotten.

Many associations in Macau depend on the voluntary work of their officers and members. Not all of them have legal, accounting or administrative training and, simply through lack of knowledge, they may make formal mistakes or fail to comply with a particular obligation without any intention of breaking the law.

Clearer rules, mechanisms allowing shortcomings to be remedied and better guidance from the relevant public services could help correct minor errors before they become larger problems.

A well-implemented reform could therefore also help protect the many volunteers who devote their time and effort to keeping associations running.

Good reform should not only improve supervision; it should also make it easier for those acting in good faith to comply with the law.

Not everyone presents the same risk

The consultation document explains that the information currently available on the governing bodies of associations, their links with organisations established outside Macau and funding received from abroad is insufficient in light of requirements concerning the prevention of money laundering and terrorist financing.

It is in this context that the document refers to the Financial Action Task Force (FATF)**.

The consultation document itself explains that international recommendations call for the identification of categories of non-profit organisations which, because of their activities, sources of funding or other factors, present significant risks, and recommend risk-based supervisory measures.

The principle seems important: not necessarily treating every association in the same way, but identifying where the actual risks lie.

In simple terms: apply closer supervision where there is risk, without assuming that every association or every external relationship presents the same level of risk.

Where funding is received from outside Macau, the proposal also provides that the DSI may, following an assessment, request activity reports, accounts and other information.

Transparency is reasonable. It will be equally important for association leaders to know clearly what they must report, within what period and under what circumstances.

Active, dormant and representative

There is another distinction that deserves attention.

According to the consultation document, almost 40 per cent of Macau's associations have not operated for a considerable period, with many existing only nominally.

Over the past decades, numerous sporting, recreational, cultural, social and other clubs and associations have been established in Macau. Many remain active and continue to perform useful functions. Others will gradually have ceased operating.

An association that organises activities, holds meetings of its members, complies with its statutes and serves the community is clearly not in the same position as one that has existed for years only on the register.

This distinction becomes even more relevant when the existence and activities of associations may have implications not only for access to public funding but also for certain mechanisms of social and political representation.

It would not be fair, without knowing the circumstances of each case, to suggest that inactive associations were established or maintained for electoral purposes. But it seems reasonable that, whenever an association plays a role in representative mechanisms, its registered status and actual activities should correspond as closely as possible to reality.

A more accurate and up-to-date picture of Macau's associative sector could therefore contribute to a fairer use of public resources and strengthen the credibility of representative mechanisms themselves.

National security as a principle

Finally, there is one issue that should be stated clearly.

Safeguarding national security is a fundamental responsibility of the MSAR and an essential principle governing the external relations of associations.

The proposal provides that, in certain circumstances, the DSI may seek an assessment from the Commission for Safeguarding National Security during the process of establishing an association. For existing associations, it also provides for circumstances in which an association may be dissolved, including where, following an opinion from the Commission, it is considered to pose a threat to State security.

It seems right to me that any external relationship must fully comply with the legal order in force in the MSAR and must not jeopardise national security, public order or the rights and freedoms of others.

The openness recognised by the Basic Law must be understood within the current constitutional and political framework of the MSAR. Historical and political circumstances from other periods belonged to different contexts and should not automatically be transposed to present-day realities.

There is an old saying that perhaps captures the idea well: "When in Rome, do as the Romans do."

An association belonging to an international organisation must naturally comply with that organisation's rules, but it must first and foremost respect the laws and responsibilities arising from its existence and activities in Macau.

For this reason, I see no need to place national security and legitimate external relations on opposing sides. National security is a principle that must be safeguarded. Within that framework, transparency, responsibility and legitimate external relations can coexist.

There is also a longer-term dimension worth considering. Genuinely active associations, clear rules, better governance, responsible use of public resources, association leaders who understand their obligations, and external relations conducted lawfully are all good practices that strengthen confidence in the functioning of the MSAR.

They are also a way of preparing Macau for the future, including the stages that will follow 2049, without any need here to anticipate a legal interpretation of what that future framework may be.

The best preparation for the future is, ultimately, to build sound institutions and good practices in the present.

Safeguarding national security and ensuring legitimate external relations are not incompatible objectives, provided there are clear rules, responsibility and proportionality.

Perhaps the real value of good reform lies precisely in its ability to turn these principles into everyday practice.

Macao SAR, August 17, 2026

* "Misericórdia" is the Portuguese word for "mercy". The International Confederation of Charities/Misericórdias, founded in 1979, unites Santa Casa da Misericórdia (Holy House of Mercy) institutions across Portugal, elsewhere in Europe, Brazil, Africa, and Asia (incl. Macau's Santa Casa da Misericórdia, set up in 1569, being the oldest Western charity organisation in the Far East). – MPD

** The Paris-based Financial Action Task Force (FATF) is the global intergovernmental watchdog for money laundering, terrorist financing, and the financing of proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. – Gemini

N.B. The two footnotes have been added by the Post.

2026 Guangdong-HK-Macao 'Little Meteorological Anchors' Contest starts local selection



This poster provided by the Meteorological and Geophysical Bureau (SMG) yesterday promotes the upcoming 2026 Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao "Little Meteorological Anchors" Contest. The Portuguese translation was arranged by the Post.

Khalel Vallo

The local selection round of the 2026 Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao "Little Meteorological Anchors" Contest (粵港澳“氣象小主播”大賽) is now accepting applications from primary school students, with submissions open until 1:00 p.m. on September 24, according to a statement by the Meteorological and Geophysical Bureau (SMG) yesterday, the first day of registering for the local selection process.

The contest is a science popularisation initiative designed to engage primary school students across the Greater Bay Area (GBA), which consists of nine cities in Guangdong Province and the Hong Kong and Macao special administrative regions.

The contest is jointly organised by the local observatory, Macao Science Centre (MSC) and public broadcaster TDM, with support from the Education and Youth Development Bureau (DSEDJ), the statement said.

According to the co-organisers, student presentations should centre on early warning systems for extreme weather, disaster prevention and mitigation, climate change adaptation, and how meteorological science supports socio-economic development.

Aimed at enhancing students' ability to create and communicate meteorological science content, as well as encouraging their interest in meteorological science, the local selection round is divided into two categories: the Children's Category, for students born between September 1, 2017 and August 31, 2020, and the Youth Category, for those born between September 1, 2014 and August 31, 2017, the statement said.

According to the statement, the contest will take place in two stages – the first involves online registration and submission of video entries, while the second will consist of an in-person selection round.

Under the theme "Observe today's weather, protect tomorrow's homeland", participants are required to focus on how meteorological technology can safeguard human life globally, the statement said, adding that their science presentations may cover monitoring, forecasting and early warning for extreme weather, disaster prevention and reduction, climate change mitigation and adaptation, and how meteorology can support high-quality socioeconomic development.

Entries may be presented in Cantonese, Mandarin or English, the statement noted, underlining that participants can register and upload their videos by scanning the QR code on the contest poster or accessing the relevant link on the observatory's website.

Each category will award first, second and third prizes, as well as merit, special and selection prizes, the statement noted.

Winners of the local selection round will also have the opportunity to advance to the semi-finals and grand final of the 2026 Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao "Little Meteorological Anchors" Contest, the statement noted.

"Little Meteorological Anchors" Contest, the statement noted, adding that the contest will also feature an "Active School Participation Award" and an "Outstanding Supervising Teacher Award" to recognise schools and teachers who actively support student participation.

Students interested in taking part should submit their applications and video entries by 1:00 p.m. on September 24. Further details and the contest regulations are available on the SMG website. Enquiries can be made with Ms Leong on 8898 6206 or Mr Kan on 8898 6201 during office hours.

The precise calendar dates for the semi-finals and grand final of the 2026 Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao contest have not yet been announced by the Guangdong Meteorological Bureau.

However, based on the official event timeline and historical schedules from previous editions, the competition is slated to follow this progression:

Offline Regional Selection Trial: October/early November 2026;

Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Semi-Finals (複賽): Typically scheduled for late November following special training sessions for qualified regional winners;

The Grand Final (總決賽) is slated to be held in Guangzhou or Hengqin between late January and early February 2027.

Exact dates for the cross-regional stages will be confirmed following the completion of local regional trials, according to the co-organisers. ■

Police arrest man in his 40s for sexually harassing woman in her 70s

Armando Neves

The Public Security Police Force (PSP) arrested a man on Thursday for sexually harassing a woman in her 70s on August 9, PSP spokeswoman Kong Chi Ian said during a regular press conference yesterday.

Kong identified the suspect as a male non-resident renovation worker in his 40s surnamed Feng.

According to Kong, in the early morning of August 9, the female victim was walking alone along Estrada de Ferreira do Amaral (亞馬喇馬路), near the Montanha Russa Park (螺絲山公園) area, when a stranger suddenly reached out and touched her private parts. Startled by the sudden assault, the victim lost her balance and fell, injuring her knee and face, Kong said, adding that after ensuring her own safety, she reported the incident to the police.

After reviewing the city's CCTV surveillance system footage, PSP officers identified Feng and arrested him on Thursday near Avenida de Venceslau de Moraes (慕拉士大馬路), according to Kong.

During the investigation, Feng denied the offence, claiming that he had consumed a large amount of alcohol on the evening of August 8 and had no recollection of the incident in the early morning, Kong said, adding that, based on comprehensive surveillance footage and other investigative evidence, the police confirmed that Feng had deliberately made physical contact with the victim.

Feng has meanwhile been transferred to the Public Prosecutions Office (MP), facing charges of physical assault through negligence and sexual harassment. ■



This undated handout photo provided by the Public Security Police (PSP) yesterday shows PSP officers escorting the sexual harassment suspect to a police station.

Tropical system in S China Sea may develop: SMG

Khalel Vallo

A trough of low pressure in the South China Sea has become active and could develop into a tropical depression or tropical storm, potentially affecting weather conditions in Macau later this week, according to a statement by the Meteorological and Geophysical Bureau (SMG) yesterday.

The broad trough was gradually consolidating over the central and northern parts of the South China Sea, the statement said, noting that both conventional numerical models and artificial intelligence (AI) models indicate the possibility of a low-pressure area or tropical storm developing within the trough and moving towards the coast of Guangdong later this week.

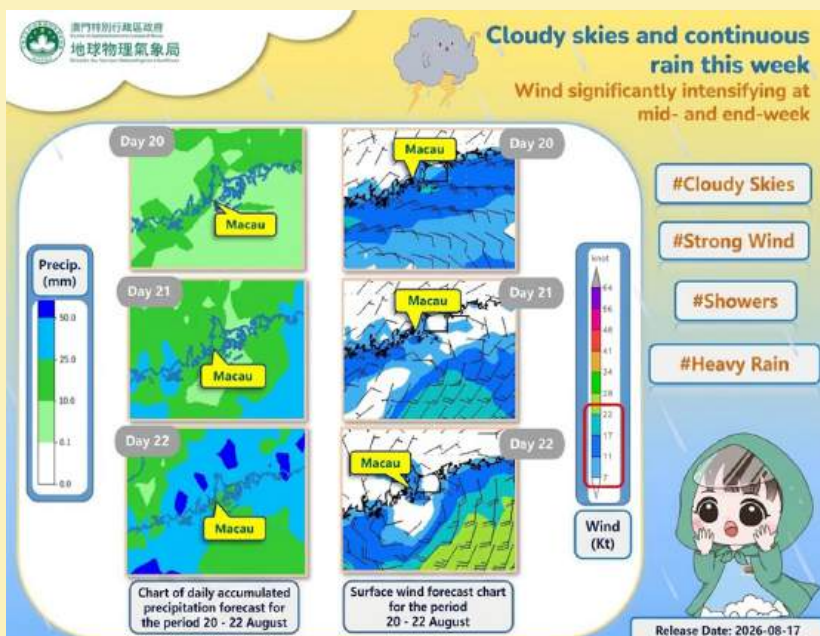
However, major forecasting models continue to show differences in the system's potential intensity and track, with uncertainty remaining over its development, the SMG statement said, adding that the bureau is closely monitoring the situation.

Regardless of whether the low-pressure system develops into a tropical storm, its associated circulation is expected to bring a significant increase in wind strength in Macau in the middle and latter parts of this week, along with more frequent showers, the statement noted.

The public is advised to closely monitor the latest weather changes and the bureau's weather alerts, the statement noted.

Meanwhile, the observatory has also launched the new "Macau Weather" mobile application (Experimental Version) to provide faster weather information and warnings amid the rapid changes and uncertainties associated with tropical systems, the statement pointed out.

Residents can follow the SMG's official website, official WeChat account and the new "Macau Weather" app for the latest weather information and warning signals, and plan their travel accordingly. ■



This poster provided by the Meteorological and Geophysical Bureau (SMG) yesterday shows its accumulated precipitation forecast charts and surface wind field for August 20-22; translation from Portuguese arranged by the Post.



6 artists tackle imperfection, happiness in dual-theme exhibition

Rui Pastorin

Six creators from Macau continue to take on themes related to the beauty of imperfection, along with happiness, through art in the ongoing joint dual-themed exhibition at the Former Municipal Cattle Stable, which is now in its final three days.

