

Wong vows deepening Macau-Hengqin integrated development

Tony Wong

In an interview with state broadcaster CCTV, Secretary for Administration and Justice Wong Sio Chak underlined the Macau government's commitment to strengthening the alignment of rules and mechanisms between Macau and Hengqin, one of the main tasks listed in Macau's 3rd Five-Year Plan.

The Macau government announced and published the final version of the 3rd Five-Year Plan on Tuesday.

In the interview, which was conducted in Macau recently and broadcast on CCTV Channel 13 yesterday, Wong said, speaking Putonghua, that institutional innovation, including the alignment of rules and mechanisms, is a "very important" element for Macau-Hengqin integrated development.

While this is a key tool necessary for advancing Macau-Hengqin future development, it will be a "complicated and difficult" task for the Macau government and the Hengqin authorities to achieve, he acknowledged.

The 106-square-kilometre Hengqin island in Zhuhai City is officially known as Guangdong-Macao In-Depth Cooperation Zone in Hengqin, following its inauguration in September 2021. The adjacent island is three times the size of the Macao Special Administrative Region (MSAR).

Continued on p.5



This photo released yesterday shows Secretary for Administration and Justice Wong Sio Chak gesturing while speaking during a joint media interview conducted in Macau recently. — Photo: Xinhua

Trump says will meet Kim later this year

Danny Kemp Claire Lee and Jihye Shin

US President Donald Trump said yesterday that he would meet Kim Jong Un later this year, seeking to revive the bond he claims to have struck with the leader of nuclear-armed North Korea in his first term.

Trump told reporters at the White House it was important to "get along" with Kim, adding in an unusually precise assessment that Pyongyang now had 57 "very powerful" nuclear weapons.

But Trump's sudden focus on Kim and his scaling back of joint US-South Korean military drills have alarmed Asian allies – while sparking speculation that he is seeking a foreign policy win as his Iran war stalls.

"Yeah, I will be," Trump said during a tour of a new helipad at the White House, when

asked if he planned to meet Kim later in 2026.

Trump defended planning to meet the North Korean leader even as he wages a war with Iran that he has justified on the grounds of preventing Tehran from getting a nuclear bomb.

"He has 57 very powerful nuclear weapons. Should have never allowed it to happen... If I were president, I wouldn't have allowed it," Trump said, referring to Kim.

"But he's got them. I get along with him very well. I can't let Iran have a nuclear weapon. And I know Kim Jong Un very well, and he's going to be fine."

Trump gave no details, but *The Wall Street Journal* reported that he was eyeing a meeting when he travels to Shenzhen, China for an Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) summit in November. (More on pages 7 & 9) — AFP



Revelers get drenched while participating in a water festival held in Baoting Li and Miao Autonomous County, Hainan Province, yesterday. The festival was held on the occasion of the traditional Qixi Festival, the Chinese equivalent of Valentine's Day. (More about the festival on p.4) — Xinhua

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

The Macau Post Daily

China says EU's probe into e-commerce giant JD.com unlawful

The Ministry of Justice said yesterday that the European Union's recent cross-border investigation into Chinese e-commerce giant JD.com has constituted unlawful extraterritorial jurisdiction.

— Story on p. 7

Oldest human brain cells grown in lab 'recorded passage of time'

Clumps of human brain cells grown in a lab for a record seven years aged similarly to those inside our heads, suggesting they "recorded the passage of time," scientists said yesterday.

— Story on p. 11

Chinese defense minister commends Timor-Leste for upholding strategic autonomy

China commends Timor-Leste for upholding strategic autonomy and standing firm for fairness and justice, Defense Minister Dong Jun said in Dili on Tuesday.

— Story on p. 12

Macao's new 5-year plan charts course for high-quality development

Commentary

Macao's new development plan for the 2026–2030 period marks another key step in the successful practice of "One Country, Two Systems" with Macao characteristics and is significant for advancing its appropriate economic diversification.

The Macao Special Administrative Region (MSAR) government on Tuesday released its Third Five-Year Plan for Economic and Social Development of the MSAR (2026–2030) – a roadmap for the MSAR to march towards high-quality development and a major move to

actively align with the national 15th Five-Year Plan.

The five-year period represents a critical window for Macao's high-quality development. The new blueprint will translate national strategic opportunities into driving forces for Macao's development and turn institutional strengths into governance efficacy.

At its core is the push for appropriate economic diversification – a move to address Macao's structural challenges due to its long-standing reliance on the gaming industry. The MSAR will foster emerging industries as new growth drivers

through major projects and a government guidance fund, as well as advance high-quality development in the Guangdong-Macao In-Depth Cooperation Zone in Hengqin.

Notably, the blueprint balances economic development with social priorities. Education, employment, housing, elderly care, and urban renewal receive dedicated policy attention, embodying a people-centered approach that ensures the fruits of development are shared more widely and equitably among all citizens.

From the proactive planning of the MSAR Government to the

suggestions from all sectors of society, the new guiding document fully attests to the fine tradition of "loving the motherland and loving Macao" – the very source of Macao's resolve to surmount difficulties and forge ahead.

Macao strictly fulfills its constitutional duties and aligns with national strategies while exploring its development path based on its unique endowments. The new development roadmap clearly shows that under the principle of "patriots administering Macao," Macao is adept at integrating Central

People's Government support, institutional strengths, and social synergy to continuously translate institutional advantages into tangible governance outcomes.

As the MSAR Government translates the roadmap into reality through concerted efforts across all sectors of society, the city will surely open up new prospects for high-quality development, contribute more to national rejuvenation, and ensure the steady and sustained practice of "One Country, Two Systems" with Macao characteristics.

– Xinhua

More on page 5

Mainland couple arrested for defrauding friend



This undated handout photo provided by the Judiciary Police yesterday shows evidence seized from the casino-fraud couple.

Armindo Neves

The Judiciary Police (PJ) arrested a couple from the Chinese mainland on Monday for defrauding a friend, PJ spokesman Ho Ka Weng announced during a regular press conference yesterday.

Ho identified the suspects as a 33-year-old businessman surnamed Min and a 32-year-old unemployed woman surnamed Wu.

The victim is a middle-aged mainland man. According to Ho, the victim contacted the Judiciary Police on January 24, reporting that he had arranged to gamble jointly with Min at a casino in Cotai, with both parties agreeing to chip in HK\$110,000 (113,304 patacas) each as capital.

The victim handed over HK\$110,000 in casino chips to Min, taking their total joint gambling pot to HK\$220,000 in chips.

Wu was also present.

After winning HK\$230,000, Min made an excuse to take the victim to view other gaming tables, leaving HK\$210,000 in chips with Wu for "safekeeping", Ho said.

Min then slipped away, and both suspects vanished without returning the victim's capital.

Following an investigation, PJ officers identified the couple and intercepted them at the Barrier Gate checkpoint on Monday evening.

The investigation revealed that Wu had cashed in the victim's HK\$110,000 worth of chips and kept the proceeds, Ho added. Officers seized HK\$70,000 in cash and two smartphones from the couple.

The pair have been transferred to the Public Prosecutions Office (MP), where they each face a charge of breach of trust. ■

Fiscal reserves grow 5.6 pct in 6 months

Tony Wong

The fiscal reserves of the Macao Special Administrative Region (MSAR) reached a record high of 704.34 billion patacas at the end of June, according to a notice published by the Macao Monetary Authority (AMCM) in the Official Gazette (BO) yesterday.

The fiscal reserves of 704.34 billion patacas (about 0.7 trillion patacas) consisted of basic reserves of 163.60 billion patacas and extraordinary reserves of 540.73 billion patacas.

The 704.34 billion patacas represented an increase of 0.3 percent from the 702.26 billion patacas at the end of May, an increase of 5.6 percent from the 666.74 billion patacas at the end of 2025, and an increase of 14.3 percent from the 616.21 billion

patacas at the end of 2024.

The fiscal reserves of 702.26 billion patacas at the end of May broke the 700-billion-pataca benchmark for the first time.

The continuous growth in the government's fiscal reserves over recent years has not only been attributed by analysts to a budget surplus (revenue exceeding expenditure) but also to the fact that the government has been able

to earn an annual positive return from investing its fiscal reserves. For instance, according to previous AMCM announcements, the government recorded an annual return of 5.2 percent, 5.3 percent, and 6.9 percent from investing its fiscal reserves in 2023, 2024, and 2025.

Macao's quasi-central bank updates the MSAR's fiscal reserves in the gazette on a monthly basis. ■



This file photo taken earlier this year shows cars driving past the headquarters of the Macao Monetary Authority (AMCM) on Guia Hill in the peninsula. – Photo: Tony Wong

GEG summer family programme draws 300 staff, children

Rui Pastorin

Around 300 Galaxy Entertainment Group (GEG) staff and their children took part in the recently held "GEG Family Cares Summer Programme", with the event featuring a raft of parent-child activities.

The integrated resort operator said in a statement yesterday that among the activities featured were the "Become a Movie Theater Star for a Day" experience at Galaxy Cinemas at Galaxy Macau in Cotai, where children were able to experience a day in the life of cinema staff, gaining firsthand insight.

Young participants were guided by staff, along with their parents, in experiencing ticketing, F&B and ushering duties. They were also able to watch a movie with their parents, offering an operational and guest perspective, according to the statement.

Culinary and pastry operations were also presented through the "Create Your Own Chocolate Masterpiece" workshop at Hotel Okura Macau, which was guided by professional pastry chefs from Galaxy Macau's Central Kitchen,



This undated handout photo provided by Galaxy Entertainment Group (GEG) shows participants attending the "Create Your Own Chocolate Masterpiece" workshop as a pastry chef demonstrates his culinary skills.

the statement said.

Meanwhile, the "Play, Explore & Bond Together" activity invited families to visit the "Galaxy Kidz Edutainment Center" for its of family-friendly recreational and interactive facilities, as well as to learn through play via the experiences on offer, the statement said. Parents and children also

created Macau-inspired Portuguese-style tile coasters and hand-painted non-woven bags during the event, according to the statement.

Moreover, the statement noted that the workshop enabled participants to "learn about Macau's unique blend of Chinese and Western cultures through locally inspired artistic elements". ■

Published since Aug 2004

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



Macau Weather

CLOUDY APART FROM SUNNY INTERVALS.

A FEW SHOWERS.
FORCE 4 TO 5 EAST TO SOUTHEASTERLY WINDS, OCCASIONALLY FORCE 6 WITH GUSTS.

RELATIVE HUMIDITY WILL RANGE BETWEEN 70% AND 95%.



27°C~31°C

Source: SMG

Macau tourism projects win 7 PATA Gold Awards

Khalel Vallo

Macau received a record seven PATA Gold Awards 2026, with projects from the Macao Government Tourism Office (MGTO) and three integrated resort enterprises recognised across marketing, sustainability, social responsibility, and human capital development categories, according to a statement by MGTO yesterday.

The Pacific Asia Travel Association (PATA) Gold Awards are annual international honours that recognise excellence and innovation in the travel and tourism industry across the Asia-Pacific region.

The awards recognise excellence and innovation in the Asia-Pacific tourism industry across areas including marketing, sustainability, and social responsibility, the statement said, noting that winners are selected by an international jury.

The awards were presented during the PATA Gold Awards 2026 gala dinner and presentation ceremony in Kuching, Sarawak, Malaysia, on Tuesday, the statement said, noting that Macau received seven of the 32 awards

presented this year, marking a record number of PATA Gold Awards for the city.

According to the statement, MGTO received two awards – POP MART MACAO CITYWALK won the Destination Marketing Campaign (Destination Management Organisation – Asia) award, while CreatorWeek Macao 2025 received the Most Engaging Social Media Campaign award.