The free-admission exhibition is located at the junction of Avenida do Coronel Mesquita (美副將大馬路) and Avenida do Almirante Lacerda (罽些喇提督大馬路), and is part of the annual “ART POWER JAMMING” exhibition organised by Ark – Association of Macau Art (AAMA).

The current edition takes on the themes “99 percent” and “HEY! Were you happy today?”, arranged in an interconnected way to allow viewers to see the core themes that intertwine and unfold as they explore the artworks presented.

The pieces displayed span from photography to mosaics to various paintings. Opening with “99%” that features a series of photographs taken by Akiaya (秋綾), Ken Wong (王嘉誠) and Leong Chi Kong, with works ranging from showing that happiness can be found even in the smallest of spaces to highlighting parallels.

This theme, as pointed out in a statement displayed at the venue, photographs the beauty of life’s imperfections, as well as highlights how people cannot help but looking back at the “what if” or outcome of an unchosen path, overlooking what they might already have while noting imperfection. “This inner conflict born of choice, and the struggle arising from dissatisfaction, is precisely the most authentic urban state of mind hidden in the 99 percent of ordinary moments”, the statement said.

Meanwhile, “HEY! Are you happy today?” sees mixed media artworks presented by Si Meng Chu, Dophine Wong (黃安兒) and Rebecca Tai (戴美儀), with works exploring everything from childlike wonder through incorporating “balloon motifs” to happiness found while working on a difficult art discipline like mosaics.

Harkening back to the first theme, the statement said that when exhibitiongoers sincerely confront 99 percent of their daily regrets and face their inner

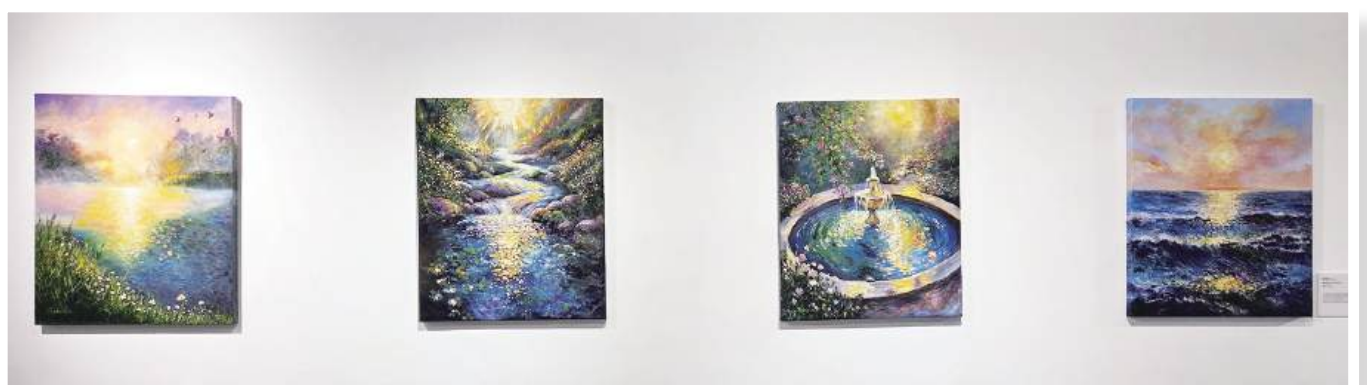
struggles, they arrive at the question that the second theme asks.

“By examining the course of a single day, the creators and audience together contemplate and uncover the moments of joy that are truly worth celebrating”, the statement noted.

With the two themes intertwined and building on each other, the exhibition encourages reflection and an exploration of their emotions, the statement added.

One can visit the exhibition from 10:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. for the remainder of its run, after which the works will also be displayed at Café Voyage, located at 31-A Rua do Padre António Roliz, Pou Mei On Bldg, ground floor, from Saturday through September 12.

On the organisers, an introduction to the group displayed at the gallery highlighted that AAMA is a constantly growing group that brings together Macau’s art enthusiasts. Established in 2014, the group organises a variety of activities for Macau residents to be given the opportunity to learn about art, express creativity and experience the joy of creation.



-Photos: Rui Pastorin

Customs intercepts 10 smuggling cases in a week, seizes 105 litres of sake

Armindo Neves

The Macao Customs Service announced in a statement on Sunday that its officers busted 10 smuggling cases at the Barrier Gate, the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge (HZMB) Macao Port (checkpoint), and Macao International Airport between August 7 and 13.

According to the statement, a total of 53,000 e-cigarettes, 15,000 cigarettes, 600 toy models, 117 used mobile phones, and about 105 litres of Japanese sake were seized, with a total estimated market value of around 470,000 patacas.

During the seven-day period, the statement said, Customs officers at the Macao International Airport passenger arrival inspection area discovered two mainland Chinese

travellers who had concealed large quantities of cigarettes and e-cigarettes in their carry-on luggage.

At the HZMB Macao Port (checkpoint)traveller arrival inspection hall, officers found a Macau resident and a Hong Kong resident who had hidden toy models in their personal belongings, the statement said, adding that on the arrival vehicle lane at the checkpoint, officers noticed a suspicious cross-border vehicle driven by another Macau resident. Their suspicion was confirmed as the Macau resident was found to have concealed Japanese sake inside the vehicle in an attempt to smuggle it into Macau.

At the Barrier Gate outbound traveller inspection hall, customs

officers discovered two mainland Chinese residents, two Macau residents, and a Hong Kong resident who had hidden used mobile phones in their clothing they were wearing in an attempt to smuggle them out of Macau.

The 10 smugglers are aged between 18 and 50. Customs has initiated legal proceedings against them under the provisions of Macau's External Trade Law. If the offences are confirmed, they may be subject to a maximum fine of 100,000 patacas each. Two of the smugglers are also suspected of violating the provisions of Macau's Tobacco Prevention and Control Law, and their cases have been referred to the Health Bureau (SSM) for follow-up action. ■



This undated handout photo provided by Macau Customs Service on Sunday shows about 105 litres of Japanese sake seized by its officers at the HZMB Macao Port (checkpoint) recently.

MGM Summer Camp draws record participation

Rui Pastorin

The two-day "9th MGM Golden Lion Summer Camp" has drawn in a record high of over 200 students aged 14 to 18 from 41 local secondary schools, the integrated resort operator said in a statement yesterday.

The camp, which was held at

the Guangdong-Macao In-Depth Cooperation Zone in Hengqin on Thursday and Friday, was launched in 2012, the statement said,

The 2-day event featured team-building and experiential activities during the first day, among which were outdoor orienteering, archery tag, high-rope courses, and

augmented reality (AR) combat games, while the evening campfire saw students interact with MGM management staff, who spoke about their professional journeys.

Meanwhile, the second day saw participants visit By-Health Transparent Factory's Nutrition Explore Center to learn about nutrition science and the "innovative development of the health and wellness industry through interactive technology experiences".

MGM Executive Vice President of Human Resources Wendy Yu (余婉瑩) was quoted by the statement as saying that the record high participation "reflects the programme's broad community recognition but also demonstrates young people's growing enthusiasm for diverse learning".

Meanwhile, Chan Chan Seng from Saint Paul School said in the statement that the camp helped him build teamwork skills through orienteering and team activities, gain career insights during the factory visit, and connect with like-minded friends. ■



Students engage in a high-rope activity during the two-day 9th MGM Golden Lion Summer Camp held in the Guangdong-Macao In-Depth Cooperation Zone in Hengqin last week. – Photo: MGM

Airport operator CAM takes over Taipa Terminal airport space

Tony Wong

The government will sign a concession agreement with local airport operator CAM – Macau International Airport Company Limited – on operating an area in the Taipa Ferry Terminal earmarked to be used as part of the adjacent airport, according to an executive order published in the Official Gazette (BO) yesterday.

The order, signed by Chief Executive Sam Hou Fai on August 7, authorises Secretary for Transport and Public Works Raymond Tam Vai Man, on behalf of the local government, to sign the concession agreement with CAM.

According to another executive order signed by Sam gazetted yesterday, the government decided to directly grant CAM a concession agreement without launching a public tender, considering that CAM is well qualified and experienced in operating an airport.

The government said in 2024 that it had decided at that time to suspend its plan to convert part of the Taipa Ferry Terminal into the adjacent airport's Terminal 2.

Neither of the two orders yesterday mentions how the area in the ferry terminal covered by the concession will be used. ■



This file photo taken in August shows the Taipa Ferry Terminal. – Photo: Tony Wong

Sam appoints new head of Court of 2nd Instance

Tony Wong

Chief Executive Sam Hou Fai has appointed Seng Ioi Man, who is currently a judge of the Court of Second Instance (TSI), as that court's president effective from September 1, succeeding Choi Mou Pan who has been appointed by Sam as a judge of the Court of Final Appeal (TUI).

Sam announced their appointments in two executive orders published in the Official Gazette (BO) yesterday. Sam signed the orders on Thursday last week.

Seng's appointment will last three years, and can be renewed upon expiration.

Choi has headed the Court of Second Instance since January 1 this year, succeeding Tong Hio Fong who became the prosecutor-

general (chief public prosecutor) of the Public Prosecutions Office (MP) in October last year.

From September 1, Choi will fill the vacancy left by José Maria Dias Azedo, who retires today as a judge of the Court of Final Appeal.

Including its president, the Court of Final Appeal comprises three judges in its organisational structure. The court is currently headed by Song Man Lei. The other judge in the court is Ho Wai Neng, whose appointment started on January 1 this year.

Seng was previously appointed by Sam as the president of the Legislative Assembly Electoral Affairs Commission (CAEAL) that oversaw the legislature's direct and indirect elections last year. ■



This file photo taken last year shows Seng Ioi Man, who then headed the Legislative Assembly Electoral Affairs Commission (CAEAL) that oversaw the legislative direct and indirect elections last year, talking to reporters after a closed-door meeting of the commission at the Public Administration Building on Rua do Campo. – Photo: Tony Wong

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- AI tools: DeepSeek, Gemini
- Wire services – AFP, Xinhua

Macau Weather

MAINLY CLOUDY.
A FEW THUNDERY SHOWERS.
FORCE 3 TO 4 EAST TO
NORTHEASTERLY WINDS,
OCCASIONALLY FORCE 5 WITH
GUSTS.
RELATIVE HUMIDITY
WILL RANGE BETWEEN
75% AND 95%.



26°C~30°C

Source: SMG

Locals can use Home Return Permit both ways at all 3 Macau-mainland joint checkpoints

Continued from p.1

Consequently, Macau residents travelling to the mainland are, as previously, required to present their Home Return Permits. Conversely, Macau residents returning to Macau can now choose to present either their Macau ID cards (as previously) or their Home Return Permits (under the new measure).

The new measure also applies to the Hengqin joint checkpoint's vehicle inspection channels, where the "joint inspection and one-time release" system is operating.

According to the statement, the new measure also applies to Hong Kong permanent residents. Specifically, when travelling from Macau to the mainland, they are now, as previously, required to present their Home Return Permits. Conversely, when travelling from the mainland to Macau, they can now choose to present either their Hong Kong ID cards (as previously) or their Home Return Permits (under the new measure).

The new measure also applies to non-Chinese nationals holding a Home Return Permit equivalent. Their version of this travel document is officially known as the Mainland Travel Permit for Hong Kong and Macao Residents (Non-Chinese Citizens).

Since earlier this year, eligible border crossers have been able to register to use a new function enabling them to use the three joint checkpoints' e-channels without having to present their travel documents. Under this function, they do not have to have their travel documents scanned. Instead, they are only required to pass fingerprint scans and facial recognition.

Speaking to the *Post* over the phone yesterday, a PSP spokesperson noted that the new measure commencing today effectively benefits those who choose to continue presenting their travel documents instead of using the document-free function. ■

Central bank adds 8 banks as digital yuan operators

BEIJING – China's central bank announced yesterday that it has added eight banks to its list of authorized institutions for digital yuan operations, in a step to promote the steady development of the digital currency.

The move aims to improve the inclusiveness of digital yuan services, and meet public demand for secure, convenient and efficient digital yuan services, according to the People's Bank of China (PBOC).

The newly added operators, including Ping An Bank, Hengfeng Bank, China Bohai Bank, Bank of Shanghai, Bank of Hangzhou, Huishang Bank, Bank of Changsha, and Guangxi Beibu Gulf Bank, will be linked to the central bank's digital yuan system.

They will start offering digital yuan services after operational and technical preparations have been completed.

This expansion has brought the number of operating institutions for digital yuan business to 30.

"The newly added institutions, comprising joint-stock commercial banks and city commercial banks, will fill service gaps in regional small and medium-sized enterprise and

cross-border trade within the existing operator network," said Dong Ximiao, chief researcher at Merchants Union Consumer Finance Company Limited.

The PBOC began research on digital currency in 2014, and pilot programs were first launched in late 2019. Since then, domestic and cross-border trials have seen the digital yuan adopted across a wide range of daily uses, including retail transactions, dining, tourism, education, healthcare, public services, and cross-border settlements that make life easier for foreign visitors.

In October 2025, the PBOC announced that it will support more commercial banks to become authorized operators of digital yuan services, ending a pause of more than two years since Industrial Bank became the 10th such operator in 2022.

In April 2026, the PBOC added 12 banks as new operators of digital yuan at one stroke, with city commercial banks joining the list for the first time.

The central bank said it will continue to expand the number of operators in order to build an open, inclusive and fair competition environment for the development of the digital yuan. — *Xinhua*

China's economy weathers July pressures as new growth drivers strengthen

Analysis

BEIJING – China's economy remained broadly stable in July despite external uncertainties and extreme weather, with new growth drivers gaining momentum and economic activity showing signs of continued structural improvement, official data showed yesterday.

The country's economy showed "resilience and vitality" as proactive macro policies helped cushion external and domestic pressures, National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) spokesperson Fu Linghui told a press conference. He pointed to persistent geopolitical conflicts, uncertainty in global energy markets, and extreme weather as key challenges facing the economy in July.

Industrial output increased 4.5 percent year on year in July, slowing 0.8 percentage points from June. Fu attributed the slowdown to short-term domestic and external factors, while noting that major production indicators remained broadly stable throughout the first seven months.

During the period, industrial output rose 5.3 percent year on year, largely in line with the first-half pace, Fu said, adding that "the overall trend of stable production growth remained unchanged."

Equipment manufacturing remained a key pillar of industrial growth, with value-added output in computer communication equipment and other electronic equipment, specialized equipment, and electrical machinery rising 19.1 percent, 12.6 percent and 8.8 percent year on year, respectively.

Growth in the three sectors all accelerated from June, reflecting "stronger innovation-driven growth and continued industrial upgrading," Fu said.

Innovation is driving new growth momentum and improving the economic structure, a trend that continued in July, Fu said. Preliminary



A drone photo taken on Sunday shows China-produced trucks bound for Ghana being loaded onto a ship at Yantai Port in Shandong. Yantai Port's general cargo shipment volume to Africa has exceeded six million tonnes since the beginning of this year, a year-on-year increase of 66.1 percent. — *Xinhua*

estimates showed that new growth drivers accounted for 50.9 percent of the growth in industrial output by major industrial firms in the first seven months, up 3 percentage points from the first half.

AI, notably, is emerging as a key driver in the shift toward new engines of growth. In July, value-added output in AI-related electronic components and equipment manufacturing and intelligent equipment manufacturing rose 24.7 percent and 15.1 percent year on year, respectively, while output of 3D printing equipment surged 65.7 percent.

"Investment in these emerging sectors not only supports current demand but also helps build high-quality supply for future growth," Fu said.

China's consumer spending further expanded. Retail sales of consumer goods rose 1.1 percent year on year in the first seven months, with upgraded consumer goods, including communications equipment, cultural and office supplies, and cosmetics, gaining a larger share of total retail sales, Fu said.

Service consumption also continued to gain ground, he noted. Retail sales of services rose 5 percent year on year during the January-July period, outpacing the growth in retail sales of consumer goods by 3.9 percentage points, as consumers shifted from buying goods toward services and experiences.

Fu highlighted the strong spillover effect of service consumption. Tourism, for example, drives spending on dining, accommodation and transportation in

addition to travel services. He added that expanding service consumption will remain a key driver of overall consumer spending.

On the job market front, the surveyed urban unemployment rate in China averaged 5.2 percent in the first seven months, unchanged from the same period last year, the NBS data showed.

During the same period, fixed-asset investment fell 6.7 percent year on year in the first seven months, with the decline widening amid extreme weather, external uncertainties and the country's ongoing economic restructuring, Fu said.

"Investment should not be assessed solely by its growth rate. More attention should be paid to its structure, quality and efficiency," he said, noting that investment has

played an increasingly important role in supporting economic transformation, strengthening infrastructure and improving people's livelihoods.

"New growth areas are attracting more investment as China accelerates the shift from old growth drivers to new ones," Fu said. Investment in information services rose 19.2 percent year on year in the first seven months, accelerating 3.7 percentage points from the first half, while investment in integrated circuit manufacturing increased 11.5 percent.

"China's economy is undergoing positive and profound changes, with innovation playing a growing role in driving growth," he said, cautioning that the transition to new growth drivers will take time and some sectors still face short-term challenges.

The country's gross domestic product grew 4.7 percent year on year in the first half of the year. The country is targeting full-year economic growth of about 5 percent this year.

In late July, a meeting of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Committee called for timely implementation of pragmatic and effective incremental policies, stronger counter-cyclical adjustments, and efforts to expand domestic demand and optimize supply.

Since August, macro policies have been stepped up, with stronger counter-cyclical monetary policy, faster fiscal spending and greater investment by state-owned enterprises, Wen Bin, chief economist and president of the research institute at China Minsheng Bank, said in a co-authored article.

"With stronger policy support and easing disruptions from extreme weather, major economic indicators are expected to rebound in August," Wen added. — *AFP*

Xi urges advancing socialism with Chinese characteristics on centenary of late leader Jiang Zemin

BEIJING – President Xi Jinping yesterday hailed the “indelible contributions” of late leader Jiang Zemin and urged the whole Communist Party of China (CPC) and the Chinese people of all ethnic groups to continue advancing the cause of socialism with Chinese characteristics.

Xi, also general secretary of the CPC Central Committee and chairman of the Central Military Commission, made the remarks at a grand gathering at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing marking the centenary of Jiang’s birth.

“We pay high tribute to his towering achievements and learn from his noble demeanor,” Xi said, calling for continuous efforts to create better lives for the Chinese people and write an even more brilliant chapter for the Chinese nation.

In his tribute, Xi described Jiang as a long-tested communist fighter and an outstanding leader of the great cause of socialism with Chinese characteristics. Jiang was the core of the third generation of the Party’s central collective leadership and the principal founder of the Theory of Three Represents.

Jiang was born in August 1926 in Yangzhou, Jiangsu Province. In 1989, he was elected general secretary of the CPC Central Committee. He passed away in 2022 at the age of 96.

About 6,000 people were present at Monday’s commemoration, which was presided over by Li Qiang and attended by Zhao Leji, Wang Huning, Cai Qi, Ding Xuexiang, and Li Xi – all members of the Standing Committee of the Political Bureau of the CPC Central Committee – as well as Vice President Han Zheng.

Xi and other leaders met with members of Jiang’s family and took group photos with them before the gathering began.

FIRMNESS IN POLITICAL CONVICTION

Jiang made indelible contributions to safeguarding the great cause of socialism with Chinese characteristics, breaking new ground in reform and opening up in all respects, achieving overall moderate prosperity in people’s lives and successfully advancing the cause of socialism with Chinese characteristics into the 21st century, Xi said.

Xi spoke highly of Jiang’s steadfast commitment to communist ideals and his devotion to the Party and the people, calling on Party members to draw strength from his



Party and state leaders Xi Jinping (center, front), Li Qiang, Zhao Leji, Wang Huning, Cai Qi, Ding Xuexiang, Li Xi, and Han Zheng attend a grand gathering to commemorate the birth centenary of late leader Jiang Zemin at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing yesterday morning. – Xinhua

firm political conviction.

He highlighted Jiang’s view that the farther the country advances along the path of reform and opening up and the more its economy develops, the more crucial it becomes to strengthen the Party’s leadership and improve Party building.

On the new journey, Xi stressed, it is imperative to uphold the overall leadership of the Party and the centralized, unified leadership of the CPC Central Committee, unswervingly strengthen the full and rigorous Party self-governance, and ensure the Party remains the strong leadership core in the cause of socialism with Chinese characteristics.

Jiang always stood with the people and cared for their well-being, Xi said, calling for efforts to learn from the late leader’s dedication to and profound love for the people.

Jiang pointed out that the fundamental goal of economic development is to raise people’s living standards. He also placed emphasis on building a moderately prosperous society at a higher level in an all-round way that would benefit over a billion people, Xi said.

Xi underscored the importance of adhering to a people-centered approach to development and demanded solid steps in promoting the all-round development of the people and common prosperity for all on the new journey.

INNOVATIVE SPIRIT, STRATEGIC THINKING, COURAGE AND VISION

Xi commended Jiang’s efforts in advancing innovations in theory, institutions, science and technology, culture, and other fields, calling for drawing on his innovative spirit.

By pooling the wisdom of the whole Party, Jiang created the Theory of Three Represents, which has further answered the questions of what socialism is and how to build it, and creatively addressed what kind of Party to build and how to build it, Xi said.

Xi highlighted Jiang’s role in opening China further to the world, including leading the country’s accession to the World Trade Organization.

On the new journey, Xi said, we must properly respond to the questions facing China, the world, the people and the times, and constantly break new ground in adapting Marxism to the Chinese context and the needs of the times.

Jiang’s far-sightedness and strategic thinking were highlighted by Xi. With an international perspective and a vision for the future, Jiang advanced the cause of the Party and the state with a slew of major decisions and measures, Xi said.

Jiang made arrangements with foresight for building a moderately prosperous society in all respects, and put forth a series of thoughts on foreign affairs and international

strategies to advance the development of a multipolar world and economic globalization in the right direction.

Looking ahead, it is essential to fully and faithfully apply the new development philosophy on all fronts, accelerate efforts to create a new development pattern, and make solid headway in promoting high-quality development, Xi said, calling for further efforts to build a community with a shared future for humanity and add more positive energy to world peace and development.

Xi also highlighted Jiang’s extraordinary courage and vision.

Jiang made resolute decisions at key historical junctures and critical moments, and responded calmly to risks and challenges, securing the steady advancement of China’s reform and opening up as well as socialist modernization, Xi said.

In particular, Jiang led China to successfully withstand the impact of the Asian financial crisis and secure the complete victory in the battle against the severe floods in 1998, Xi noted.

“On the new journey, we should stand ready to withstand high winds, choppy waters, and even dangerous storms, resolutely safeguard national sovereignty, security, and development interests, and continue to write a new chapter in the miracles of fast economic growth and long-term social stability,” Xi said. – Xinhua

China issues commemorative stamps marking birth centenary of late leader Jiang Zemin

BEIJING – China Post yesterday issued a set of commemorative stamps to mark the centenary of the birth of late Chinese leader Jiang Zemin.

The set consists of two regular stamps and one souvenir sheet.

One stamp features Jiang Zemin in Shanghai in east China, while the other shows him at the 15th National Congress of the Communist Party of China.

The souvenir sheet features Jiang Zemin waving to a marching crowd from the Tian’anmen Rostrum.

The two regular stamps have a total face value of 2.4 yuan, while the souvenir sheet is priced at 6 yuan. A total of 4 million sets of these stamps and 3.2 million souvenir sheets will be issued.

The stamps and the souvenir sheet will be available for six months at designated postal outlets, on the philatelic online platform and via the China Post mobile app.

Jiang passed away in 2022 at the age of 96.

– Xinhua

Mainland reports narrowed home price drops in July, another sign of market stabilization

BEIJING – The Chinese mainland’s 70 major cities generally saw narrowed year-on-year home price drops in July, adding to signs of stabilization of the property market, data from the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) showed yesterday.

In the four first-tier cities of Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou and Shenzhen, new home prices fell 1.1 percent year on year last month, compared with a 1.3-percent drop in June, while the decline in second-hand home prices narrowed from 4.9 percent to 3.7 percent in July.

In other cities, year-on-year declines of home prices also narrowed slightly in July, except new home prices in third-tier cities, where the decline was unchanged from June.

On a month-on-month basis, home prices in first-tier cities generally rose, while those in second- and third-tier cities went down. Across the 70 cities, 23 recorded increases or no change in new home prices, two more than in June, while the figure for second-hand homes was eight, two fewer than the previous month.

The NBS releases a monthly home price report tracking market changes in 70 major cities, including four first-tier cities, 31 second-tier cities and 35 third-tier cities.

More signs emerging this year suggest the property market has remained broadly stable with confidence and expectations gradually improving.

At a meeting on economic work held by the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Committee at the end of last month, policymakers called for continued efforts to stabilize the property market.

Experts said the policy direction remains clear, with local governments expected to make better use of policy tools tailored to local conditions to meet housing demand.

Yu Xiaofen, a researcher at Zhejiang University of Technology in east China, called for faster progress in developing a new model for the property sector, as well as improving long-term mechanisms to promote the stable and healthy development of the market. – Xinhua

Philippines suspends classes in Manila, 12 provinces amid extreme weather

MANILA — The Philippine government has suspended in-person classes in Metro Manila and 12 other provinces as heavy rains from tropical cyclones and the southwest monsoon continue to batter the country, local media reported yesterday.

According to Memorandum Circular No. 127 issued by the presidential office yesterday, schools and government agencies in affected areas were directed to adopt alternative work arrangements, except for frontline services such as health, disaster response and other essential functions.

At least 50 cities and towns have declared a state of calamity, with Pampanga and Cavite placing all their municipalities under the status, according to the Office of Civil Defense.