Melco Resorts & Entertainment also received two awards, the statement noted, highlighting that “House of Dancing Water Premiere” won in the Marketing Campaign – Hospitality (Hotel, Resort, Management Company) category, while “RISE to Go Above & Beyond” was recognised in the Climate Action Initiative (Industry) category.

Meanwhile, Sands China Limited received two awards, with “Sands China Presents: Dopamine: Fountain of Happiness Artbook” winning in the Printed Marketing Campaign (Industry) category and “Empowering Inclusive Communities: The Sands Shopping Carnival” receiving the Sustainable and Inclusive Marketing Campaign award, the statement added.

Moreover, MGM China received one award in the Human Capital Development Programme category for “Unleashing Greatness – MGM’s Human Capital Development Programme”, the statement said.

Among MGTO’s winning projects, POP MART MACAO CITYWALK ran for 108 days between June and September in Taipa last year, combining Macau’s UNESCO World Heritage status with contemporary “trendy toy” characters, the statement noted, underlining that the campaign attracted more than 723,000 visitors and facilitated 3.64 billion patacas in total e-wallet transactions through the integration of six cross-border e-wallets.

CreatorWeek Macao 2025, which was held last October, brought together creators, platforms, brands, and communities through summits, live performances, and tourism-related experiences, the statement said, underlining that 184 creator groups participated, with content related to the event and Macau generating more than 1.5 billion global impressions and reaching over 2 billion cumulative KOL (Key Opinion Leader) followers. ■

Macau delegation preps for Asian Games



20th Asian Games Macau Delegation Head Pun Weng Kun (podium, left) and deputy head Fu Si Na (podium, right) preside over a pre-departure work meeting at the Athlete Training and Development Centre in Cotai on Tuesday.

– Photo courtesy of Sports And Olympic Committee of Macau, China

Armindo Neves

The Sports and Olympic Committee of Macau, China (C.O.D.M.) announced on Tuesday that the Macau delegation for the 20th Asian Games has entered its final preparation stage.

The 2026 Asian Games will take place from September 19 to October 4 in Aichi Prefecture and Nagoya City, Japan. The Games will run for 16 days and feature 43 sports.

On Tuesday, the committee held its pre-Asian Games working meeting at the Athlete Training and Development Centre in Cotai.

According to a statement from the committee, delegation head Pun Weng Kun briefed all participating teams on departure procedures, arrival arrangements, and key guidelines for the competition. Pun encouraged the athletes to show a tenacious, never-give-up spirit,

perform at their best, strive for success, and bring honour to Macau.

Fu Si Na, acting vice-president of the Sports Bureau (ID) and deputy head of the delegation, expressed her hope that participants would cherish the opportunity to represent Macau. She encouraged athletes to demonstrate good discipline, learn from the experience, broaden their horizons, and gain valuable exposure at the high-level event to help advance Macau’s sports sector.

The Macau delegation comprises 145 members, including 85 athletes and 41 team leaders, coaches, and technical support staff.

The delegation will compete in 15 sports: Aquatics (Swimming and Diving), Athletics, Badminton, Women’s 3×3 Basketball, Boxing, Cycling, Fencing, Golf, Karate, Squash, Table Tennis, Taekwondo, Triathlon, Women’s Beach Volleyball, and Wushu. ■

Destination Marketing Campaign (Destination Marketing Organisation - Asia)



This handout photo provided by the Macao Government Tourism Office (MGTO) yesterday shows Business Tourism and Events Division chief Benjamin Long (容國源) (second from right) posing with his award alongside MGTO Director Maria Helena de Senna Fernandes (second from left) at the PATA Gold Awards 2026 in Kuching, Sarawak, Malaysia, on Tuesday. MGTO did not identify the two other people in the picture.

MGM’s Glen Corales wins ‘Hennessy MyWay’ title

Rui Pastorin

Bar Patuá’s Glen Corales was this month recognised as the “Hennessy MyWay 2026 Hong Kong & Macau Champion” during the regional final held in the South Korean capital of Seoul, being the sole finalist from Macau, integrated resort operator MGM said in a statement yesterday.

Bar Patuá is located at MGM COTAI.

Corales, who was born and raised in the Philippines, won the event with “Tea Ceremony 125”, a reimagining of the classic “French 125”, the statement noted.

With the win, the statement said, Corales is set to compete in the Hennessy MyWay 2026 Global Final slated for November in France, adding that he has become the first Macau bartender to “advance to the global stage of this prestigious competition”.

The Filipino has lived in Macau for a decade, joining MGM in 2023 and has since become part of Bar Patuá’s core team, the statement said.

According to the statement, the recent final challenged participants to interpret the theme of Past and Future, with Corales crafting his award-winning drink using grains of rice, a staple in Chinese and Filipino cuisines, highlighting a blend of cultures.

The drink also pays tribute to his favourite childhood drink, Kapeng Bigas*, a traditional Filipino non-caffeinated rice coffee. The statement added it is paired with Hennessy V.S.O.P., while its syrup and garnish are crafted using toasted grains of rice.

It also takes inspiration from the traditional “Long-Spout Copper Kettle Kung Fu Tea Dance” he discovered at MGM’s Five Foot Road restaurant, according to the statement.

Corales previously secured his Top 5 qualification with his sustainability-focused cocktail, “TRACE”, the statement said.

Ahead of the finals, he will perform guest shifts across Asia to promote Macau’s cocktail culture. ■

*Literally “rice coffee”



In this undated handout photo, Glen Corales (centre) poses with his trophy at Bar Patuá in MGM COTAI.

– Photo provided by MGM yesterday



San Kio Qixi fest blends traditional culture with community tourism

Khalel Vallo

The “2026 Qixi Festival Summer Experience in San Kio” is being held in San Kio Garden through August 31, combining traditional Chinese culture, cultural creativity and business promotions to attract residents and visitors to the old district.

Organised by the San Kio District Residents Mutual Aid Association, the 17-day event runs from last Saturday to August 31.

The event has expanded its business district participation this year, according to a recent statement by the organisers, with more than 100 food, retail, creative and local service shops taking part. The event also features 24 specialised craft workshops, offering activities such as accessory weaving, floral arts, hand-painted crafts, and portrait drawing, the statement said.

Promotions include buy-one-get-one-free tickets at Teatro Alegria and instant merchant discounts, while the event mini-programme has been enhanced with online games and promotional content, the statement said, adding that offline check-in rewards are also available to encourage visitors to explore participating shops.

San Kio Garden serves as the main venue, hosting workshops, cultural performances and interactive activities in a one-stop festival setting. The Qixi* Fair and stalls operate every Friday, Saturday and Sunday, providing an additional weekend attraction for residents and tourists.

The “Aroma & Tea Tasting” Qixi Gathering (“「聞香品茗」七夕雅集”) also features regular weekend sessions, alongside special events that featured “Traditional Night” (“傳統之夜”) on Tuesday and “San Kio Appointment” (“新橋之約”) yesterday.

Three major themed activities form the highlights of the programme. “Traditional Night” on Tuesday featured Moon-worship rituals, Qixi craft competitions, folk customs, and qipao** showcases.

Meanwhile, “San Kio Appointment” yesterday included calligraphy and painting sessions, orchid lectures and arts workshops highlighting the district’s cultural heritage.

On August 30, “Qixi Fate Orienteering” (“七夕良緣定向活動”) will guide participants through street-level challenges and puzzles while exploring the history and character of San Kio’s old district.

Speaking to the *Post* yesterday, the festival coordinator Celia Fong (馮麗芬) said that yesterday’s theme drew inspiration from San Kio’s local Qixi traditions and the distinctive community heritage of the old district. She said that the festival, which has been held since 2014, aims to preserve and pass on San Kio’s cultural traditions while using its popularity to “drive consumption among local businesses, strengthen neighbourhood ties and establish a tourism and cultural identity unique to San Kio.”

Fong also said that the event also responds to the government’s efforts to revitalise business districts and promote urban renewal, with the organisers hoping to integrate community tourism and cultural activities to breathe new life into the old district, adding that residents and visitors can experience Qixi traditions through workshops, markets and cultural performances, while also exploring the shops and streets of San Kio to experience the district’s distinctive community atmosphere and support the long-term development of its business district.

Looking ahead, the organisers hope the event will help make traditional festivals a lasting part of community life, while continuing to bring visitors to local businesses, support small shops and strengthen residents’ sense of belonging. Fong said, adding that the event’s themed parade last night invited adults and children to dress in traditional Chinese attire and walk through San Kio’s streets and alleys, stopping at designated landmarks for photo opportunities and bringing greater exposure and foot traffic to shops while allowing participants to experience the Qixi atmosphere and community character of the old district.

*Qixi (七夕) literally means “Seventh Night”. It is a traditional Chinese festival that falls on the seventh day of the seventh lunar month. Widely known as Chinese Valentine’s Day, it celebrates a famous ancient folktale about true love, separated stars, and traditional crafts. Its date changes annually on the Western (Gregorian) calendar. – Gemini

**The qipao (also known as cheongsam) is a sleek, form-fitting Chinese dress originating from 1920s Shanghai. It features a high mandarin collar, an asymmetrical side closure with decorative frog buttons (knotted fasteners), and a figure-hugging silhouette with a high side slit. – DeepSeek



Photos taken yesterday at San Kio Garden by Khalel Vallo



Artists paint during yesterday’s “2026 Qixi Festival Summer Experience in San Kio” at San Kio Garden.



A Chinese ensemble performs during last night’s festival at San Kio Garden.



Participants in traditional garb pose for a group photo during last night’s festival at San Kio Garden.



Macao's roadmap for a more diversified, integrated future

Analysis

BEIJING – Nearly three decades after its return to the motherland, Macao continues to explore new ways to sustain stability and prosperity under the “One Country, Two Systems” policy, with successive five-year plans offering a long-term roadmap for its development.

Macao and its neighbor Hong Kong are China's two special administrative regions (SARs) governed under the “One Country, Two Systems” policy. This arrangement, in place since China resumed the exercise of sovereignty over the two cities in the late 1990s, allows them to maintain their capitalist systems and ways of life within socialist China.

The third five-year plan of the Macao Special Administrative Region (MSAR), unveiled on Tuesday, sets out policy priorities for the next stage, focusing on economic diversification, social progress, and closer integration into national development, while ensuring security.

Since its return to the motherland in December 1999, Macao has evolved from a city once associated largely with casinos and gangster films into a vibrant international hub with a dynamic economy, a low crime rate and an increasingly comprehensive social welfare system. It now ranks among the world's wealthiest economies in terms of GDP per capita.

With the plan, the MSAR Government is proactively positioning Macao within the broader context of national development and actively implementing the relevant arrangements of the country's 15th Five-Year Plan (2026-2030), said MSAR Chief Executive Sam Hou Fai.

ECONOMIC DIVERSIFICATION

Economic diversification has remained a central theme throughout Macao's three five-year plans, from the first plan unveiled in



Journalists work during Tuesday's press conference about Macao's 3rd Five-Year Plan at Government Headquarters on Avenida da Praia Grande in Nam Van.

– Photo: Tony Wong

2016 to the latest one.

Sam said economic diversification is essential to sustaining Macao's long-term prosperity and stability and is a task the MSAR Government must tackle, no matter how difficult it may be.

According to Sam, the MSAR Government will advance economic diversification through major projects and a government guidance fund to build Macao into a World Tourism and Leisure Center and develop its priority industries, namely, big health, modern finance, high technology, exhibition and convention, as well as culture and sports.