The extreme rainfall has triggered severe flooding and landslides across the nation. The well-known flood-control corruption scandal has left key infrastructure unfinished or poorly maintained, further straining



Commuters cross a flooded street triggered by heavy monsoon rains in Manila yesterday.

— AFP

the country's disaster response, local media reported.

Over 5 million affected by extreme weather

Around 5.08 million people across 10 regions in the Philippines have suffered from extreme rainfall brought by tropical cyclones and monsoon rains, the Office of Civil Defense (OCD) said yesterday.

The OCD reported about 1.45

million affected families, with 24,893 people seeking shelter in 523 evacuation centers. The government has provided 734.1 million pesos (about US\$11.93 million) in aid so far.

The extreme weather has claimed 23 lives, injured 17 others and left one person missing. It also damaged 1,863 houses, including 182 destroyed, according to the OCD yesterday.

— Xinhua

'Nowhere to run': Indonesian quake survivors plead for help

Marchio Gorbiano

MARAPOKOT, Indonesia — Sulistiyah labours over a pot of rice cooking outdoors for a group of displaced people bracing for a third night sleeping on the ground under a tent after a deadly earthquake jolted east Indonesia.

She was among dozens who fled to the hills from the coastal village of Marapokot in the hardest-hit Nagekeo district of Flores island.

A 7.7-magnitude quake struck north of the island in the early hours of Saturday, killing 68 people and injuring dozens.

Rescue officials have said there were no reports of people missing, and efforts were being made to get emergency supplies of food, water and medicine to some 13,000 displaced people.

Sulistiyah and her group are too scared to go back home, with more than 1,600 aftershocks having rumbled through the area, according to officials.

"Our houses are all cracked... We are worried about aftershocks, that we will be buried under the

rubble," the 53-year-old mother of three told AFP.

She and her family took refuge in one of several large tents residents erected on higher ground, some using tarpaulin, plastic, rope and poles.

The tents provide some protection from the scorching sun, but the evacuees have no toilets and only limited access to water and electricity.

"Luckily, we all survived, but our homes cannot be saved," said Sulistiyah, who like many Indonesians uses only one name.

'Traumatised'

AFP reporters experienced at least two aftershocks while visiting the makeshift tent camp, and each tremor sent panic through the community.

Many Flores residents have traumatic memories of another 7.7-magnitude quake that hit the island in 1992, triggering a tsunami and killing about 2,500 people.

Resident Asia Yusuf, 52, said officials had urged the displaced to return home, though she added that people did not want to return given the continued shaking.

"Every day (since the quake), it's like this," she said as the ground rumbled once again.

Another evacuee from Marapokot, Muhamad Yasin, said the entire community was "traumatised".

"When it shakes even slightly, we panic," he told AFP.

"But there is nowhere to run, as we believe we are already at the highest point."

Asia and others are also becoming increasingly frustrated with a perceived lag in government response.

"Because (the water) is not enough, we only take shower once every two days," said Asia, also appealing for help with reconstruction.

"We hope things can go back to what they were, at least that our homes can be rebuilt," she said.

In the Indonesian capital Jakarta, the government cancelled an Independence Day fireworks show planned for yesterday, in solidarity with the victims.

President Prabowo Subianto in an address to mark the holiday urged Indonesians to pray for those affected by the quake.

— AFP

Cambodian opposition leader's daughter named PM's 'special envoy'

PHNOM PENH — The daughter of Cambodian opposition leader Kem Sokha was appointed an adviser to Prime Minister Hun Manet yesterday, a surprise move analysts said will further weaken the government's opponents.

A royal decree said Kem Monovithya had been appointed as a "special envoy" to the premier at his request, giving her a rank equal to a government minister.

Her father, Kem Sokha, was sentenced to 27 years in prison in 2023 after being convicted of trying to topple the government of Hun Sen — Hun Manet's father, who remains highly influential.

He was pardoned in May but is still banned from running for office.

Cambodia's ruling family has a long history of co-opting opponents during its decades in power, with Hun Sen offering government positions to opposition politicians and activists.

The two older men, Hun Sen and Kem Sokha, met for three hours over the weekend, while last week Hun Manet said he met with Kem Monovithya.

"Kem Sokha has been neutralised" by the latest move, political analyst Ou Virak told AFP.

"This will definitely undermine already a very weakened opposition," he said. "You will see the opposition split even further."

The royalist Funcinpec party, which won Cambodia's UN-sponsored election in 1993, has been weakened after years as part of Hun Sen's government.

Hun Sen stepped down as Cambodia's prime minister in 2023 and handed the job to Hun Manet, his eldest son.

Ou Virak said the latest appointment was "part of the ruling party's playbook".

It would ensure Kem Sokha was seen as "too close to the ruling party", he added, disillusioning opposition supporters.

Kem Sokha first ran for parliament in the 1993 poll, the country's first election since emerging from years of civil war and the genocide of the Khmer Rouge period in the 1970s.

He left politics in 2002 to found the Cambodian Centre for Human Rights.

Five years later, he rejoined the political fray with his newly established Human Rights Party, which later merged with opposition figurehead Sam Rainsy's grouping to form the Cambodia National Rescue Party.

It was dissolved by court order in 2017.

Rights groups have long accused Cambodian authorities of using legal cases as a tactic to silence opposition voices and legitimate political dissent.

— AFP

Indonesia provides free education to over 64,000 students from Central Papua

JAKARTA — The Indonesian government is providing free education to more than 64,000 students from Central Papua province this year, Central Papua Governor Meki Fritz Nawipa said yesterday.

The program covers education costs for more than 58,000 junior and senior high school, vocational school and special-needs students, as well as around 6,000 university students studying in various provinces, Nawipa said.

"The program ensures that financial constraints do not prevent

people from accessing education," he said.

The provincial government also provides funding for Central Papua students studying overseas through a grant scheme with an annual budget of around 30 billion rupiah (about US\$1.68 million).

In addition to expanding access to education, the provincial government has supported professional certification for 1,800 teachers over the past two years and provided additional incentives aimed at improving teachers' welfare and teaching quality.

— Xinhua



Customers look at products in a Lush shop, as commuters walk past in the metro in Tokyo's Itabashi ward yesterday.

Japanese economic growth showed a surprise slowdown in the second quarter, official data showed, as capital expenditure dropped along with consumption.

— AFP

Malaysia Airlines cabin crew faces drug tests over pilot arrest

KUALA LUMPUR — Malaysia Airlines' parent company said yesterday it will extend mandatory drug screening to more than 2,800 cabin crew after all pilots tested negative for illicit substances following the arrest of a pilot in Indonesia.

The move comes after a Malaysia Airlines pilot tested positive for a cocktail of narcotics and was arrested last month at Jakarta's Soekarno-Hatta International Airport shortly after arriving from Kuala Lumpur.

The 39-year-old pilot was also allegedly attempting to smuggle more than 70,000 ecstasy tablets in his suitcase.

The group "will proceed with the next phase of the programme involving approximately 2,840 Malaysia Airlines cabin crew," Malaysia Aviation Group (MAG) said in a statement.

MAG chief executive Nasaruddin A. Bakar said the screening of pilots completed "an important milestone in the measures we committed to implementing."

"But work does not stop here," he added.

Screening was also underway at MAG's sister airline Firefly, covering both pilots and cabin crew.

"Firefly has screened more than half of its 158 pilots and 163

cabin crew, with all results to date returning negative," MAG said.

The detained pilot faces the death penalty if convicted in Indonesia.

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

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

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

— AFP

2 more Air India pilots fail dope test after Phuket-New Delhi flight incident

NEW DELHI – Two more Air India pilots failed to clear the preliminary mandatory drug test ordered by the airline following the mid-air turbulence on the Phuket-New Delhi flight that caused injuries, multiple local media reports said yesterday.

The two pilots have reportedly been de-rostered.

“Two more Air India pilots have failed the airline’s preliminary drug screening, with confirmatory tests now being conducted to establish whether the results were triggered by a psychoactive substance or by medication they may be taking,” local television news channel News18 reported. “The two pilots have been de-rostered as a precautionary measure and will remain off flying duties until the final test results are received.”

According to the news channel, around 400 Air India pilots have been tested so far as part of a mandatory screening exercise launched by the Tata-owned airline.

The airline had ordered all its pilots to get the drug test done, as part of a new standard operating procedure (SOP), after the pilot-in-command of the Phuket-New Delhi flight failed two urine tests he was asked to undergo when the flight landed. Marijuana had been detected in his system.

On August 4, 24 people onboard an Air India flight from Phuket, Thailand to New Delhi were injured after experiencing turbulence. The aircraft lost approximately 300 feet in altitude, triggering a mid-air scare among the passengers.

– Xinhua



Devotees worship Hindu mythical serpent idols during the Naga Panchami festival in Hyderabad, India yesterday.

– AFP

Hotel blaze, stampede kill 15 Hindu devotees in India

PATNA, India – At least 15 people were killed yesterday in two separate incidents in eastern India while paying homage to Hindu deity Shiva during the holy month of Shravan, officials said.

A fire at a hotel in Tarapith in West Bengal state killed eight people, while seven others were killed in a stampede at a Shiva temple in neighbouring Bihar.

The victims of the hotel blaze had travelled to Tarapith to offer prayers on the final Monday of Shravan, a sacred month dedicated to Shiva that attracts huge crowds of worshippers.

“Words cannot adequately express the grief I feel for the families who have lost their loved ones,” West Bengal Chief Minister Suvendu Adhikari said in a statement.

The cause of the fire was not immediately known.

In Bihar, seven pilgrims were

crushed to death and 19 others injured when a stampede broke out at the Ashok Dham temple in Lakhisarai district.

The stampede was triggered after rumours spread that an electric pole had fallen on devotees inside the temple premises, district magistrate Shailendra Kumar told AFP.

Bihar Chief Minister Samrat Choudhary described the incident as “heart-wrenching” and announced a compensation of 400,000 rupees (US\$4,180) for the family of each victim.

Deadly stampedes are a common occurrence at big Indian gatherings and religious festivals, mainly due to poor crowd management.

One of India’s worst recent crowd disasters occurred in 2024 in Uttar Pradesh, where 120 people died during a religious gathering attended by tens of thousands of devotees.

– AFP

Food safety crackdown snares Mumbai’s famed restaurants

Anuj Srivas

MUMBAI – When food safety inspectors raided a Mumbai dessert parlour famed for its ice cream sandwiches last month, they found rats, houseflies and expired flavouring agents.

At another beloved restaurant known for slow-cooked mutton and beef stews, they discovered meat stored in filthy containers, greasy floors and open windows that could let in insects and crows.

Both eateries were ordered shut in the toughest crackdown in years on restaurants in the megacity of more than 20 million people.

Residents of India’s financial capital are fiercely protective of their food culture, but many have welcomed the closure of some of the best-known establishments over a lack of hygiene.

Much of the campaign has been driven by Tukaram Mundhe, the new head of Maharashtra state’s food safety regulator.

“If they are abiding by the law... they have nothing to fear. And those who do not, they have no place to hide,” Mundhe told AFP.

In July alone, his office inspected nearly 900 businesses and temporarily suspended more than 100 licences.

The sweep has targeted everything from top eateries and luxury hotels to canteens at elite institutions, including the nearly century-old Cricket Club of India.

Mundhe, who has 2.6 million Instagram followers, said he was surprised by how many owners lacked knowledge of even basic food safety rules.

“How to receive the raw material, how to store it, how to process it... whether there should be (special) flooring. Many of the things they are unaware (of).”

Taste tests

India has a robust food safety framework on paper, but enforcement remains weak.

Government data from 2022 to 2025 shows roughly one in six food samples tested by the federal regulator failed to meet key standards.

While Indians are used to street food carts that use grimy rags or rancid cooking oil, they have higher expectations for established restaurants.



This photograph taken on July 30 shows Maharashtra’s Commissioner of the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), Tukaram Mundhe speaking with AFP at his office in Mumbai.

– AFP

Mundhe’s no-holds-barred approach has won support from residents who believe some operators routinely bribe officials to overlook violations.

“Every department must have an officer like Mundhe,” said Mumbai resident Pramod Shinde.

“Corruption and adulteration can be contained only through the strict actions of such officers.”

But the campaign is also facing resistance from hotel lobby groups, who have criticised it as too heavy-handed.

“The sudden suspension or termination of licences without prior notice or opportunity for corrective action is a matter of grave concern,” three industry associations said in a statement, adding that they had appealed to Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

Courts have also begun weighing in.

In one case, local media reported that Mumbai’s high court had overturned the suspension of a hotel’s licence, telling regulators to tone down their approach given “we’re in India”.

Anxiety has also spread among roadside vendors, many of whom fear they could be next.

More than he can chew?

“If the smaller street-food stalls are closed down, where will we go? We have a family and kids to support,” said Ashok Verma, who runs a sandwich shop.

Mundhe, who took over in May, says much of the criticism he has faced is unfair since only a small

share of inspections have led to licence suspensions.