The plan sets the target of raising the share of value added from non-gaming industries to around 60 percent of Macao's GDP by 2030.

Cheong Chok Man, director of the Policy Research and Regional Development Bureau under the MSAR Government, said that setting such a target means Macao will need to intensify its efforts to achieve greater economic diversification.

Major projects aimed at promoting economic diversification during the period

are expected to involve around 130 billion patacas in budgeted investment.

For a small economy like Macao with a GDP of roughly US\$50 billion in 2025, the investment represents a significant commitment, said Lao Chi Ngai, president of the Macao Economic Association.

BROADER INTEGRATION

The plan is designed to advance the high-quality development of the Guangdong-Macao In-Depth Cooperation Zone in Hengqin.

Located in Zhuhai, Guangdong Province, Hengqin is separated from Macao by a narrow stretch of water. The cooperation zone was established in 2021 to create new space for Macao's development.

This year marks a crucial period for the zone's second phase of development. The latest five-year plan calls for addressing challenges through reform and advancing deeper integration between Macao and Hengqin, with science and technology and education serving as key drivers.

The plan sets quantitative targets in areas

including industrial diversification, cross-border flows of production factors, and the integrated provision and sharing of public services.

Richard W. Hu, dean of the Faculty of Social Sciences at the University of Macau (UM), said the plan moves beyond integration in individual industries toward broader integration encompassing industries, people's livelihoods, talent and governance.

Hengqin is expected to develop into an integrated urban area that serves as an extension of Macao's industries and a vibrant cross-border community. In doing so, it could offer a landmark example of leveraging the institutional strengths of “One Country, Two Systems” to foster closer regional synergy, Hu said.

SECURITY AS FOUNDATION

Alongside economic diversification and regional integration, the latest plan places security among its major priorities.

“Amid a complex and evolving international landscape, Macao faces potential challenges arising from a combination of traditional and non-traditional security risks,” said Yin Yifen, director of the Social, Economic and Public Policy Research Center at Macao Polytechnic University (MPU).

He said the plan seeks to improve the legal framework and enforcement mechanisms for safeguarding national security, strengthen security governance in emerging areas such as cyberspace, data and artificial intelligence (AI), and further develop smart policing.

It also places emphasis on national security education for young people.

“Making security an integral part of governance in the SAR will help lay a stronger foundation for economic diversification, improved livelihood and deeper integration between Macao and Hengqin,” Yin said.

– Xinhua

Wong vows deepening Macau-Hengqin integrated development

Continued from p.1

The in-depth cooperation zone's governance consists of a management committee and an executive committee.

The management committee is the zone's top decision-making body run under a dual director system, jointly led by the governor of Guangdong Province and the chief executive of the MSAR.

The zone's executive committee, which is run under the management committee, is the body tasked with the zone's daily functioning and execution of tasks.

There are nine bureaux administered under the zone's executive committee.

Currently, the zone's management committee is jointly headed by Guangdong Governor Meng Fanli and MSAR Chief Executive Sam Hou Fai.

Wong is the management committee's executive deputy director. The management committee has five deputy directors comprising officials from Guangdong and Macau.

In the interview with CCTV, Wong underlined the Macau government's commitment to advancing Hengqin's ongoing second-phase development. The Macau government will strengthen Macau's alignment and integration with Hengqin's current planning and policy documents, with emphasis placed on aspects such as industrial development and people's daily life matters, with the aim of creating a legal environment in Hengqin similar to that of Macau, he said.

Moreover, Wong said, the Macau government will also advance the alignment of rules regarding market access, the flow

of production factors, standards recognition and certification, and sector supervision, thereby facilitating Macau-Hengqin integrated development.

Meanwhile, according to a Xinhua report published yesterday, Wong also elaborated on the Macau government's commitment to fostering Macau-Hengqin integrated development during a joint media interview conducted recently.

Wong underlined the need for leveraging Macau's unique institutional advantages brought about by implementation of the “One Country, Two Systems” principle in its ongoing participation in Hengqin's development.

By achieving deep convergence across administration, industry, and social governance, the aim is to build a higher-level collaborative governance system, Wong said.

Wong said that specific measures will include strengthening Macau's executive-led governance system in order to boost governance effectiveness, advancing the construction of a Macau-Hengqin collaborative industrial system, deepening the alignment of rules and mechanisms, and facilitating collaborative social co-governance.

Wong pointed out that the 3rd Five-Year Plan has a dedicated section about advancing the high-quality development of the Guangdong-Macao In-Depth Cooperation Zone in Hengqin.

This section includes a chapter about deepening Macau-Hengqin integrated development, designating the alignment of rules and mechanisms as one of the key tasks for the Macau government, he noted. ■

HK exchange reports record half-year revenue, profit in H1

HONG KONG – Hong Kong Exchanges and Clearing Limited (HKEX) delivered an exceptional first half of 2026, with revenue and profit both reaching new half-year records, Bonnie Chan, HKEX chief executive officer, said in the interim-results announcement yesterday.

In the first six months, HKEX reported total revenue and other income of HK\$16.7 billion and profit attributable to shareholders of about HK\$10.6 billion, representing year-on-year increases of 19 percent and 24 percent, respectively, according to the announcement.

Building on the strong momentum

achieved in 2025, HKEX entered 2026 with resilience and continued strategic progress, delivering record first-half performance against a backdrop of macroeconomic uncertainty and evolving geopolitical dynamics, HKEX Chairman Carlson Tong said in the announcement.

Supported by a surge in listings from the AI and broader technology, media and telecommunications sectors, the IPO market in Hong Kong remained buoyant in the reporting period. In the first half, there were 87 new listings, raising a total of HK\$212.4 billion, up 94 percent from a year earlier.

– Xinhua

HK students deliver best-ever performance at 38th Int'l Olympiad in Informatics

HONG KONG – A team of four Hong Kong students won two gold medals, one silver medal and an honorable mention, ranking sixth at the 38th International Olympiad in Informatics (IOI), which was the city's best-ever performance at the competition, according to a press release published yesterday by the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) government.

Christine Choi Yuk-lin, secretary for education of the HKSAR government, congratulated the students on their excellent performance. She also extended her gratitude to the school sector for continuously partnering with the education bureau of the

HKSAR government to promote digital education and STEAM (science, technology, engineering, arts and mathematics) education in Hong Kong.

Choi noted that schools have been offering diversified learning opportunities outside the classroom, such as competitions, to build a solid foundation in mathematics, science, and technology. These initiatives help to nurture students' creativity, enabling them to apply their knowledge and skills to solve problems and broaden their horizons.

This year's IOI, held in Uzbekistan, attracted contestants from 92 countries and regions.

– Xinhua

Unitree's successful IPO a vote of confidence in China's high-tech future

Commentary

BEIJING — China's leading robotics company Unitree Robotics had a successful debut yesterday, with its shares ending the day up 460.34 percent on the Shanghai Stock Exchange's sci-tech innovation board, known as the STAR Market.

Unitree Robotics' debut on the STAR Market represents much more than just a corporate fundraising event. It brings capital-market validation to the booming industry and casts a vote of confidence in a high-tech future.

The message is clear: the capital market is placing faith in the growth of the emerging tech segment and the broader robotics industry. The company gives a glimpse into China's capability to translate its industrial chain strengths into commercially viable artificial intelligence applications.

Hangzhou-based Unitree Robotics is a global sales leader in humanoid and quadruped robots. In 2025, it shipped over 5,500 units of humanoid robots — roughly a third of the global total — ranking first worldwide. This dynamism is evident in the 116,000 new companies registered in China's humanoid robotics sector in the first half of this year.

Embodied intelligence holds enormous potential in China, which boasts a large market for robotics as the world's second-largest economy accelerates its industrial upgrade and advances high-quality development. Deeply integrated into the country's comprehensive industrial ecosystem, the industry unlocks

demand across smart manufacturing, household services, and disaster relief operations, among others. For example, humanoid robots have been used to serve as traffic police, restaurant servers, and package sorters in Chinese cities such as Hangzhou and Shenzhen.

Clearly, the robotics industry will not only drive automation across China's industries but also support industrialization in Global South countries. Furthermore, it can meet the practical need for robots to handle dangerous, complex, or costly tasks. Cleaning robots have been employed in some countries to take on the once complicated and expensive task of washing high-rise glass facades.

Robotics is a shared global undertaking. Unitree Robotics' listing coincided with the opening of the World Robot Conference that runs until Sunday, as well as the World Humanoid Robot Games from August 22 to 26.

The two robotics events in Beijing serve as important platforms for participants worldwide to examine real-world application prospects, showcase how embodied intelligence machines may reshape human life, and carry out exchanges and cooperation among robotics businesses so as to empower common development and promote human well-being through the industry.

The events also provide a testing ground for the very future that Unitree's listing has priced in. Ultimately, the true measure of its IPO will not be first-day gains, but how effectively China's robotics ecosystem translates capital into shared prosperity. — *Xinhua*



A robot band performs during the 2026 World Robot Conference in Beijing yesterday. Themed "Human-Robot Symbiosis, Production-Demand Convergence," the 2026 edition of the conference kicked off yesterday. — *Xinhua*

Shanghai launches AI-powered tourist services amid inbound tourism surge

SHANGHAI — Shanghai launched 100 AI-powered tourist service terminals across the city yesterday, aiming to enhance the travel experience for the growing number of summer tourists, local authorities said.

The terminals are powered by a dedicated AI agent named Hu Xiaoyou, capable of offering services from navigation and real-time translation to attraction recommendations and ticket booking. They can also generate personalized travel itineraries for users.

Operators said the terminals' database contains more than 84,000 entries on cultural activities, tourist attractions and sports events in Shanghai, and is directly connected to 14,000 booking and shopping links.

The machines support 10 languages — Chinese, English, Japanese, Korean, French, German, Spanish, Thai, Russian and Arabic

— and accept payments in more than 120 currencies.

Located in major hotels, tourism information centers, event venues, key business districts and scenic spots across the city, the terminals will also be staffed with volunteers to assist visitors with additional needs.

The terminals' functions will be upgraded and their footprint expanded over time to form a citywide service network, said Zhong Xiaomin, director of the Shanghai Municipal Administration of Culture and Tourism.

As China continues to upgrade its summer tourism offerings, Shanghai has emerged as a prime destination for inbound travelers riding the "China Cool" wave.

The city received 5.3 million inbound tourists in the first half of this year, up 27.82 percent year on year, official data showed. — *Xinhua*

How emerging industries are driving manufacturing upgrades in central China

Analysis by Xinhua writers Zheng Bofei and Cheng Ji'an

CHANGSHA — Inside a factory in central China's Hunan Province, copper is inspected with micrometer-level precision before being wound into coils. The finished electromagnetic wire is rarely visible to consumers, yet it is an indispensable component in the electric motors that power new energy vehicles (NEVs).

As electric vehicles become faster, more compact and capable of charging at higher voltages, upstream suppliers are being pushed to develop thinner insulation, more precise conductors and increasingly automated production lines.

One such supplier, Goldcup Electric Magnet Wire Co., Ltd. in the city of Xiangtan, began developing electromagnetic wire for NEV drive motors in 2015. Its shipments, driven by the rising demand for electric vehicles, grew 50 percent year on year to reach around 17,000 tonnes in 2025.

Zhou Weibin, assistant to the company's general manager, told Xinhua that rising performance requirements had prompted the company to shift from conventional round wire to flat wire, allowing more copper to fit inside a motor. This helps manufacturers reduce the motor size while meeting the higher power and voltage requirements of modern vehicle platforms.

The change reflects a broader trend in the country's industrial landscape, where demand from fast-growing industries is driving innovation further up the supply chain.