“(But) we don’t compromise on unhealthy or unsafe food which is likely to go in the stomach of the person.”

Experts say India’s food safety problems are structural and cannot be fixed through inspections alone.

A shortage of personnel is among the biggest challenges. Maharashtra’s regulator has fewer than 400 officers, despite rules requiring more than twice that number.

“They ideally need 2,000 for proper functioning,” said food safety consultant Sanjay Indani.

Many residents worry Mundhe may not stay long enough to complete the overhaul, given India’s reputation for frequently transferring bureaucrats who upset powerful interests.

Mundhe has reportedly been moved 20 times during a career spanning more than two decades.

He has received some backing from the rich and influential, including billionaire Harsh Goenka.

“Nothing restores public faith faster than seeing the powerful treated like everyone else. Nothing destroys it faster than transferring the officer who made that happen. Let’s hope this time it’s different,” Goenka wrote on social media.

Mundhe himself is unfazed by the prospect of reassignment.

“I do not look at it as a hanging sword on me. I just look at my role where I am posted. I try to do it in the best possible manner,” he said.

– AFP

Pakistan detains 258 foreigners in scam centre raid

ISLAMABAD – Pakistan authorities said yesterday they detained 258 foreigners, including 40 Chinese nationals, following a raid on an alleged “scam call centre” in the capital Islamabad.

“They were running a scam call centre in Gulberg Green, a housing society on the outskirts of Islamabad,” an official from the Federal Investigation Agency, a Pakistani intelligence service, told AFP.

“They came to Pakistan on

tourist visas and were not allowed to do what they were doing.”

Those detained – including 170 people from Vietnam, as well as nationals from Malaysia and “other Asian countries” – were being held at a Rawalpindi jail.

The official said the respective embassies were informed and that details of the allegations against the detainees would be released in the coming days as the investigation was ongoing.

Possible outcomes included the

deportation of those involved, the official added.

Media reports said the foreigners were detained last week.

AFP has asked the Chinese foreign ministry for comment on the detentions.

A similar raid took place in July 2025, with 149 people – including 71 foreigners who were mostly Chinese – arrested on allegations of working for a “large call centre involving Ponzi schemes and investment fraud”.

– AFP

Netanyahu, Kushner discuss US general for Hamas disarmament: Israeli official

Shaun Tandon

JERUSALEM — Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and US envoy Jared Kushner discussed yesterday putting an American general in charge of verifying Hamas's disarmament, an Israeli official said, as the premier insisted there would be no pullout from Gaza until then.

Kushner, President Donald Trump's son-in-law, flew to the region after Netanyahu, facing a tough re-election fight, publicly rejected the latest part of a US plan aimed at ending the devastating Gaza war.

Kushner, who has long family ties to Netanyahu, met with him in Jerusalem a day after holding rare direct talks in Egypt with Hamas, which has publicly committed itself to the plan and to disarmament, winning praise from Trump but prompting deep scepticism in Israel.

The two sides "agreed that no redeployment or reconstruction would take place in the Gaza Strip before Hamas is disarmed throughout Gaza", a senior Israeli official told AFP.

"It was also agreed that the first step toward the demilitarisation of the Strip would be to require Hamas to hand over its weapons for decommissioning under the supervision of an American general," the official said.

Kushner was joined in the talks by other members of Trump's so-called Board of Peace on Gaza, including former British prime minister Tony Blair.

The group did not immediately comment on the meeting.

The Trump administration has

already given a role to the US military and friendly foreign forces in supervising an October ceasefire in Gaza that has reduced, but not ended, Israeli strikes in the ravaged Palestinian territory.

The call for a US general's involvement came after Netanyahu publicly rejected an earlier text by the Board of Peace in which it said Hamas would hand over its weapons to a nascent Palestinian governing committee.

Kushner in the talks in Egypt had demanded that Hamas verify it is giving up its weapons and that the group — whose unprecedented October 7, 2023 attack against Israel launched the Gaza war — renounce any future role in governing the Palestinian territory, the sources said.

A Hamas official said the group, represented by its new leader Khalil al-Hayya, told Kushner it was committed to the Gaza plan and wanted pressure on Netanyahu.

Hardline rhetoric

Netanyahu, Israel's longest-serving prime minister whose job is on the line in October 27 elections, has increasingly been willing to defy Trump, whose support he once highlighted in his campaign.

The prime minister has also made clear his unhappiness with Trump's decision to halt the US-Israeli war on Iran launched in late February and instead pursue a settlement with Tehran's clerical leaders.

After initially voicing muted criticism of the Gaza plan, Netanyahu last week told his cabinet that he rejected it.

The stance came even though Nickolay Mladenov, the Board of Peace high representative for Gaza, had assured him that Israel would not need to withdraw until a full disarmament by Hamas, backtracking on the Board's earlier calls for Israel to start a phased withdrawal.

In an interview, Itamar Ben Gvir, the far-right national security minister in Netanyahu's cabinet, called for mass killings in Gaza.

"I think targeted eliminations should be carried out in Gaza every night. Take out 30 or 40," Ben Gvir said on a podcast with a former Gaza hostage.

"Not only those who endanger you right now. These are people who shouldn't be alive," he said. "I'm paying them a compliment by calling them humans."

On Sunday, eight Muslim-majority countries including Saudi Arabia, Egypt and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) — whose relationship with Israel is considered by Netanyahu to be a key achievement — condemned Israel's rejection of the Gaza plan in a joint statement.

Israel has resumed airstrikes in Gaza after a short lull following Trump's promotion of the peace plan.

Israeli operations have killed at least 1,265 Palestinians since the ceasefire came into effect on October 10, according to figures by Gaza's health ministry, which is under Hamas. Its figures are considered reliable by the United Nations.

The Israeli army has reported five deaths in its ranks during Gaza operations over the same period.

— AFP

Trump threatens to bomb Oman if it gets in way of Iran deal: report

WASHINGTON, DC — US President Donald Trump yesterday threatened to bomb Oman if it "gets in the way" of a US deal with Iran on the Strait of Hormuz and called for Iran to surrender.

"If Oman gets in the way, we'll bomb the shit out of them," Trump told Fox News journalist Trey Yingst, referring to ongoing talks between Oman and Iran on control of the strait, while Washington is also pursuing its own talks.

Iranian and Omani officials have been talking for weeks on future maritime navigation arrangements through the shipping route, and the foreign ministry in Tehran said earlier yesterday that the two sides were working on a joint declaration.

However, Trump has repeatedly insisted that the strait — which Tehran effectively closed at the start of the Middle East war on February 28 — is under US control despite traffic remaining throttled.

On Friday, Trump claimed that he would even declare the Strait of Hormuz part of US territory, while Iran retorted that the crucial energy waterway it has blockaded "will remain Iranian."

Prior to the launch of the US-Israeli war against Iran, the

Hormuz strait was considered an open, international waterway. It carries significant portions of global energy shipments, as well as other commodities.

Tehran has used its effective seizing of control over the strait as leverage against the US-led attempts to destroy its military and force it to abandon a controversial nuclear power program.

Iran's coast flanks the north side of Hormuz and Oman lies on the south.

Trump also said that Iran should "put up the white flag of surrender," according to Yingst's post on X on his interview with the president.

Trump insisted that he was in no hurry to reach a deal despite the deep unpopularity of the war among Americans ahead of November midterm elections in the United States, with opposition Democrats seeking to take control of Congress from Trump's Republicans.

Trump told Yingst that there is a direct back-channel between his administration and officials of Iran's Revolutionary Guard. "They're good poker players, but they're dying," he was quoted as saying.

— AFP

Virgin moves closer to launching Eurostar rival in 2030

LONDON — British group Virgin has been granted track access from 2030 to the high-speed rail line linking London to the Channel Tunnel, the country's rail regulator said yesterday, bringing it closer to launching a rival service to Eurostar.

The agreement paves the way for Virgin Trains to potentially operate up to 20 daily return services between London and Paris, Brussels and Amsterdam from October 1, 2030 to the end of 2040, the Office of Rail and Road (ORR) said in a statement.

Founded by British entrepreneur Richard Branson, Virgin promises to shake-up cross-Channel rail traffic by challenging Eurostar, which has held a monopoly on passenger services through the tunnel linking Britain and France since it opened in 1994.

"This is an important next step in bringing competition and growth to the market for international rail services," said Martin Jones, deputy director of access and international at the ORR.

"While there is still more work to do, we are supporting Virgin and the wider industry to grow international services," he said.

Before its services can run, Virgin still needs to procure rail carriages, gain access to continental rail networks and obtain safety

approvals from British and European Union authorities.

Virgin was granted access last year to the Temple Mills International site for maintaining and storing trains, a critical requirement for an operator to launch services.

Although the Channel tunnel is used only at about 50 percent capacity, previous rival bids for a new service on the line have hit hurdles including regulation and restricted station capacity.

Travellers are hoping that opening the line to competition will drive down prices for Paris-to-London tickets that can often be more expensive than flying.

"Our plans for a new London-Europe rail service from 2030 are moving at pace," a Virgin Group spokesperson said.

"We welcome the ORR's pre-approval of our track access agreement and the opportunity to bring competition and Virgin's award-winning customer experience to the Channel Tunnel."

Several companies have announced plans to launch competing services through the Channel tunnel, with Italy's Trenitalia planning to start a rival service by 2029.

Eurostar said it transported a record 20 million passengers last year.

— AFP



Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu (centre, right) and his wife, Sara (centre, left) cast their ballots at his Likud party's main polling station during primary elections ahead of Israel's general election in October in Jerusalem yesterday. The Likud, the historic party of the Israeli right and the political base of Netanyahu, held primaries yesterday to determine its slate of candidates for the general election on October 27. Likud is projected to win around 22-23 of the 120 seats in the Knesset, Israel's parliament, according to the latest polls — a dramatic drop from the 32 seats it won in the 2022 election.

— AFP

Jason Arday: UK academic who died amid plagiarism storm

Joe Jackson

LONDON – Jason Arday, the ex-Cambridge professor found dead amid a growing furore over claims of academic plagiarism and personal life embellishments, rose from humble roots in Britain to be hailed as an academic superstar.

Boasting a backstory of remarkable achievement despite childhood autism and other developmental disorders, by the time of his death on Friday Arday was at the epicentre of intense controversy. He was 41.

Cambridge University's youngest black professor when appointed in March 2023 aged 37, he quickly emerged from relative obscurity to a prominent figure known outside academia.

That skyrocketed in recent weeks, as plagiarism allegations and unrelenting scrutiny of other seemingly outlandish claims played out within the context of the West's so-called culture wars.

Arday resigned from his Cambridge roles earlier this month after the university announced internal probes.

Detractors have criticised the university for the appointment, claiming he unfairly benefited from diversity, equality and inclusion (DEI) policies.

But Arday, his family and his supporters have alleged a racist "campaign of sustained abuse" and media witchhunt.

Married since 2014, he is survived by two children.

'Destined for great things'

Jason Atta Kwei Arday was born in May 1985 in south London, one of four brothers, to parents originally from Ghana.

The midwife who delivered him told his mum "he's going to do something special", Arday wrote in a memoir being published this month.

His book also notes another prophecy, delivered some two decades later by an aid worker during a relief mission he joined in Brazil.

"You're destined to do great things, but I also believe you're destined for very sad and difficult things as well," Arday recalled her saying.

The autobiography recounts doctors diagnosing him with autism and global developmental delay – a term applied to under-fives with issues around motor skills and speech.

Doctors branded him "a lost cause" and therapists warned he would require lifelong support, he wrote.

He credited his mental health nurse mum – an anti-racism activist whom he always called Giff – with helping defy the predictions, in part using music to aid his linguistic understanding.

Arday writes that he was non-verbal until 11 after "thousands of hours" of speech therapy.

Some of his childhood claims have been disputed, with at least two former schoolmates telling *The Guardian* they recalled him speaking during this period. But others have spoken up in support.

"The coverage about him being a fantasist and a liar that does not ring true with the human that I know and loved," childhood friend Mike Freeman told Sky News.

Arday did not read or write until he was 18, according to his biography on Cambridge's website.

He gained just two school-level qualifications – in Physical Education (PE) and textiles.

After earning a vocational qualification in sport and development, he became a PE teacher before launching his academic career.

He subsequently earned PE and education-

related university degrees before earning a PhD from Liverpool John Moores University.

While studying for his PhD, he wrote a set of goals on a bedroom wall. "One of these read: 'One day I will work at Oxford or Cambridge'," he wrote.

Arday fulfilled that dream within a decade, after academic roles at Roehampton, Durham and Glasgow universities, becoming a sociology of education professor at Cambridge.

'Evil'

He was commended by Cambridge as a "highly respected scholar of race, inequality and education".

But around this time, plagiarism concerns first surfaced.

David Harris, a British academic who published a 2024 critique of critical race theory, is said to have contacted Arday and Cambridge with claims.

Arday reportedly lodged a harassment complaint against Harris with police.