In the neighboring Hubei Province, engineers have developed copper foil just 3 micrometers thick — roughly one twenty-fifth the diameter of a human hair. Currently in mass production, the ultra-thin foil reduces copper use and enhances EV battery performance.

Such increasingly sophisticated components have helped raise the competitiveness of the NEVs, which accounted for more than 60 percent of China's monthly new-car sales for the first time in July 2026. Their cumulative share during the first seven months of the year also exceeded 50 percent, according to the China Association of Automobile Manufacturers.

The shift toward advanced manufacturing reflects a national strategy to transform central China — comprising Shanxi, Anhui, Jiangxi, Henan, Hubei and Hunan provinces — into a key manufacturing hub linking coastal innovation centers with markets in western China.

Anhui, once strongly associated with agriculture, has emerged as a major automobile and NEV manufacturing base. In the first 11 months of 2025, the province produced about 3.34 million vehicles, including 1.64 million NEVs, making it China's leading vehicle-producing province during that period.

Beyond the EV supply chain, manufacturers are applying capabilities developed for established products to new ones.

In Liuyang, Hunan, Lens Technology initially built its manufacturing strength around precision glass components. It later expanded into smart-device assembly and automotive components, and more recently into AI hardware and robotics.

At its facilities, rows of humanoid and quadruped robots show how production capabilities developed for one generation of

products are being adapted for another.

Sun Yulei, CEO of Lens Intelligent, said the company's entry into embodied-intelligence hardware did not begin on an empty factory floor.

"We already have many years of accumulated experience, including experience in industrial robots and the group's capabilities in materials, modules and large-scale manufacturing," Sun said.

The company had previously developed industrial robots and automated production equipment to meet the needs of its own factories. Technologies involving joints, motion control and automated guided vehicle platforms could subsequently be adapted to new categories of robots, Sun said.

That accumulated know-how matters because building a robot that can walk or perform a demonstration is very different from creating a product that can be manufactured consistently, delivered at scale, and maintained at an acceptable cost.

Some robots are now being tested in the company's own factories, providing engineers with real-world application scenarios and operational data.

"For relatively simple tasks in specific scenarios, a closed loop can be formed," Sun said. "But complex environments, particularly homes where every setting and required action is different, will still require a long period of development before fully autonomous operation becomes possible."

For humanoid robots, however, finding real-world applications remains a challenge.

"The biggest difficulty for humanoid robots is finding profitable applications and real-world scenarios," said Xiao Xiang, chief economist of the Liuyang municipal bureau of industry and information technology. "The company has its own application scenarios, so it can use them to iterate its robots and advance the technology."

According to the Hunan Provincial Bureau of Statistics, advanced manufacturing and equipment manufacturing have accelerated in both quality and growth, emerging as the primary engine driving industrial expansion in the province. In 2025, Hunan's major firms in advanced manufacturing, or those with an annual main business revenue of at least 20 million yuan, demonstrated robust momentum, with their value added rising by 7.2 percent year on year — 1.0 percentage point faster than the overall growth rate of major industrial firms.

In Nanchang, capital of east China's Jiangxi Province, robots are already being put to work on production lines.

AgiBot's Genie G2 robots carry out final quality inspections, identifying and picking up products, placing them in testing boxes, and separating anomalies for staff. Able to adapt to positional deviations and production-line disturbances, each robot processes about 310 units per hour, with a reported success rate exceeding 99.9 percent.

"Embodied intelligence is no longer a lab concept, but a genuine driver of productivity that can enter production lines and create real value," said Yao Maoqing, senior vice president of AgiBot.

For decades, industrial upgrading was seen as a linear process. But now, it's more like a feedback loop: downstream industries create new demand, upstream manufacturers answer with better materials, components, and production methods, and those advances pave the way for the next generation of products. — *Xinhua*

Chinese FM calls for healthy, stable, sustainable China-S Korea ties

SEOUL—Foreign Minister Wang Yi said yesterday that China and South Korea should demonstrate strategic vision and work to ensure the healthy, stable and sustainable development of bilateral relations.

Wang, also a member of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of China (CPC) Central

Committee, made the remarks when meeting with South Korean Foreign Minister Cho Hyun.

Wang expressed hope that South Korea, based on its fundamental interests, pursues an independent foreign policy and develops relations with other countries in parallel without conflict. — Xinhua



Foreign Minister Wang Yi, also a member of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Committee, meets with South Korean Foreign Minister Cho Hyun in Seoul, South Korea, yesterday. — Xinhua

China says EU's probe into e-commerce giant JD.com unlawful

BEIJING — China's Ministry of Justice said yesterday that the European Union's recent cross-border investigation into Chinese e-commerce giant JD.com under its Foreign Subsidies Regulation (FSR) has constituted unlawful extraterritorial jurisdiction.

The ministry said in a statement that no organization or individual may comply with or assist in implementing the EU's unlawful extraterritorial jurisdiction measures.

The ministry's statement came after the European Commission announced an investigation into JD.com's proposed takeover of German retailer Ceconomy in May.

In the statement, the ministry said the conclusion followed an investigation conducted under China's rules on countering foreign states' unlawful extraterritorial jurisdiction measures, which were issued in April this year.

According to the rules, the Chinese government has the authority to take countermeasures in response to extraterritorial jurisdiction measures by a foreign country that violate international law and the basic norms governing

international relations and that harm China's sovereignty, security and development interests, or the legitimate rights and interests of Chinese citizens and organizations.

In May, citing the same set of rules, the ministry said that the EU's probe into Chinese security check company Nuctech constituted unlawful extraterritorial jurisdiction.

A spokesperson with the Ministry of Justice yesterday said the EU's probe, under the bloc's FSR effective since 2023, has arbitrarily demanded broad and unnecessary information located in China, which is a serious violation of the international rule of law.

"China will resolutely take countermeasures in accordance with the law if the EU side were to insist on the wrong course," the spokesperson said.

The spokesperson urged the EU to immediately correct its wrong practices, stop abusing the FSR as a tool, and foster a fair, impartial and predictable environment for companies investing and operating in the EU market. — Xinhua

Lives saved, lives changed – Chinese doctors mark their days in Africa

Analysis by Xinhua writers Chen Chen, Hua Hongli, Liu Jie

NAIROBI – For three years, Seif Amour Rajab could barely open his mouth.

Seif was 16 when he fell from a mango tree and fractured his jaw. On Tanzania's remote Pemba Island, the hospital could do little. The jaw slowly locked shut; eating became a struggle, then speech. The once-active teenager withdrew into silence.

It was not until last December, after a four-hour operation by Chinese doctors, that Seif could finally open his mouth and speak with ease again. "Thank you, Chinese doctors!" he said.

The surgeons who treated Seif belong to a mission now in its seventh decade. Since China sent its first medical team abroad in 1963, to Algeria, some 30,000 Chinese medical workers have served in 76 countries and regions, treating about 290 million patients, most of them in Africa.

The cooperation is still expanding. Under the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation Beijing Action Plan (2025-2027), China plans to send 2,000 medical personnel and public health experts to Africa, build joint medical and traditional medicine centers, and support the development of the Africa Center for Disease Control and Prevention headquarters and its sub-regional centers.

LIVES PULLED BACK

Last January, five children aged three to seven underwent congenital heart surgery at the Chinese-built Jakaya Kikwete Cardiac Institute in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. The operations used a minimally invasive technique pioneered by Chinese doctors, avoiding open-heart surgery or radiation.

When Husna Shabaan Kingwande learned that the operation on her three-year-old son, Ikram, had succeeded, the young mother wept for joy.

In June that year, the team behind those operations, the 27th Chinese medical team in Tanzania, lost its leader. Anesthesiologist Zhang Junqiao saw a woman drowning off a beach in Dar es Salaam and plunged in without hesitation. He held her above the water and gave her his own life jacket. She made it to safety. Zhang never made it back to shore.

In the six decades of the program, more than 50 members of China's medical teams abroad have, like Zhang, died far from their homeland.

Half a century ago, Mei Gengnian, who led China's first medical team to Ethiopia, was killed in a road accident on his way back from a disaster-relief mission. In the Ethiopian city of Jimma, one family has tended his grave for two generations. Mei's son later joined the Ethiopian teams himself.

SKILLS LEFT BEHIND

Chinese doctors treat patients – and teach local doctors to treat them. Since 1963, Chinese medical teams have trained more than 100,000 local health workers.

One evening last November, a two-year-old boy was rushed to Abdulla Mzee Hospital on Pemba Island after swallowing a coin more than 48 hours earlier.

Such emergencies once meant a transfer off the island, or a wait for visiting specialists. That evening, local doctor Harun Maisara Mahkum extracted the coin himself for the first time, guided by He Zhilong, an otolaryngologist from the 35th Chinese

medical team.

"I was nervous," Mahkum recalled. "But Doctor He trusted me to lead."

Mahkum, now 30, has worked alongside Chinese medical teams for eight years. "Before the Chinese doctors came, we could not perform surgeries like this on our own. We depended on outside specialists," he said. "Now, I can act immediately in emergencies. It is empowering, and it changes the way we serve our community."

In Dar es Salaam, a training session on the technology behind Ikram's heart operation drew about 50 Tanzanian cardiologists. In a country where roughly one in 100 newborns has a congenital heart defect, this is a lifesaving technology, Tanzanian pediatrician Theophyllus Ludovick said.

Such teaching now reaches across the continent. On July 27, the China-Africa partnership on minimally invasive medicine was launched in Addis Ababa, where Ethiopian centers for robot-assisted surgery training and for laparoscopic techniques were inaugurated.

"These two training centers are only a starting point," said Liu Longfei, vice president of Xiangya Hospital of Central South University, which leads the program.

HEARTS DRAWN TOGETHER

Over decades of working side by side, trust has grown between the medical teams and the communities.

In Afanoya, a village outside Cameroon's capital Yaounde, Marceline Mbo and her two children were already seated outside the health center by six in the morning. She had come to a free clinic run by the Chinese medical team – for her toothache and eye problem, and for

her children's malaria. By sunrise, the line behind her had grown long.

It was one of nearly 200 free clinics Chinese medical teams have held in Cameroon since 1975. Over 50 years, 24 teams have treated more than 3.3 million patients there.

For some, the care has meant a life restored. Liliane Mfoumou, 72, had suffered back pain for years until a Chinese acupuncturist treated her during a village visit. "Today, I go to the farm regularly and do other activities. I feel no pain," she said.

In Dakar, Senegal, members of the 21st Chinese medical team spent a day off at an orphanage, where a classroom became a clinic. There, 84 children aged 2 to 14 moved between specialists, and each left with a health file of their own.

"The consultation today is not the end," said team head Lan Jinkai. "We will continue to follow the children's health conditions."

"This helps us know whether the children have health problems that we may not have been aware of," said Fatou Ba, a staff member at the orphanage.

Chinese and African hospitals have formed dozens of pairing partnerships and jointly built more than 20 key specialty centers, while free-clinic campaigns such as "Bright Journey" for cataracts have benefited hundreds of thousands of patients.

"China does not simply give; it shares. It does not dictate; it proposes. It does not impose itself; it cooperates," said Cameroonian Health Minister Manaouda Malachie.

Seif, now 20, has found his confidence again. "He is talented in playing football, which he now enjoys again," his guardian Mohamed said with relief, watching him race across the pitch. Enditem — Xinhua

Indonesian family finds 84-year-old woman alive days after earthquake



This handout picture taken and released yesterday by Indonesia's Search and Rescue Agency (BASARNAS) shows an infant with their feet bandaged being handed over by a medical worker in East Manggarai, following a 7.7-magnitude earthquake that struck Indonesia's Flores island on August 15.

– AFP

SIKKA, Indonesia – A paralysed 84-year-old woman has been found alive three days after a strong earthquake flattened her home on an Indonesian island, an official said yesterday, as the death toll rose to 73.

More than 900 people were injured and nearly 60,000 displaced by the 7.7-magnitude quake that struck off Indonesia's Flores island on Saturday, according to the BNPB disaster mitigation agency.

Paulina Pobi's house on a small island north of Flores was one of hundreds knocked down by the earthquake, with the 84-year-old buried alive under collapsed bamboo walls.

She had remained there until her family, who initially thought she had

been rescued and taken to a shelter, returned to look for her on Tuesday.

"Because she was paralysed, she couldn't move or speak, so it wasn't until the fourth day that her family finally found her," local official Rudolfus Riba told AFP.

"She is in good health; there were no injuries at all. She was just a bit weak because she hadn't eaten or drunk anything for days," Rudolfus said.

"It feels unreal, almost like a miracle."

More than 3,000 aftershocks have been recorded since Saturday, at least 86 of them strong enough to be felt by residents, according to the BMKG geological agency.

The tremors have made many

too afraid to return to their damaged homes.

The BNPB said nearly 400 tonnes of aid, including food, water and medicines, have been delivered since Saturday.

Indonesia frequently experiences earthquakes because it lies on the Pacific "Ring of Fire", a zone of intense seismic and volcanic activity that stretches from Japan through Southeast Asia and across the Pacific Ocean.

In 2004, a powerful 9.1-magnitude earthquake off the coast of Sumatra triggered a tsunami that killed about 220,000 people across the region, including around 170,000 in Indonesia.

– AFP

Indonesia seizes 2.6 tonnes of meth in major bust

JAKARTA – Indonesia has seized 2.6 tonnes of liquid methamphetamine hidden on a Tanzanian-flagged vessel in one of the country's biggest drug busts, with 10 crew members arrested, a senior narcotics official said.

The National Narcotics Agency said in a statement late Tuesday it had received intelligence that a vessel sailing from Sarawak, Malaysia through the Andaman Sea may be carrying narcotics to Indonesia.

The agency, in a joint operation with customs officials, intercepted the MV Rain Maker – sailing under a fake name – late Monday near Bengkalis in Riau province.

"The inspection of the vessel found 2.6 tonnes of methamphetamine, or liquid meth, stored in eight water barrels and a water tank," narcotics agency official Roy Hardi Siahaan said.

Sniffer dogs also found more than 1.5 million illegal cigarettes on board, the agency said.

Authorities arrested 10 crew members, all Myanmar nationals.

Last year, authorities announced Indonesia's biggest-ever drug bust with the seizure of two tonnes of crystal meth hidden on a fishing boat sailing from the Andaman Sea to Batam Island.

Monday's bust was the second involving a Tanzanian-flagged vessel intercepted in the area this month.

On August 8, Indonesian authorities seized 1.3 tonnes of ketamine from a ship sailing in waters around the Riau Islands near Singapore.

Eight crew members aboard the vessel – seven from Myanmar and one from China's region of Taiwan – were arrested.

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

– AFP

Thailand declares disaster zone in northern province amid flooding

BANGKOK – Thailand has declared a disaster zone in Nan and put two other northern provinces on alert as heavy rain and flash flooding cut off roads and forced evacuations, the government said yesterday.

Thai Prime Minister Anutin Charnvirakul continued to monitor the situation from Australia, where he is on an official visit, and ordered all agencies, including the armed forces, to join relief efforts, said government spokesperson Rachada Dhnadirek.

Anutin has instructed that response teams and heavy machinery be

deployed to high-risk areas to respond as soon as an incident occurs, with a focus on draining water from areas that flood frequently, Rachada said.

She said the prime minister emphasized that lives and safety must come first, particularly for the elderly, bedridden patients, children, and people in high-risk areas, calling for a rapid survey of affected areas and close monitoring of rainfall and water levels to allow warnings if volumes rise.

Authorities warned residents across northern, northeastern, and central Thailand to watch for

flash floods, runoff, and landslides through tomorrow.

Separately yesterday, Thai Deputy Prime Minister Yodchanan Wongsawat, who oversees flood response in the north, issued an urgent directive to the governors of Nan, Phayao, and Lamphun provinces to make comprehensive flood preparations.

The order follows a Meteorological Department outlook for August forecasting thunderstorms, locally heavy rain, and strong winds that could trigger flash floods, runoff, and rivers bursting their banks.

– Xinhua

Australia, Thailand agree to crack down on transnational crime

CANBERRA – Australia and Thailand have pledged to crack down on scam centers and criminal networks following a meeting between the two countries' prime ministers in Canberra yesterday.

Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese and Thai Prime Minister Anutin Charnvirakul, who is on an official visit to Australia, said in a joint statement that the two countries have agreed to deepen cooperation to address transnational crime.

The statement said that both

leaders expressed grave concern about the growing sophistication and proliferation of online scam operations and agreed to strengthen collaboration between the two sides' law enforcement, customs, immigration and financial intelligence agencies to disrupt criminal networks, financial flows and supply chains that enable cyber-enabled fraud and the trafficking of illicit commodities, including narcotics and illicit tobacco.

In addition to the statement on

transnational crime, the leaders also issued a joint statement on deepening economic engagement in which they committed to pursue opportunities in agriculture, food, clean energy, healthcare and resources, among others, to expand two-way trade and investment.

Thailand was Australia's 11th-largest trading partner in 2025, with two-way trade in goods and services worth A\$32.4 billion (about US\$22.9 billion), according to the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade.

– Xinhua

Thai teen in Pattaya suitcase murder died of suffocation: police

BANGKOK – A 17-year-old Thai girl whose body was found in a suitcase in the seaside resort of Pattaya in June died of suffocation, police told AFP yesterday.

An Australian man, 45-year-old Simon Peter Carman, was charged with murder following the discovery of her body near a railway track.

"We received the autopsy reports from the doctor yesterday that she died of suffocation," Pattaya police chief Anek Srathongyoo said.

"We will add the cause of the death into our investigation reports, and hope we can submit a case to state prosecutors by this Friday," he added.

Carman remains in custody after being arrested at Bangkok's Suvarnabhumi Airport on June 26

as he prepared to board a flight back to Australia, after the victim's friend had reported her missing.

Police said CCTV footage showed him entering a condominium in Pattaya with the girl in the early hours of June 25, and leaving that evening carrying a large black suitcase.

He allegedly loaded the suitcase onto a motorcycle and rode to a grassy area near a railway line in the city, where it was found early on June 27.

Inside was the victim's body, which bore signs of violence.

Popular with foreign tourists, Pattaya is known for its beaches and a nightlife scene that has long drawn scrutiny over sex tourism.

– AFP

Philippine authorities verifying 27 severe weather-related deaths

MANILA – Philippine authorities are verifying reports of 27 deaths as severe weather continues to affect nearly 5.4 million people in the Southeast Asian country, the Office of Civil Defense (OCD) said yesterday.

The number of injured from recent extreme rainfall triggered by tropical cyclones and the southwest monsoon stood at 17,

with one person still missing, said the OCD, adding that a total of 206 houses were destroyed and 1,787 others damaged.

Around 461 evacuation centers are sheltering over 12,000 families, while assistance provided to the affected communities has reached 797 million pesos (about US\$13 million), said OCD information officer Diego Mariano.

– Xinhua



Protesters hold up signs as they listen to speakers during a rally against the current government across the street from the National Diet in Tokyo yesterday.

– AFP

Kim's sister says 'unaware' of reported Kim-Trump communication

Claire Lee and Jihye Shin

SEOUL – The powerful sister of Kim Jong Un said yesterday she was “unaware” of reported communication between her brother and Donald Trump, after the US president hinted at contact with the North Korean leader, but said ties between the two remained “excellent”.

Kim Yo Jong's statement came hours after Washington and Seoul announced their annual exercises would end about a week earlier than planned following an order from Trump to scale them back.

Trump said on Sunday that he had told the Pentagon to curtail the annual Ulchi Freedom Shield exercises – a day before they started – citing his “good relationship” with North Korean leader Kim Jong Un.

Asked on Monday whether Kim had responded to his requests for a conversation, Trump said: “Yeah, he has.”

But Kim's sister, Kim Yo Jong, said yesterday she was unaware of any such contact between her brother and Trump.

“Regarding the recent news from Washington about communication between the leaders of North Korea and the United States, I am completely unaware of it,” she said in a statement.

“It is likely the only matter concerning our top leadership's foreign policy that I am unaware of.”

Kim Yo Jong nevertheless said her brother still had “good memories and feelings” about Trump and that the relationship between the two leaders remains “excellent”.

Earlier yesterday, Seoul's military said the drills would wrap up tomorrow, not on August 27 as originally planned.

“We have decided to adjust the UFS exercise period to run from the 17th to the 21st,” South Korea's Joint Chiefs of Staff said in a statement.

The decision was made “at the suggestion of the US side”, it added.

The Pentagon said the “substantially reduced” drills would “preserve essential readiness and... (cause) no degradation to US training objectives”.

The exercises are designed to prepare for a possible attack by North Korea.

They were understood to consist of two phases: the first, focused on defending against potential North Korean threats, was due to run until tomorrow; and the second, focused on a counteroffensive, from August 24 to 27.

The second phase is now understood to have been scrapped.

Kim Yo Jong, however, dismissed the reduction, saying: “we do not consider it worth commenting on and find it completely uninteresting.”

She said reducing the scale or duration of the exercise did not change their “provocative and aggressive” character.

Nuclear-armed North Korea has long voiced outrage at the exercises, considering them dress rehearsals for an invasion.

Yesterday's early morning commentary by the state-run Korean Central News Agency said they pose “the most immediate and open threat” to North Korea and “regional security”.

That commentary did not mention Trump's order or his desire to resume talks with Kim, with whom he has hinted at being in contact.

‘Much safer’

In the initial announcement on his Truth Social platform, Trump described the drills as unfriendly towards a country that had been respectful to him.

South Korea's Foreign Minister Cho Hyun told lawmakers yesterday that Seoul had not been informed in advance of Trump's plan to downsize them.

“Neither our government nor US government officials knew in advance what President Trump revealed via Truth Social,” Cho said.

Trump has insisted that he is making the situation “much safer” through his ties with Kim.

“There has been persistent speculation that Washington could seek renewed talks with Pyongyang ahead of the November US midterm elections,” Yang Moo-jin, former president of the University of North Korean Studies, told AFP.

“For Trump, a meeting with... Kim Jong Un could offer a chance to secure a foreign-policy legacy.”

The Wall Street Journal reported on Tuesday, citing unnamed US officials, that Trump is pushing aides to set up a meeting with Kim as soon as this autumn.

“Reducing exercises could have a positive impact on the possibility of US-North Korea dialogue,” Park Won-gon, a professor at Ewha Womans University, told AFP.

“The suspension of joint exercises has always been a prerequisite for North Korea to engage in dialogue with the US,” he added.

Trump and Kim met three times in his first spell in the White House, but they have not held talks during his second term.

The United States stations about 28,500 troops in South Korea to bolster the country's defences, a legacy of the 1950-53 Korean War that ended with an armistice rather than a peace treaty.

Trump has repeatedly criticised longstanding US alliances, casting doubt on Washington's commitment to security in East Asia and alarming regional partners. – AFP

Pakistan govt to challenge court on moving ex-PM Khan to private hospital

ISLAMABAD – Pakistan's government will challenge the Supreme Court's order to move jailed former prime minister Imran Khan to a private hospital for medical checks, the law minister said late Tuesday.