Two years later, a Times Higher Education reporter contacted Arday with similar allegations but abandoned the story after receiving a letter from a leading defamation law firm on behalf of Arday, *The Times* said.

Then in July Nathan Cofnas, a US academic and self-defined "race realist" – whose Cambridge research affiliation ended in 2024 amid racism accusations – published further plagiarism claims.

The Telegraph newspaper followed up, alleging dozens of passages in Arday's PhD had been copied from another earlier thesis.

Meanwhile some of his claimed accomplishments, around marathon-running and fundraising, as well as over the alleged abuse he faced, have been disputed in newspaper probes.

Arday admitted making academic



November 24, 2024 file photo of Jason Arday – Image courtesy of ConiferousForest19/Wikimedia Commons

"mistakes" but said he was being falsely portrayed as a liar.

He told *The Times* some early academic errors were due to his autism, as he relied on using mimicry to understand information.

Arday has also insisted black academics face racially motivated systemic targeting, alleging conservative "activists" on both sides of the Atlantic were using a "playbook" to discredit them, according to reports.

"It's a disgrace and, quite frankly, evil," he reportedly told a conference. – AFP

Burnham exchanged messages with Trump aide imposter: reports

LONDON – New British Prime Minister Andy Burnham exchanged messages with someone posing as Susie Wiles, the White House chief of staff, several media outlets reported yesterday.

According to *Politico*, which broke the story quoting anonymous sources, the British leader sent a "few messages" via an unspecified communication channel to a person he believed to be Wiles before becoming suspicious.

The incident was deemed serious enough for the British embassy in Washington to raise the matter with the White House, according to two sources cited by *Politico*.

Neither the date nor the content of the exchanges is known.

Burnham succeeded former Labour Party leader Keir Starmer as prime minister on July 20.

"We do not comment on national security matters," a spokesperson for Burnham's Downing Street office said, without denying the exchanges.

Burnham is not the first prominent British politician to fall victim to this type of hoax.

In 2024, the British government released a video of a phone call in which the then foreign minister David Cameron was duped by someone posing as former Ukrainian president Petro Poroshenko.

The Foreign Office explained at the time that it had disclosed the incident to preempt any attempt by the perpetrators to manipulate the footage. – AFP

Cambridge head slams 'feeding frenzy' over dead academic

Anna Malpas

LONDON – The head of Cambridge university yesterday condemned a "racist feeding frenzy" prompted by plagiarism claims against black academic Jason Arday, as his supporters prepared for a London vigil after his death last week.

Arday, who became Cambridge's youngest ever black professor in 2023, was found dead on Friday aged 41, following multiple plagiarism accusations.

Chris Smith, the University of Cambridge's chancellor, told the BBC he believed it was important for such claims to be "rigorously investigated".

But he added it was right to "refuse to join in a racist feeding frenzy over a particular academic", without naming Arday directly.

Arday, the professor of sociology of education at the prestigious university in eastern England, resigned August 5 after accusations he had plagiarised parts of his doctoral thesis and exaggerated personal achievements prompted a media storm.

The academic had said in a public resignation letter that he had "reached the limits of what any person should reasonably be expected to endure".

The cause of his death a week later

has not been made public.

Prime Minister Andy Burnham, a Cambridge alumnus, has called Arday's death "a tragedy on so many levels".

His family have denounced "a campaign of sustained abuse" since his 2023 appointment.

'Press harassment'

An online fundraising page created by racial equality campaigner Patrick Vernon to support Arday's family had raised over £163,000 (US\$218,000) by yesterday afternoon (local time).

Separately, a petition demanding an immediate public inquiry into the media coverage of Arday had gathered over 83,000 signatures yesterday including MP Diane Abbott and Green Party leader Zack Polanski.

Addressed to Burnham and the arts minister Lisa Nandy, the petition posted by activist group Good Law Project claimed Arday's death was "the direct, foreseeable and foreseen result of press harassment".

Downing Street declined to say whether such an inquiry was planned.

The petition said Arday's death came after "two weeks of relentless harassment", stressing that "racism lay at the heart of this story".

"To be Black and a public figure is now enough to make you a target," it alleged.

The university was also facing mounting questions over its handling of the allegations and treatment of Arday.

James Cleverly, a right-wing opposition MP whose mother was born in Sierra Leone, told the BBC yesterday that "quite possibly" some scrutiny of Arday was motivated by racism.

But the situation would "never have come this far if people within the university establishment – not just Cambridge – had done the robust due diligence and checking that should happen with any senior academic appointment", he said.

Former students of Arday have also created a website called "Everything Good About Jason Arday" asking people to share memories to show that they are "tired of the single reductionist narrative about the kindest person we knew".

Last week, prior to the announcement of Arday's death, Cambridge's vice-chancellor Deborah Prentice announced an investigation into the circumstances of his appointment and his time working at the university.

– AFP

Long waits expose deepening strain on Portugal’s public healthcare system



2009 file photo of the main building of Lisbon’s Santa Maria Hospital (SMH) – Photo courtesy of Ivandrell/Wikimedia Commons

Analysis

LISBON – As Europe swelters through the summer of 2026, Portugal’s emergency departments are facing a familiar crisis: patients waiting hours, and in some cases more than a day, to see a doctor as staff shortages and seasonal demand put renewed pressure on the country’s public healthcare system.

At Hospital do Barreiro, in the Setúbal district south of Lisbon, one patient said he brought his mother to the emergency department of the hospital on Saturday and was told that the doctor on duty would not arrive until that evening and that patients would not be seen before then.

“That is not a normal situation,” said a patient on Sunday at the Barreiro hospital who asked not to be identified. He spent more than 24 hours waiting for a first medical observation.

He was not alone. On Sunday, patients continued to wait as the hours passed, highlighting the strain facing Portugal’s National Health Service (SNS) at a time when high summer temperatures and seasonal demand are adding to existing staffing pressures.

The problem is reflected in official data.

Between June 21 and August 12, patients classified with yellow wristbands, the second-highest urgency category in Portugal’s color-coded triage system, waited an average of 56 minutes for their first medical observation, according to the SNS monitoring portal. The category carries a recommended maximum waiting time of 60 minutes.

That average was six minutes longer than during the same period last year, although the situation varied sharply between hospitals.

Barreiro was among the hardest-hit facilities. On August 16, the SNS portal showed a waiting time of 11 hours and 38 minutes for yellow-wristband patients and more than 20 hours for those classified green,

the lowest urgency category. Across all triage categories, the average waiting time approached 15 hours.

Local media reported even longer waits in individual cases. One patient’s father said his child, who had been classified as yellow, had waited more than 24 hours.

The pressure was not confined to Barreiro.

At Hospital de Santa Maria, Lisbon’s main public hospital, green-wristband patients were waiting about 10 hours for an initial observation on Sunday morning, while the average across all categories stood at seven hours.

In the Algarve region about 280 km south of Lisbon, Hospital de Portimão on Sunday recorded an average wait of more than six and a half hours, with green-wristband patients waiting nearly 11 hours. Garcia de Orta Hospital in Almada reported four-hour waits for urgent cases, while Hospital de São João in Porto recorded a wait of three hours and 37 minutes.

SNS data show that Lisbon and the Tagus Valley, the Centre region and the Alentejo were among the areas most frequently affected by prolonged emergency-room waits.

For Xavier Barreto, president of the Association of Hospital Administrators, the situation could worsen in the weeks ahead. He pointed to a shortage of doctors available for on-call shifts, combined with a seasonal increase in demand, as key factors behind the pressure.

Francisco Jerônimo, who brought his mother to the hospital on Sunday, said staff shortages were clearly a reality, but that those on duty were doing their best.

Portugal has struggled for years with shortages of emergency medicine specialists and difficulties filling overnight and weekend shifts. Pay structures and working conditions have made some positions difficult to fill, leaving hospitals increasingly dependent in some cases on contracted or visiting physicians.

When those arrangements cannot be completed, gaps appear in emergency rosters.

Health Minister Ana Paula Martins has acknowledged that the current waiting times are unacceptable, particularly for urgent patients. She has also warned that further increases in demand could trigger another wave of long waits, while maintaining that emergency services are functioning better than in previous years.

The summer crisis is therefore not simply a story about overcrowded emergency rooms. It is a window into broader structural problems confronting Portugal’s National Health Service, established in 1979.

The system is facing shortages of doctors and nurses, rising demand from an ageing population and difficulties maintaining adequate staffing across different parts of the healthcare network.

Experts said patients also face long waits for surgery and specialist consultations, while millions reportedly remain without a registered family doctor. Some healthcare services, including obstetric units, have faced temporary closures, while problems with healthcare technology platforms have added another layer of frustration.

Emergency departments have consequently become the most visible pressure point in the system.

They are designed to deal with urgent and life-threatening conditions, but they also absorb patients who cannot obtain timely access to primary care. Healthcare administrators often describe this as the “inappropriate use” of emergency services.

For the man still waiting in the Barreiro hospital corridor at midnight, however, the structural problems were far removed from his immediate reality. He had come because someone he loved needed a doctor.

By morning, he was still waiting.

– Xinhua

Mexico’s indigenous chief justice hits back at discrimination

Javier Tovar and Yussel González

MEXICO CITY – Mexico’s Supreme Court chief justice told AFP he faces discrimination on a daily basis over his indigenous roots.

Hugo Aguilar is the first indigenous Mexican to preside over the country’s top court in 168 years.

He attributes the achievement to a voting reform championed by the leftist government, which sees judges elected by a popular vote.

Having secured the most support in the first-ever ballot of its kind last year, Aguilar follows in the footsteps of Benito Juárez, Mexico’s first indigenous president who also led the Supreme Court from 1857-1858.

“Without the reform, I wouldn’t be here,” said the 53-year-old, who hails from San Agustín Tlacotepec, an indigenous Mixtec* town in Oaxaca state.

Before, “the most I could do was set foot in the building,” he said during a recent interview with AFP – his first with an international outlet since taking office.

Wearing a traditionally embroidered white shirt, Aguilar has dedicated his life to indigenous causes.

He calmly rejects accusations that he is a pawn of leftist governments under ex-leader Andrés Manuel López Obrador and current President Claudia Sheinbaum.

“If I were...I would have been a minister five or six years ago,” Aguilar said, adding that attacks on him focus on his appearance rather than his work.

“The criticism directed at me is [because I am] Indian,” he said, referring to his indigenous background, saying that his identity makes detractors think “he has no prospects, no ability, no knowledge, no aptitude.”



Mexico’s Supreme Court Chief Hugo Aguilar Ortiz speaks during an interview with AFP at the “Galería de Presidentes” inside the Supreme Court in Mexico City on Thursday last week.

– AFP

No one is ‘unreachable’

Not a huge fan of photos, the judge posed awkwardly in front of Juárez’s portrait, calling him an “inspiration and a guide.”

Along with experts, the Mexican opposition criticised Sheinbaum’s reform for politicising the judiciary.

Political parties did not partake in the election, but some complained that the governing camp pushed some candidates, including Aguilar.

He voiced strong opposition to any politicisation of his court.

“Everyone thought the court was going to step into the realm of judicial activism, issuing rulings with no legal basis...That is completely out of the question,” he insisted.

He urged patience with the reform, acknowledging how challenging it is to root out the corruption that blights Mexico’s justice system.

“We are starting with this,” Aguilar said. “We have to acknowledge that there’s a set of deeply ingrained habits that are hard to break.”

The justice also highlighted the court’s achievements under his mandate, including a reduced backlog of cases and a more accessible system.

He recalls with fondness a childhood marked by caring for and communing with nature, and says he has every intention of returning to that lifestyle one day.

“My mother told me that the day I change will be the day I don’t return to the village,” he said.

Social status “shouldn’t make us unreachable,” he added.

– AFP

* The Mixtec (or Ñuu Savi, meaning “People of the Rain”) are an indigenous Mesoamerican civilisation and culture historically centered in La Mixteca, a region spanning parts of modern-day Oaxaca, Puebla, and Guerrero in southern Mexico. – Gemini

Jacquet scores on Liverpool debut in friendly win over Como

Football

LIVERPOOL – Jeremy Jacquet scored on his Liverpool debut as Andoni Iraola's Reds ended their pre-season campaign with a 2-0 win over Serie A side Como at Anfield on Sunday.

After agreeing a reported £60 million (US\$81 million) transfer for Jacquet in January, the 21-year-old Frenchman's move was confirmed on July 1.

But a niggling knee injury had kept him on the sidelines until the visit of Cesc Fabregas's Como.

The centre-back impressed in the early stages with some well-timed challenges and rounded off a fine first appearance for Liverpool with a tap-in from Cody Gakpo's cross that gave the Merseysiders a 2-0 lead in the 44th minute.

France Under-21 international Jacquet was replaced by another debutant, Ronald Araujo, at half-time, with Gakpo having given Liverpool the lead in the 23rd minute after good work from Jeremie Frimpong.

"I think Jeremy played really

well," Iraola said.

"Also Ronald played really well when he came in. When you have two new faces, first game for both, they do so well.

"It was also a very good performance of Jeremie Frimpong, playing 90 minutes as a right-back, helping us offensively but closing very well his side also. So some good performances at the back."

Ryan Gravenberch came closest to scoring in a lacklustre second half when he clipped the top of the crossbar following fine play by Victor Munoz.

"I think we need a little bit this feeling of finishing with a clean sheet, winning the game," said former Bournemouth boss Iraola, who has succeeded the sacked Arne Slot.

"Still, the first half has been better than the second, but at least we kept our organisation, our composure and we found a way to finish with a clean sheet, 2-0. I think we needed this feeling before we start."

Liverpool begin their Premier League campaign away to Newcastle a week on Sunday. – AFP



Liverpool's French defender Jeremy Jacquet (left) warms up with Liverpool's Dutch defender Virgil van Dijk before the pre-season friendly against Como at Anfield in Liverpool, north west England on Sunday. – AFP

Football shorts

Scottish FA withdraws support for FIFA boss Infantino

LONDON – The Scottish Football Association has withdrawn its support for embattled FIFA president Gianni Infantino after his failed attempt to sell off stakes in the World Cup.

A host of European federations have already scrapped their backing of Infantino, including England, Ireland and Wales.

And the Scottish FA yesterday became the latest to officially turn its back on Infantino, who hopes to survive the controversy as he bids for re-election at next year's FIFA Congress.

The governing body's chief executive Ian Maxwell said: "The Scottish FA will not be voting for Gianni Infantino. That's in line with the UEFA position and we've maintained that stance throughout."

Infantino remains under extreme pressure, with three confederations accusing him of "deception" over his private investor World Cup plan in an open letter published last week.

SFA president Mike Mulraney is the current chair of FIFA's finance committee.

"When you're an administrator in football, you shouldn't be anywhere near the camera anywhere near as often as has been the case," Maxwell said.

"There's obviously been a fall-down in governance, there's been a lack of transparency, there's been a lack of engagement with member associations, and that's something that we need to address.

"The transparency and the governance needs to change. What form that takes, what that looks like, is up for a bit of debate." – AFP

Barcelona reach deal with Man City to sign Rodri

BARCELONA – Barcelona have reached a deal with Manchester City to sign Spanish World Cup winner Rodri, a source from the Catalan club told AFP Sunday.

The 30-year-old midfielder will move for a fee of around 75 million euros (US\$87 million) according to reports.

"In the coming days there will be a statement and (the transfer) will become official," said the Barcelona source.

Rodri had been linked with Real Madrid after Spain won the World Cup in July but Barcelona pushed to sign the former Atletico Madrid star, who has played a key part in Manchester City's success since he joined in 2019.

The midfielder, who won the Ballon d'Or in 2024, has struggled with injuries over the past two seasons but shone as Spain won their

PSG beaten by Lens in French Champions' Trophy



LENS, France - Ten-man Lens denied Paris Saint-Germain a second trophy in five days as Florian Thauvin's first-half goal secured a 1-0 victory in the French Champions' Trophy on Sunday.

Lens were worthy winners in their first match under new coach Dino Toppmøller, adding to the French Cup title they won under previous boss Pierre Sage in May.

PSG, who beat Aston Villa on Wednesday in the UEFA Super Cup, struggled to find their flow at Lens' Stade Bollaert-Delelis, despite their hosts having Kyllian Antonio sent off in the first half.

"I think we deserved more," insisted PSG coach Luis Enrique.

"But I have to congratulate Lens - they won, and they played very well, with their usual intensity..."

"We played a very good match, but we didn't have the luck we needed."

Paris will turn their attentions to the start of their Ligue 1 title defence at home against Rennes in a week's time.

They will be without Portugal defender Nuno Mendes for that match, after he was also dismissed late on.

Lens, runners-up in Ligue 1 behind PSG last season, qualified for this match by winning their first ever French Cup with a 3-1 final win over Nice.

Luis Enrique named a strong side, making just three changes to the team which won the Super Cup, including giving Lucas Digne his second debut after the France left-back rejoined the club from Villa.

But Bradley Barcola, widely linked with a possible move to Liverpool, was not in the squad.



Lens' French forward Florian Thauvin celebrates scoring his team's first goal during the French Super Cup (Trophée des Champions) against Paris Saint-Germain (PSG) at the Stade Bollaert-Delelis in Lens, northern France on Sunday. – AFP

Dominated possession

The visitors dominated possession in the opening stages but struggled to create clear-cut chances, with Lens goalkeeper Robin Rissler making a comfortable save from Khvicha Kvaratskhelia.

Lens grew into the contest and grabbed a 32nd -minute lead when PSG failed to clear before Thauvin slotted home at the back post from Matthieu Udol's cross-shot.

But Toppmøller's men were dealt a big blow six minutes before half-time when Antonio was dismissed for a studs-up tackle on Maghnes Akliouche.

PSG almost made the most of their man advantage before the break but Desire Doue's effort from a tight

angle bounced off the crossbar.

The European champions continued to labour after the restart, though, and Thauvin flashed a strike wide as Lens continued to threaten on the counter.

PSG substitute Mendes came close to an equaliser, drilling a dipping long-range shot narrowly over the bar.

Luis Enrique also brought on Fabian Ruiz and Ousmane Dembele off the bench, with the latter drawing another simple save from Rissler.

PSG were reduced to 10 men themselves with three minutes remaining, as Mendes was shown a straight red card for elbowing Lens wing-back Michal Skorak in the face off the ball. – AFP

second World Cup.

Barca's Dutch midfielder Frenkie de Jong is set to miss several months through injury, encouraging the club to move for Rodri.

The Spain captain was a vital figure for Pep Guardiola at City, leading them to the 2023 Champions League and four Premier League titles among 12 major trophies.

The Spanish champions had two bids rejected for Rodri but eventually reached a deal with City on Sunday, with the midfielder following Anthony Gordon, Karim Adeyemi and Jesse Bisiwu to Camp Nou this summer.

Barca are also expected to complete a deal to sign Joao Cancelo in the coming days after they loaned him last season from Al Hilal. – AFP

Ipswich sign Enciso and Ouattara in double raid on Strasbourg

LONDON – Ipswich boss Gary O'Neil made a double raid on his former club Strasbourg to sign Julio Enciso and Abdoul Ouattara yesterday.

Enciso is back at Ipswich in a deal worth a reported £25 million (US\$33 million) after spending six months on loan from Brighton in 2025 in a spell that ended in the Tractor Boys' relegation from the Premier League.

The Paraguayan winger, who played for

his country at the recent World Cup, joined Strasbourg in September 2025, impressing O'Neil enough to earn a five-year contract after the manager's move to Ipswich in the close-season.

"I really enjoyed my time on loan at the club and I was so happy to see them win promotion back to the Premier League last season," Enciso said.

"I worked with the manager in France last season and the chance to play for him again at a great club like Ipswich is one I'm very excited for."

Ipswich won promotion to the Premier League in May under the management of Kieran McKenna, who quit at the end of last season.

Ahead of Ipswich's Premier League opener at home to Sunderland on Saturday, Ivorian forward Ouattara was also reunited with O'Neil at Portman Road.

Ouattara, 20, signed a contract lasting until 2031 to complete his £17 million move to England.

"Abdoul is a talented young player who can play in different positions, so is a very good addition to our squad," O'Neil said.

"We enjoyed working with him in France last season and are delighted to have the opportunity to do so again at Ipswich." – AFP

Duplantis dominant, Hunt hits 4 and Asher-Smith makes history

Luke Phillips



BIRMINGHAM, United Kingdom – Serial world record setter Armand ‘Mondo’ Duplantis claimed a fourth successive European title in Birmingham on Sunday, while home heroine Amy Hunt bagged a record fourth gold of the championships in the 4x100m mixed relay.

Hunt’s relay teammate Dina Asher-Smith made history with a record-breaking eighth European gold. Her continental total of 11 medals established the 30-year-old as the most-decorated European athlete of all time.

A sell-out crowd of 23,000 was treated to a heady night of track and field at Alexander Stadium, with a wealth of global stars on show.

They don’t come any larger than Duplantis, who has dominated his discipline since winning a first European title in Berlin back in 2018.

The US-born Swede soon found himself in a predictable duel with Greek rival Emmanouil Karalis in Birmingham, but kept his nerve as the bar continued to be raised.

Karalis in the end crumbled and couldn’t nail a clearance beyond 6.00 metres.

The imperious Duplantis bettered his own championship record by 5cm to win with 6.15m. The 26-year-old’s fourth European gold adds to a tally that already includes two Olympic titles, three world outdoor and four world indoor golds - as well as 15 world records.

“Another medal, I can’t complain,” said Duplantis.

Hunt on roller-coaster

On the track, it was four golds from four events for the impressive Hunt, who went into the final having already won golds in the 100, 200 and women’s 4x100m relay.

She anchored a dominant foursome starring Jeremiah Azu, Asher-Smith and Zharnel Hughes as they won in a European record of 39.97 seconds, ahead of Germany and Spain.

“When you’re queueing for a roller-coaster, and you’re seeing the drops, but when you get off you want to do it all again. I loved it,” Hunt said.

There was a third major gold medal of



Portugal's Pedro Buaro competes in the men's pole vault final during the European Athletics Championships at Alexander Stadium in Birmingham United Kingdom on Sunday. – AFP

the season for Hunt’s teammate Georgia Hunter Bell, whose victory in the 1,500m followed successes at the world indoors in Torun in March and Commonwealth Games in Glasgow last month.

Hunter Bell said she felt like a “caged animal”, chomping at the bit to get going in Birmingham, having won 13 of the 15 races in which she’s competed this season going into the final.

The 32-year-old Briton went one better than her training partner Keely Hodgkinson, who was beaten into 800m silver by Audrey Werro, by dominating the 1,500m for an impressive gold in 4:07.78.

“I did feel really calm and really confident. I have been on a win streak and I have had lots of failures before when I have been the favourite,” Hunter Bell said.

“It was nice to come down the home stretch and know I had it. It is just special. Another gold. I am hoping to make it four in September,” at the World Athletics Ultimate Championships in Budapest.

Italy’s Larissa Iapichino won a thrilling women’s long jump with just 6cm separating the top five jumpers.

Iapichino managed a winning best of 7.00m on her first effort, Britain’s Jazmin Sawyers taking silver, 1cm adrift, and France’s Hilary Kpatcha yet another centimetre back in bronze.

Germany’s reigning champion Malaika Mihambo of Germany could only finish fifth.

Gold for Broeders-Bol

There was more luck for Mihambo’s teammate Frederik Ruppert, who made history this season by becoming the first European in history to break the 8min barrier and won the men’s 3,000m steeplechase in 8:25.33.

Croatia’s Sara Kolak won gold in the women’s javelin with a winning throw of 62.43m, remarkably her first major title since a shock victory at the 2016 Rio Olympics.

The 13th and final session of a gripping week of athletics finished with the 4x400m relays.

Femke Broeders-Bol, the two-time former 400m hurdles champion who won 800m bronze here, delivered a typically astute anchor lap to secure gold for the Netherlands in 3:21.10 over Britain and Italy.

Lorenzo Benati held off Britain’s Charles Dobson on the anchor leg to ensure Italian gold in the men’s 4x400m relay.

That result saw Italy finish the championships atop the medal table with a haul of 22 (10 gold, six silver, six bronze), ahead of Britain (19: nine, eight, two). – AFP

No. 1 Shi suffers shock 1st-round exit at badminton worlds

Badminton

Faisal Kamal

NEW DELHI – Defending champion Shi Yuqi suffered a shock first-round defeat to rising Indian star Ayush Shetty at the world badminton championships in New Delhi yesterday.

World number one Shi of China went down 14-21, 21-13, 19-21 in one hour and 13 minutes to 21-year-old Shetty, who enthralled the home crowd at the Indira Gandhi Indoor Stadium.

The 30-year-old Shi, who won the previous edition in Paris last year, looked off-colour from the start as the Indian raced to a 11-5 lead and took the first game.

Shi bounced back to take the second game but Shetty - ranked 22nd in the world - held his nerve in a tense decider in his debut at the badminton showpiece.

“The last time I won against him, but since this time the atmosphere of the stadium was also with Ayush that made the change,” Shi said.

Shi added, “even a world number one can make mistakes”.

Standing six feet five inches tall (1.95 metres), Shetty relied on his wide reach and clean smashes to outwit his veteran Chinese opponent.

The crowd cheered every Indian point and despite Shi attempting to make a late comeback as he brought the score down to 15-18 from 7-17, Shetty triumphed.

Shetty nailed the winner with a final smash the young Indian pumped his fists and later obliged young fans with selfies and autographs.

“Definitely it was an energy-booster for me,” Shetty said of the home fans. “The way they were standing and supporting at the end as I was getting nervy.”

Top-ranked An eases through

Earlier South Korea’s women’s number one An Se-young reached the second round with a comfortable win after returning from injury.

Top-ranked An, who was playing her first match after she pulled out of the Japan Open in the second round last month with a foot issue, served past Bulgaria’s Kaloyana Nalbantova 21-14, 21-13 in 41 minutes.