The ruling “does not fall within the four corners of the law”, Law Minister Azam Nazeer Tarar said in a video statement shared on X by state broadcaster Radio Pakistan.

The government was submitting a petition for a review that would call for 73-year-old Khan's medical tests to be conducted at a government hospital, instead of a private facility as the court had ordered.

“Until such time as evidence or material is available to show that government hospitals are unable to provide this type of treatment or cannot do so, such arrangements are normally not made,” Tarar said.

The three-bench court decided Tuesday that the ex-cricket captain would be moved “within the next two days” to Shifa International Hospital in the capital Islamabad.

He would also be allowed to meet with his family once a week and speak to his sons via telephone twice weekly, the court order stated.

Khan's personal physician Faisal Sultan, and sister and medical doctor Uzma Khan, “shall be permitted to remain associated with the prisoner's medical examination and treatment”.

The judges warned against public gatherings within the hospital grounds or the use of information about Khan's health for political gain, cautioning any breaches could lead to the order being reversed.



Pakistan's former prime minister Imran Khan talk with media representatives at a hospital in Lahore on November 4, 2022, a day after an assassination attempt on him during his long march near Wazirabad, Pakistan. – AFP

The next hearing was set for September 16.

Khan and his wife, Bushra Bibi, were sentenced late last year to 17 years behind bars after being charged with a slew of crimes.

He insists the charges were politically motivated.

The former prime minister received eye treatment at a hospital this year, with his family and lawyer saying at the time that he had lost most of the vision in his right eye.

Khan was prime minister from 2018 to 2022 before being removed in a no-confidence vote during a political crisis over tensions between his government and the powerful military establishment.

His arrest triggered nationwide protests in May 2023. – AFP

Cambodian opposition leader's daughter defends govt role

PHNOM PENH – The daughter of Cambodia's opposition leader defended her new role in the government that once detained her father, telling AFP yesterday it had “nothing to do” with him.

Kem Monovithya was appointed on Monday as a “special envoy” to Prime Minister Hun Manet with a rank equal to a government minister, just months after her father Kem Sokha was pardoned.

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

The leader of the court-dissolved Cambodia National Rescue Party (CNRP), Kem Sokha was pardoned and released from house arrest in May but is still banned from running for office.

Analysts say Kem Monovithya's government role signalled a further weakening of the opposition – and her father's political neutralisation.

“This role has nothing to do with my father, the opposition or the ruling party,” she told AFP in an email.

Her appointment followed a meeting between her, Kem Sokha and Hun Sen at the weekend, while she also met with Hun Manet last week.

“Political differences are one thing; our responsibility to Cambodia is another,” she said.

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.

Kem Monovithya said her new position would focus on “international affairs”, with an emphasis on economic development and “safeguarding Cambodia's territorial integrity” after border areas were “illegally occupied by Thai military forces”.

More than 20,000 Cambodians remain displaced from areas along the border with Thailand now controlled by Thai forces following military clashes last year, Phnom Penh has said.

Hun Manet said yesterday that Kem Monovithya would help with diplomacy abroad, citing the border dispute with Thailand.

“I ask that people look beyond politics and judge this by the nature of the role and my actions,” Kem Monovithya said.

Former senior CNRP leader Mu Sochua, who lives in the United States, said the position for Kem Monovithya likely reflected an effort by the government to “address international scrutiny” and “demonstrate responsiveness to external concerns”.

Western nations, including the United States, have long called for Kem Sokha's full release and restoration of his political rights.

“The Kem family has negotiated for position in the government and their own freedom,” Mu Sochua told AFP via email.

But “political prisoners” and jailed local opposition members were not included in the “political deal”, she said.

Around 50 opposition politicians and political activists are currently jailed on charges related to their public statements or activism, according to local rights group Licadho. – AFP



South Korean soldiers take part in an anti-terror drill at a hotel in Seoul yesterday, on the sidelines of a major South Korea-US joint military exercise named Ulchi Freedom Shield. Annual war games between South Korea and the United States will end around a week earlier than planned, both countries said yesterday, after US President Donald Trump ordered the “inappropriate and hostile” drills scaled back. – AFP

Israel army admits firing on car in death of 5-year-old Hind Rajab

Alice Chancellor

JERUSALEM – The Israeli military yesterday admitted its troops fired on a car carrying five-year-old Hind Rajab in Gaza in 2024, saying it had ordered a criminal investigation into the killing which drew international outrage.

Hind Rajab's body was recovered from a car riddled with bullets in Gaza City days after she was last heard from in a desperate, hours-long phone call to the Palestinian Red Crescent on January 29, 2024.

The Israeli military had previously denied its troops were present in the area near the incident.

"Following review of the findings and due to alleged failures in the coordination of the movement of the Palestine Red Crescent ambulance, it has been decided to initiate a criminal investigation of the incident by Military Police Criminal Investigation Division," the military said yesterday.

Alongside the Hind Rajab case, the military published reviews into four other high-profile incidents in Gaza, saying it was also launching a criminal probe into the 2025 killings of 15 Palestinians including medics and humanitarian personnel.

Hind Rajab had made the emergency call after her family's car came under fire during an attempt to flee Gaza City amid an Israeli advance in the Palestinian territory's north.

Her body was eventually recovered along with those of six relatives and two Red Crescent rescue workers sent to find her.

Her death sparked international outrage and calls for an independent investigation, and the original audio recordings of her emergency call were incorporated into the Oscar-nominated feature film "The Voice of Hind Rajab".

Upon publishing its review into the incident yesterday, the Israeli military said its findings indicated troops had "fired at a vehicle that was approaching them while travelling contrary to the advance notice" that had been given to residents in the area.

"As a result of the fire, five of the vehicle's passengers were killed, and two survived: Hind Rajab and her cousin Layan Hamada," it said.

The military said that following a call to rescue authorities in which the girls participated, the movement of a Palestine Red Crescent ambulance had been coordinated in order to evacuate the casualties.

"However, according to the allegations raised, upon the ambulance's arrival at the scene of the incident, a shell was fired toward it, resulting in the deaths of the two paramedics travelling in it," it added.

The Hind Rajab Foundation, a Brussels-based legal organisation seeking to address alleged Israeli violations in Gaza, said it had "no confidence" in the move by the Israeli military.

"These reported investigations, even if they do occur, should not be mistaken for a genuine step toward justice," it said in a statement, adding that Israel's internal investigations were "fundamentally flawed and cannot be regarded as credible mechanisms of accountability".

2025 killing of medics

The military said criminal investigations would not be launched into three other incidents it reviewed, involving the killing of employees from World Central Kitchen and Doctors Without Borders (MSF), both of which drew international scrutiny.

It said it had ordered a criminal investigation into the death of 15

Palestinians, including medical personnel, in southern Gaza in March 2025, in another incident that drew international condemnation.

The UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) said at the time that a team of first responders was killed by Israeli forces on March 23, 2025 and that other emergency and aid teams were hit one after another over several hours while searching for their missing colleagues.

Those killed included eight Red Crescent staff, six members of the Gaza civil defence agency and one employee of the UN agency for Palestinian refugees.

The bodies were found buried near Gaza's southernmost city of Rafah in what OCHA described as a mass grave.

"On March 23, 2025, three shooting incidents occurred toward different rescue vehicles, including a fire truck, ambulances, and a UN vehicle, during an ambush carried out by IDF troops against operatives of the Hamas terrorist organisation" the military said.

It said 15 Palestinians were killed including medical personnel and paramedics, claiming "six of those killed were identified as belonging to Hamas".

It said troops had then decided to "crush the vehicles and to cover the bodies with metal mesh."

"Following review of the findings, having found that the firing conducted during the incident raises a reasonable suspicion of criminal misconduct, it has been decided to initiate a criminal investigation of the incident," it said.

The UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Volker Türk, said at the time that the incident raised "further concerns over the commission of war crimes by the Israeli military".

– AFP

ICC says US sanctions 'flagrant attack' on court independence

THE HAGUE – The International Criminal Court (ICC) yesterday lashed out at the United States after Washington slapped sanctions on ICC President Tomoko Akane, calling it a "flagrant attack" on the court's independence.

The US sanctioned Akane of Japan and trial lawyer Abdoulaye Seye of Senegal on Tuesday, as part of Washington's campaign against what it calls a "corrupt and fatally politicised" body.

The EU's top officials immediately threw their support behind Akane, saying they "stand firmly" with the ICC president and her top officials.

In twin statements on X, European Commission chief Ursula von der Leyen and European Council head António Costa the court "must be able to act independently and without external pressure."

Germany echoed the stance, with its foreign ministry calling the court's independence "of central importance", while the Netherlands, which hosts the court at The Hague, also voiced its disapproval.

Slamming the US move, Spain described the court as "the cornerstone of the international criminal justice system".

The court said in a statement: "These sanctions are a flagrant attack against the independence of an impartial judicial institution."

"Such measures targeting judges, prosecutors and staff... undermine the rule of law," it added.

Washington's latest move follows sanctions it imposed on several ICC officials, seen as largely in response to the court's investigations involving Israel, a US ally.

Japan also objected to the sanctions, saying the country has "consistently supported the ICC... in its efforts to prosecute and punish the most serious crimes of concern to the international community and to uphold the rule of law."

The measures are "very unfortunate," foreign ministry press secretary Toshihiro Kitamura said in a statement.

Japan is the biggest funder of the ICC and a close US ally – which is not a party to the international treaty that established the court.

US Secretary of State Marco Rubio earlier said in a statement, without providing examples, that the sanctioned "individuals have directly engaged in efforts by the ICC to investigate, arrest, detain, or prosecute officials whose government has not consented to ICC jurisdiction".

Established in 2002, the ICC prosecutes individuals accused of the gravest atrocities and acts as a last resort when countries do not have adequate legal systems to ensure accountability.

Israeli support

President Donald Trump's administration has already imposed sanctions against officials of the ICC, which issued in 2024 an arrest warrant for Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu over the war in Gaza.

The measures bar them from entering the US and from carrying out transactions in the US financial system.

In an X post Tuesday, Netanyahu applauded the US sanctions and called the ICC "a kangaroo court that cloaks its abuse of power in the language of international law".

Last month, Washington launched a major diplomatic offensive against the ICC, accusing it of "threatening" Americans and calling on partners to withdraw from the body – a move already announced by Chad and Venezuela, which has aligned with the United States since the capture and ouster of leader Nicolás Maduro.

The ICC expressed concern over those withdrawals, asserting that such countries risked undermining the collective pursuit of justice.

'Assault'

The US signed the Rome Statute establishing the ICC but never ratified the treaty. Israel, Russia and China are not ICC members either.

"The Trump Administration has been clear: the International Criminal Court is a corrupt and fatally politicised supranational court that has maliciously abused its authority and exceeded its mandate. We will not tolerate its assault on state sovereignty," Rubio's statement said.

Last week, four human rights groups sued Trump in a New York court over his sanctions targeting the ICC, saying the measures block victims of war crimes from pursuing justice.

In 2023, the ICC issued an arrest warrant for Russian President Vladimir Putin over the war in Ukraine, prompting Moscow to issue its own arrest warrants for senior court officials.

These included Akane, 70, an ICC judge since 2018 who was elected as the court's president in March 2024.

"Even if one judge were to die, we are easily replaceable, so there is really no value in targeting us," she said after the Russian announcement.