“Little bit of pain (in the foot), but I tried to get into a rhythm and I hope to get a good recovery,” An told reporters. “Any tournament is not easy for me, but I tried to stay calm.”

The badminton champion took her time to find rhythm in the opening game, but soon gained momentum to take control in her first competitive match in about a month.

With scores level at 9-9 in game one, An rattled her opposition with six straight points to seize momentum at 15-9 and never looked back.

An is looking to win her second world title after she claimed the crown in 2023 in Copenhagen.

Indian star P.V. Sindhu cruised past Ireland’s Sophia Noble 21-7, 21-11 to keep up her form after she won the Japan Open title last month. – AFP

China’s Wang Manyu wins women’s singles title at WTT Europe Smash

Table tennis

MALMO – China’s Wang Manyu claimed the women’s singles title at the World Table Tennis Europe Smash Sweden on Sunday, as China wrapped up the tournament with two titles, in women’s singles and mixed doubles.

In an all-Chinese women’s singles final, Wang Manyu overcame Wang Yidi 4-2 after a hard-fought six-game contest.

“I’m very happy to win the title,” Wang Manyu told Xinhua after the match, adding that the final against

Wang Yidi was “very tight” and offered plenty for her to reflect on.

“I need to quickly turn my attention to the training and competitions ahead while enjoying the win,” she said.

Earlier on Sunday, Wang Yidi defeated Japan’s Miwa Harimoto 4-2 in the semifinals, while Wang Manyu swept compatriot Kuai Man 4-0 to book her place in the final.

In the men’s singles, Tomokazu Harimoto edged fellow Japanese Sora Matsushima 4-3 in the semifinals, while France’s Felix Lebrun eased past Slovenia’s Darko Jorgic 4-0. Lebrun went on to beat Harimoto 4-1 in the

final to lift the men’s singles trophy.

The 2026 WTT Europe Smash Sweden was held in the city of Malmo, which hosted the event for the second consecutive year. The tournament featured men’s and women’s singles, men’s and women’s doubles, and mixed doubles competitions.

China’s Lin Shidong and Kuai Man won the mixed doubles title on Friday. Chinese players were eliminated in the men’s singles round of 16, while China’s men’s and women’s doubles teams both exited in the quarterfinals.

– Xinhua



Wang Manyu of China celebrates scoring against Wang Yidi of China during the singles final match at the WTT Europe Smash Sweden 2026 in Malmo, Sweden, on Sunday. – Xinhua

Is this cave in Turkey where Homer wrote ‘The Odyssey’?

Burçin Gerçek

BORNOVA, Turkey – On a Turkish hillside overlooking the olive-covered slopes outside Izmir is a cave known to generations of locals as the place where Homer penned “The Odyssey”.

“This place was always called Homer’s Valley by the locals. Travellers from all over the world would come and see the cave where Homer is said to have composed his poems,” said Turkish researcher Altan Altin, who has written a book on the subject.

In fact, nobody knows exactly where Homer wrote his epic poems and there is much mythology around the idea of his cave. Today, of course, the debate has become livelier and more immediate thanks to Christopher Nolan’s blockbuster film “The Odyssey”.

The poet has for a very long time been associated with the Izmir region of Turkey’s Aegean coast, which for most of its history was known as ancient Smyrna.

“The Smyrnaeans have the river Meles, with its lovely water, and at its springs is the grotto, where they say Homer composed his poems,” wrote the 2nd-century Greek chronicler and geographer Pausanias.

Those words have fuelled a centuries-long debate, one that continues today, about Homer’s life and the location of the river where he was thought to have been born in the year 8 BCE.

Remarkable precision

Visiting the cave, which is filled with rocks, is not easy.

Inside, travellers have left Greek scrawled on the walls, although it is



Tourists visit the Homer Caves in Bornova Homeros Valley, believed to be where Homer lived and wrote the Iliad and the Odyssey, in Izmir on August 7. – AFP

not clear how old the writing is.

Although other places, notably the Greek island of Chios, also lay claim to Homer’s origins, ancient Smyrna and its hinterland – where Bornova is located – are closely associated with the poet.

“For me, there’s no doubt, Homer is from Bornova. In any case, he is from Ionia, which includes Smyrna and Chios. He’s from these lands,” Altin told AFP. Ionia is the name of an ancient Greek region on Turkey’s Aegean coast.

To support his thesis, Altin pointed to a 3rd-century BCE frieze depicting the deification of Homer, which he says reproduced the Bornova cave with remarkable precision.

“This bas-relief was already known, but no one had ever noticed the identical details to those found



Moviegoers enter a cinema for the screening of Christopher Nolan’s ‘The Odyssey’ in Izmir, Turkey, on August 7. – AFP

in Homer’s cave. This is the first time such a detailed geographical description came to light,” he said.

Archaeological evidence from the area also suggests a link to Homer.

“The discoveries from the excavations, especially coins bearing Homer’s likeness, show us that the inhabitants of ancient Smyrna considered the poet to be one of their own,” archaeologist Mehmet Akif Erdem said.

“‘The Iliad’ and ‘The Odyssey’ were written in the [ancient Greek] dialects of Ionic and Aeolic, suggesting that ancient Smyrna and Bornova could be among Homer’s native lands,” he said.

Homer everywhere

Beyond the academic debate about his origins, Homer is everywhere in Bornova.

At Yesilova Hoyuk, a Neolithic site considered to be the oldest known prehistoric human settlement

in Izmir, there is a bust of Homer with the inscription: “I compiled The Iliad and The Odyssey epics on this land. I lived in Bornova.”

The town – which already hosts a book fair dedicated to Homer and has a statue of Trojan War hero Hector in a local park – is planning to refurbish the cave and open it to visitors to capitalise on the revival of interest in the ancient poet.

“Preserving Homer’s legacy is a duty we owe to humanity. He is one of the founding fathers of literature,” Bornova Mayor Omer Eski told AFP.

“The stories he tells are about this land. The question is not whether we should claim Homer or not. His story is also ours,” he said.

But not everyone shares his vision.

In 2024, municipal officials from President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan’s ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP) proposed renaming

Homer’s Valley after a Turkish fighter, saying the site should not have a Greek name.

“Erasing Homer’s name would be one of the worst things we could do to Bornova,” retorted the mayor, whose aim is to “make Homer known to the whole world as a person from Bornova” and to make the town a tourist attraction.

‘Proud to be his compatriot’

Mustafa Koçyiğit, who runs the Gargantua bookshop in Izmir, said the success of Nolan’s film has revived interest in Homer and boosted sales of the poem “The Odyssey”.

“I knew Homer was from these lands, but I didn’t know he was specifically from Izmir. We are incredibly lucky,” said teacher Safak Tosun outside one of the city’s cinemas where the film is showing.

“I feel proud, honoured and deeply privileged to be his fellow countryman.”

For the researcher Altin, there are clues in Homer’s writing that he says shows the poet came from the area.

“When you dive into the Iliad, you really understand that Homer was an Anatolian. You find anecdotes and cultural references that are completely unknown elsewhere,” he said.

He believes Homer’s origins should not stir up rivalry between Turkey and Greece.

“Homer is 2,800 years old, while the Turkish-Greek border is only a century old,” he shrugs.

“Homer is Greek. Homer is Anatolian. None of us is older than he is, not even our countries.” – AFP

US actress Hayden Panettiere dies at 36

WASHINGTON, DC – Hayden Panettiere, a US actress and singer known for her roles in popular TV series “Heroes” and “Nashville,” died on Sunday, aged 36, according to media reports.

Her father confirmed her death in a statement to ABC News on Sunday.

“It is with profound sadness that we share the tragic passing of our beloved Hayden. She was an incredible light and a force of nature who brought immeasurable love and joy to all who knew her – and to the millions who watched her onscreen,” he said.

He asked that her family be given privacy while they “process this unimaginable loss.”

Details about her death were not immediately given but news outlet TMZ said there was an “open investigation” into the cause.

Born in 1989, Panettiere became a child star and went on to have numerous roles in both film and TV.

Her credits include “Remember The Titans,” “Ice Princess,” “Scream 4,” and “Scream VI.”

She wrote a memoir titled



US actress Hayden Panettiere poses upon arrival for the world premiere of “Scream VI” at AMC Lincoln Square in New York City on March 6, 2023. – AFP

“This Is Me: A Reckoning” which was released in May.

In that book, she wrote of the pressures of being a child star and her experiences of addiction and recovery.

She had also spoken of estrangement from her mother, who managed her career as a child and later criticised her daughter’s book. – AFP, MPD

Spidey swings high for 3rd weekend in N American box office

LOS ANGELES – “Spider-Man: Brand New Day” continued dominating the North American box office, drawing an additional US\$70 million in ticket sales on its third weekend on the big screen, according to industry estimates.

Spidey is the most common nickname for Spider-Man.

The superhero film fronted by Tom Holland and real-life wife Zendaya has brought in more than US\$2 billion globally since its July 31 release, according to industry watcher Exhibitor Relations.

It is now Sony Picture’s highest-ever grossing film, according to the Hollywood Reporter.

The latest Marvel blockbuster had the biggest debut weekend of all time at the domestic box office, when it earned US\$360 million – topping Disney’s 2019 “Avengers: Endgame” for the record on a non-adjusted-for-inflation basis.

The film, which was directed by Destin Daniel Cretton, follows Peter Parker as he struggles with changes to his powers and lives in isolation after erasing his identity.

Spider-Man works to reconnect with his ex-girlfriend, MJ (Zendaya), and his best friend Ned (Jacob Batalon), while fighting off a new

force threatening New York City.

Trailing Spidey by some distance was Christopher Nolan’s epic “The Odyssey” which brought in US\$23.2 million domestically for Universal in its fifth weekend on screen.

Warner Bros.’s sci-fi thriller “The End of Oak Street,” starring Anne Hathaway and Ewan McGregor as a couple battling to survive when their neighbourhood is transported back to prehistoric times, brought in US\$21 million – earning it third place on its opening weekend.

In fourth, “Paw Patrol: The Dino Movie” hoovered up an estimated

US\$20.5 million for Paramount on its debut weekend.

“Katseye: Wild Hearts,” which chronicles the pop girl group by the same name, came in fifth place, earning US\$3.6 million for Trafalgar Releasing on its opening weekend.

All in all, 2026 continues to be a boon for Hollywood.

“The box office generally slows during the second half of August as kids start returning to school, but right now business remains extremely strong,” said industry analyst David A. Gross. – AFP, MPD

World Weather			
CHINA	ASIA-PACIFIC	WORLD	LUSOPHONE
Beijing 21°C~31°C	Manila 25°C~27°C	New York 20°C~31°C	Lisbon 19°C~29°C
Shanghai 25°C~32°C	Bangkok 26°C~35°C	London 16°C~25°C	Rio de Janeiro 19°C~28°C
Hong Kong 25°C~30°C	Tokyo 22°C~32°C	Frankfurt 17°C~23°C	Luanda 18°C~23°C
Taipei 24°C~33°C	Singapore 25°C~33°C	Vancouver 14°C~23°C	Maputo 15°C~27°C
Guangzhou 25°C~32°C	Kuala Lumpur 24°C~33°C	Paris 18°C~28°C	Dili 21°C~31°C
Nanjing 23°C~32°C	Jakarta 24°C~33°C	Moscow 16°C~23°C	São Tomé 23°C~31°C
Guilin 25°C~35°C	Seoul 22°C~31°C	Las Vegas 27°C~42°C	Praia 24°C~32°C
Xi'an 20°C~25°C	Sydney 9°C~19°C	Monte Carlo 23°C~31°C	Bissau 24°C~29°C



1. Very expressive

Mural artists work during the eighth edition of the PigmenTrip Muralism Festival -part of the local Festival del Jaguar- in Concepcion de Ataco, Ahuachapan, El Salvador, on Saturday.

— AFP

2. Peace worker!

A dove walks on the grass next to soldiers during a flag raising ceremony marking Indonesia's 81st Independence Day at Merdeka Palace in Jakarta yesterday.

— AFP

3. Every animals has its day!

Devotees perform rituals during a celebration of Nag Panchami, a Hindu festival dedicated to the worship of snakes, in Bhaktapur, Nepal, yesterday.

— Xinhua

4. Snowmen on parade

Tourists visit the Phoenix Mountain scenic area in Yakeshi of Hulun Buir, Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region, on Sunday. The scenic area has rolled out off-season ice-and-snow activities and cultural performances to draw visitors.

— Xinhua

5. Mixed emotions

A total of 90 couples sit in rows during a mass wedding ceremony organised on the occasion of the 80th anniversary of the founding of the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) in the town of Akre, about 100 kilometres north of Arbil (Erbil), the capital of Iraq's autonomous northern Kurdish region on Sunday.

— AFP

6. Intricacies of nature

Tourists pose for photos next to the roots of a tree at the Dray Nur waterfall tourist site in Dak Lak province, Vietnam yesterday.

— AFP