– AFP



Mourners march with the body of Palestinian police officer Ayman Jundiya during his funeral procession, after he was killed in an Israeli strike on the municipal police headquarters in Gaza City, in Gaza City, yesterday. Gaza health officials said the August 19 Israeli strike killed nine people, with the Israeli military saying it targeted a Hamas commander in that strike and another further south. Attacks in the Palestinian territory have continued in recent days, despite a renewed push by the United States to advance a long-term Gaza peace plan.

– AFP

Oldest human brain cells grown in lab 'recorded passage of time'

Daniel Lawler

PARIS — Peppercorn-sized clumps of human brain cells grown in a lab for a record seven years aged similarly to those inside our heads, suggesting they “recorded the passage of time,” scientists said yesterday.

These tiny clumps called organoids are grown from stem cells by scientists around the world in the hopes of uncovering the mysteries of our brain — and to test new medicine without having to use animals such as mice.

Normally these organoids live for a few months, meaning they can only offer a window into the earliest stages of human brains, which take nearly 20 years to fully develop.

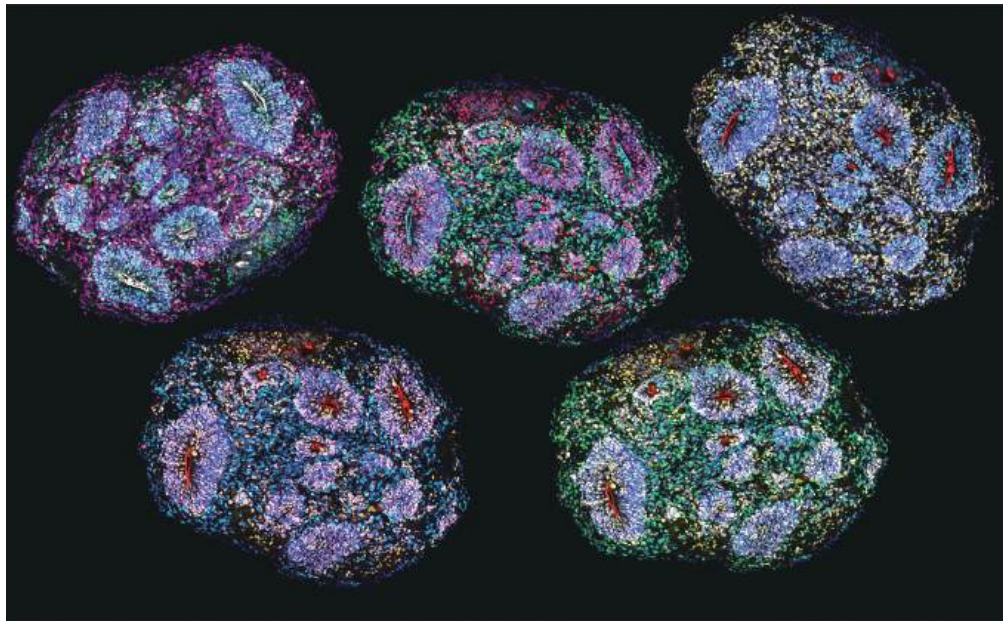
So a US-led team of researchers grew some for around seven years, making them the “oldest ever”, Paola Arlotta, the senior author of a new study describing the experiment, told AFP.

They discovered that the brain organoids continued to change and mature over the years, despite never having been inside an embryo, let alone a body.

“The brain can continue to develop outside the context of a person for this unprecedented amount of time,” said Arlotta, a Harvard University professor.

The scientists hope this will help shed light on how a range of disorders such as autism and schizophrenia first emerge and then progress later in life.

The study, published in the journal



This handout image obtained from the press service of Springer Nature Publishing Group yesterday shows a view taken in March 2023 in the Arlotta Lab, Department of Stem Cell and Regenerative Biology of Harvard University, of brain organoids, human brain cells grown in a lab by Harvard researchers. — AFP

Nature, said the organoids “recorded the passage of time and retain a memory of the developmental steps already performed”.

This does not mean organoids have memories like we tend to think of them — such as recalling something from childhood — but simply that their past is “engraved” on a cellular level, Arlotta emphasised.

Organoids are “biological models” or “avatars” for human brain cells that are far less complex and do not receive sensory

input, she added.

Scientists widely agree that organoids are not capable of consciousness or other higher-order brain functions.

Experiment ‘warped time’

The researchers analysed their ageing organoids with three different kinds of recently developed genetic “clocks” that can roughly determine the biological age of cells.

They all showed that the organoids

changed over time in similar ways to normal brain cells.

To further confirm their theory, the scientists carried out what Arlotta described as a “crazy experiment”.

They mixed cells that had been developing for a year together with others that were only two weeks old, creating a “chimera”.

The young cells behaved as normal.

But the older cells “jumped ahead a whole chunk of development” and started making neurons that normally take around four months, Arlotta said.

This effectively “warped time” for brain development, which was “super cool”, she added.

In the future, it could be possible to use this technique to rapidly speed up the development of certain brain cells, Arlotta speculated.

The previous record for the oldest grown brain organoids was a little under two years, according to the study.

Unlike the brains inside our heads, these organoids do not have a body that can get sick and die.

So could brain organoids grown and maintained in a lab hypothetically outlive humans?

“Nobody really knows,” Arlotta said, adding she suspected organoids could hypothetically last a little longer.

That will not be the case for the brain organoids used for the new research, which were recently destroyed. — AFP

Merck and Moderna’s tailored cancer drug curbs melanoma recurrence in trial

WASHINGTON, DC — US drugmakers Merck and Moderna said yesterday an experimental melanoma drug that delivers treatment tailored to a patient’s specific tumour prevented the cancer from returning in a large clinical trial.

Called “intismeran autogene,” it is based on the same messenger ribonucleic acid technology behind COVID-19 vaccines. Researchers have been working on developing mRNA treatments against cancer, but this is the first time one has shown positive results in a Phase 3 trial.

When delivered along with pembrolizumab, an immunotherapy drug and the current standard of care, intismeran autogene prevented melanoma recurrence and prevented the cancer from spreading to other organs, the companies said in a statement.

The news sent shares in Moderna soaring 128 percent to US\$143 while Merck’s stock was up more than 10 percent to US\$149.50.

The trial lasted approximately a year and involved 1,137 patients who, following surgical removal of their cancers, were randomised into groups, with two-thirds receiving the new treatment plus pembrolizumab, while the rest received pembrolizumab alone.

The companies said they would present their data at an upcoming international conference and begin filings with regulators for approval.

“Today’s results represent a

landmark moment for adjuvant melanoma treatment,” said Professor Georgina Long, the study’s principal investigator and medical director of Melanoma Institute Australia, in the statement.

“Intismeran in combination with pembrolizumab has the potential to establish a new treatment paradigm in the adjuvant melanoma setting, helping patients remain cancer-free for longer.”

The treatment works by taking a sample of the patient’s tumour and identifying its unique mutational signature, or “fingerprint,” then using messenger RNA technology to fight it.

Messenger RNA technology uses synthetic molecular instructions wrapped in tiny fat bubbles to teach the body how to make specific proteins.

The technology came to the fore during the COVID-19 pandemic, when Moderna and Pfizer developed vaccines that were highly effective against serious forms of the illness.

Melanoma is one of the deadliest forms of skin cancer, with more than 330,000 new cases diagnosed worldwide in 2022.

“Together with Merck, we are now studying intismeran in combination with pembrolizumab and other anti-cancer therapies, and as a monotherapy, across multiple tumour types and stages of disease, including melanoma, lung, bladder and kidney cancers,” Moderna CEO Stephane Bancel said in a statement. — AFP

Burnham launches bid to get rough sleepers off streets by Christmas

Jo Biddle

LONDON — New UK Prime Minister Andy Burnham unveiled plans yesterday to offer those sleeping rough a way off the streets by Christmas, as part of his bid to curb homelessness.

“No one should have to bed down in a doorway or outside a station. But we’ve seen it for so long that it feels like Westminster has started to accept it,” Burnham said in a statement, referring to the UK parliament.

The announcement comes a month after Burnham replaced Keir Starmer as prime minister, and builds on his promise on his first day in office to end rough sleeping.

His government is now setting out the next steps to achieve that aim, with emergency accommodation and long-term housing support to be put in place across England this winter.

Burnham expressed his disbelief that the fifth-largest economy in the world cannot “get our own people off the streets”, writing in *The Guardian*: “I don’t believe it for a minute.”

Under the programme, areas facing the highest levels of homelessness and housing pressure will receive the largest share of a boosted £442 million (US\$666 million) in funding.

The number of rough sleepers in England reached a record 4,793 in 2025, according to government figures.

Rough sleepers — those sleeping outdoors — are a minority of England’s total homeless, estimated at 382,000 in 2025 by leading charity Shelter.

This larger figure includes those who manage to stay off the streets but lack a permanent residence or security of tenure, and includes families and children.

The figures show little sign of budging, with the Institute for Public Policy Research (IPPR) think tank warning earlier this year that the numbers could increase by 25 percent by 2030.

Burnham cited efforts to move rough sleepers into temporary accommodation during the

COVID-19 pandemic, saying in his statement that “we can do it again”.

He also vowed to end rough sleeping during his almost-decade long stint as mayor of the northern city of Manchester, but ultimately failed despite some initial success.

Helping ‘thousands’

He pledged on Monday that the government would convene the first national summit dedicated to tackling rough sleeping later in the year.

Burnham also stressed it will be up to local leaders including mayors to drive the action before Christmas.

He said during a visit to a homeless charity in northern Newcastle that the programme would be funded from the existing housing ministry budget.

But he acknowledged: “The government money may not fully get us there.”

“I’m saying to wider society, faith organisations, let’s see if we can do this together. Let’s see if Britain can do this.”

The government said the funding package would not only provide immediate accommodation, but also support the creation of more than 1,000 permanent homes over the next three years.

Housing Secretary Angela Rayner said the government was moving “urgently” following Burnham’s pledge.

“This funding will help thousands of people leave the streets behind, move into secure homes and get the support they need to rebuild their lives,” she said.

Charities broadly welcomed the announcement, but there was scepticism from other political parties.

The opposition Conservatives housing spokesman James Cleverly said it had been presented “without any plan for delivery”.

“And as with many of his other commitments, there is very little detail on how this one will be paid for,” he added. — AFP

Lights out, crowds gone: Havana waits for what comes next



Empty tables at a restaurant in Old Havana are seen amid a dearth of tourists in Havana on June 9, 2026.

– AFP

Andrew Beatty

HAVANA – Once a byword for joyful excess, Havana has been hollowed by blackouts, departures and deep uncertainty about its future.

There are so few cars in Cuba’s capital that it is possible to cross the Malecón, the once bustling seafront promenade, without looking.

At night, the narrow cobbled streets of Old Havana are enveloped in inky black, devoid of power and virtually deserted.

After a seven-month-long US fuel embargo and rolling power cuts, locals joke that they are sick of seeing the stars.

There are occasional stirrings in the shadows.

Rake-thin men, their shorts made many sizes too big by hunger, pick through mountains of trash for food, plastic or anything they might be able to use or sell.

“We look through the garbage so we can eat without stealing or hurting anyone,” said Manuel Sánchez Angeira, 50, who has mouth cancer. “I don’t have a home. I don’t have a family. I have nothing.”

There are sudden explosions of noise. A band of protestors in flip-flops thrash on aluminium pans, registering their anger with the blackouts, moving quickly to avoid the police.

Most Habaneros avoid the old town at night: It is too dangerous.

“There is a lot of violence on the streets,” said Sánchez. “Someone stabs you, hits you in the head with a rock, they kill you.”

The only real crowds are to be found in the daytime – at banks, cheap bakeries and outside the Spanish consulate, where hundreds clutch papers and wait to get off the island.

No one knows for sure how many people have left already. In 2012, the official population was more than 11 million.

Demographer Juan Carlos Albizu-Campos estimates it is now as low as eight million, only slightly

more than 67 years ago, when Fidel Castro declared, “The tyrant has fled... the revolution has triumphed!”

Cuba has experienced many crises since then – sanctions, hurricanes, a pandemic and the collapse of the Soviet bloc.

But this latest grinding crisis has transformed the sights, sounds and smells of Old Havana entirely.

The invigorating brass or woody bass of salsa, son cubano* and cha-cha-cha are all but gone.

Instead, the humid silence is punctuated by the diesel generators, the occasional Bluetooth speaker or the tinny buzzing of a cell phone squeezing out reggaeton, reparto or US pop.

Missing tourists

A century ago, Prohibition in the United States made Havana the place to be for mob bosses and vacationers alike.

The tourists left an indelible mark on the city, but now they have vanished.

A few Mexican or Colombian stragglers remain, hunting for restaurants that are open, have light and have food that might have been refrigerated in the not-too-distant past.

Those still open tend to have generators, menus priced in US dollars and a clientele of well-connected Cubans, decked in salmon shirts and tassel loafers.

Many of the city’s old storied haunts are closed.

Century-old El Floridita is cloaked with metal shutters. Its most famous patron, Ernest Hemingway, sits in statue form alone at the bar in the musty, sweltering darkness.

A few blocks away, Sloppy Joe’s is closed too, despite being extensively restored by the team of Havana’s famed historian, Eusebio Leal.

Leal did perhaps more to shape Old Havana than any other person in the last century.

He convinced Castro that Old Havana could bring in desperately

needed tourist dollars and was worth restoring.

He secured UNESCO Heritage status and launched countless restoration projects.

But many of his projects are again succumbing to time, with chunks of pediment falling to the sidewalk.

Habaneros grumble that the money he spent turning old palaces into stunning hotels – now empty – was wasted.

Divining the future

Irina Aguirre spends her days on the doorstep of one such building, just off the Plaza San Francisco.

Her job is to predict the future in a city that thinks of little else.

For years, she read tarot cards for tourists who poured out of cruise ships eager to learn of new loves or fabulous riches.

In those days, she said, nearby Calle Obispo (“Bishop Street”) was full of joy and music.

Today, she answers Cubans’ questions, not about love, but what will happen to their island. When will the US fuel blockade end? Will Trump invade? Will life get better?

“That’s the question people ask everywhere,” she said. “We all want a better tomorrow.”

But Cuba’s future is too uncertain, even for the cards, she said.

“Only God knows that,” she smiled. “You just can’t lose faith.”

She packed up her two worn decks of tarot cards, some small carved stone figurines and headed for home before the darkness swallowed Old Havana again.

– AFP

* *Son cubano is a genre of Cuban music and dance that blends Spanish musical elements (like melodies and guitar) with African rhythms and percussion. It’s a foundational style that heavily influenced salsa and other Latin music. In recognition of its cultural importance, the practice of son cubano was declared an Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity by UNESCO in 2025. – DeepSeek*

At least 23 dead as bus, truck crash in Brazil

BRASÍLIA – A head-on collision between a bus carrying medical patients and a truck killed at least 23 people yesterday in southern Brazil, highway police said.

The crash occurred at 3:30 a.m. (local time) when the truck veered into the other vehicle’s lane in the municipality of Ipiranga in Paraná State, police said.

“At least 23 deaths have been confirmed. Most of the victims were on the bus,” authorities said in a press release. The truck driver was among those killed.

Images in the local press showed the bus smashed to pieces next to a truck at the roadside.

Initially, the company that manages the highway said the accident took place in Imbituva, where the bus began its journey.

The collision occurred on a highway that connects the southern

part of the country with São Paulo, Brazil’s wealthiest state.

Hours later, the highway remained closed, causing a kilometers-long backup of vehicles.

The bus belonged to the Imbituva health department and was transporting patients to medical centers in the city of Curitiba.

Authorities have not provided any information about the truck’s occupants.

Fatal traffic accidents are common in Brazil.

Eight people died on Sunday in the state of Rio de Janeiro when the bus they were traveling in overturned.

In February, a bus returning from a religious festival in northeastern Brazil veered off the road and overturned, killing at least 16 people.

– AFP

Chinese defense minister commends Timor-Leste for upholding strategic autonomy

DILI – China commends Timor-Leste for upholding strategic autonomy and standing firm for fairness and justice, Chinese Defense Minister Dong Jun said in Dili on Tuesday.

Dong made the remarks during his meeting with Timor-Leste’s President José Ramos-Horta.

Dong noted that China firmly supports the development of Timor-Leste’s national defense and military, and is willing to work with Timor-Leste to take military-

to-military relations to a new level.

Ramos-Horta thanked China for its long-standing support and assistance since Timor-Leste’s independence, and expressed the hope that the two militaries will deepen and expand practical cooperation.

He said Timor-Leste firmly adheres to the one-China policy and is willing to work with China and other countries in the region to build the South China Sea into a sea of peace, friendship and cooperation.

– Xinhua

Palestinian girls amputated in Gaza arrive in Portugal for free prosthetic care

LISBON – Two Palestinian girls who each lost a leg in Israeli bombardments in the Gaza Strip arrived in Portugal on Monday to receive free prosthetic fitting and rehabilitation treatment, humanitarian organizations said.

Dima Qudaih, 16, and Malak Alshirafa, 7, landed at the Porto airport accompanied by family members. They arrived via Egypt, where they had been sheltered since being evacuated from Gaza.

Dima will receive care at Hospital da Prelada in Porto, while Malak will undergo treatment at the Alcoitão Rehabilitation Medicine Center near Lisbon. Specialized medical teams will provide daily rehabilitation and fit each girl with a prosthetic limb.

Portuguese authorities granted visas allowing the girls and their families to remain in the country during their treatment, which is expected to last between six

months and one year, depending on their rehabilitation progress.

The initiative was organized by HEAL Palestine in cooperation with Portuguese groups Parents for Peace and Support Group for Palestinian Refugees in Portugal. HEAL Palestine has helped arrange medical treatment abroad for Palestinian children and other patients unable to receive adequate care in Gaza.

“Portugal has opened a door that very few countries have been willing to open,” said Steve Sosebee, executive director of HEAL Palestine.

UN agencies and humanitarian organizations have repeatedly raised alarms over the large number of children severely injured or amputated during the conflict in Gaza, where widespread damage to the territory’s health system has severely limited access to surgery, rehabilitation and prosthetic services.

– Xinhua

Referees chief Webb wants clamp-down on Premier League set-piece grappling

Football

LONDON – Premier League clubs have been warned to expect a tougher stance from officials on grappling and holding at set-pieces in the new season.

Howard Webb, English football's chief refereeing officer, believes there were too many instances last season of defenders dragging attackers to the ground that went unpunished during corners and free-kicks.

Arsenal won the Premier League title in part due to their expertise at set-pieces, with rival managers and fans complaining about the Gunners' habit of wrestling opponents prior to the ball being delivered.

Webb is keen for referees and VAR officials to be more vigilant over the issue, starting with Arsenal's clash against Coventry at the Emirates Stadium in the opening game of the season tomorrow.

"I think fans can expect less warnings from referees (before fouls are given) than they might have seen previously, and I know (those warnings were) a source of frustration," he said yesterday.

"Fans can expect to see more situations being penalised, but not only in August or September, throughout the season."

A change for the coming season is the ability for VAR to check for attacking fouls at set-pieces and order them to be retaken, where a goal, penalty award or disciplinary sanction follows afterwards.

But Webb, a former Premier League and FIFA referee, doesn't want the flow of the game ruined by endless stoppages for fouls at set-pieces.

"I'm not going to commit to say we're going to go from here to penalising lots of contact. Contact's still part of the game," he said.

"We still maintain a high threshold, but I would imagine we'll be sat here this time next year and we'll be able to reflect on a season where more offences have been penalised."

Webb is also concerned by the aftermath of FIFA's decision to overturn United States forward Folarin Balogun's ban for a red card during the World Cup.

Webb fears there is growing belief in refereeing conspiracies among supporters following the Balogun controversy, which included US president Donald Trump admitting he told FIFA president Gianni Infantino to review the incident.

"I was really troubled by it," Webb said. "We know that there was pressure placed by a politician on to FIFA, because that was admitted."

"And we know that the suspension was taken away for that particular tournament and suspended through a process which seemingly didn't exist before the tournament started."

"Decisions were previously viewed as correct or incorrect, based on your judgement. Far too often now decisions are viewed as correct or corrupt by people who want to type all over social media." – AFP

Golden Shoe winner Kane hopes for Ballon d'Or after 'best season ever'



MUNICH – Bayern Munich striker Harry Kane has set his sights on the Ballon d'Or after receiving his second European Golden Shoe in Munich yesterday.

The England captain collected the prize after scoring the most goals in Europe's top divisions last season.

Kane won the 2023-24 award after a prolific first season at Bayern, but said this year's honour "tasted even better than the first".

The 33-year-old scored 36 goals in 31 Bundesliga games last term, the third most in a German top-flight campaign, while winning the league and cup double.

He also netted six times at the World Cup, becoming England's top goalscorer at the competition with 14 career goals.

In total, he scored 73 goals for club and country last season.

Kane said he hoped to receive football's highest individual honour after his "best season ever".

"Obviously, that's out of my control. I know, of course, there's going to be a lot of talk about it from now until October when it's announced," he said.

"Ultimately, I've done everything I can last season. It was my best season by far. I achieved a lot with the teams I was in."

Kane made it to the Champions League semi-finals with Bayern, who were narrowly defeated by eventual winners Paris Saint-Germain.

He also reached the semi-finals of the World Cup with England before an agonising 2-1 loss to Argentina.

Only serial Ballon d'Or winners Lionel Messi and Cristiano Ronaldo have won the Golden Shoe more often than Kane.

Messi won the award six times, all with Barcelona, while Ronaldo won it three times at Real Madrid and once at Manchester United.

"That's for you guys to debate and fans to debate," Kane said of the possible winner of this year's Ballon d'Or, which will be handed out in London in late October.

"That's what makes the Ballon d'Or so special as well. Many players have had great seasons."

Kane said on Monday he was about to begin negotiations to extend his contract at Bayern, which will expire in 2027. – AFP

Villa sign Japanese 'keeper Suzuki, Italian defender Ruggeri



LONDON – Aston Villa announced yesterday they have signed Japan international goalkeeper Zion Suzuki and Italian defender Matteo Ruggeri as they strengthen their defensive options ahead of the Champions League.

The arrival of 23-year-old Suzuki, following a stellar showing at the World Cup, could hasten the departure of Argentina 'keeper Emiliano Martinez from the Premier League club.

Martinez, who won the World Cup with Argentina in 2022 and played in this year's final, has been a target for Italian clubs.

Suzuki joins the reigning Europa League champions on a permanent transfer for a reported fee of around 35 million euros (US\$40 million) from Serie A outfit Parma.

Born in the United States, Suzuki made his debut for Japanese club Urawa Red Diamonds aged 18.

Following a short stint in Belgium with Sint-Truiden, he spent the past two seasons with Italian side Parma.

Suzuki will be the first Japanese goalkeeper to play in the Premier League.

Manager Unai Emery further bolstered his side's defensive

options by securing the services of left-back Ruggeri from La Liga's Atletico Madrid.

The 24-year-old came through the youth system at Italian club Atalanta, where he was part of the squad that won the club's first piece of European silverware in the 2024 Europa League.

He joined Atletico last season and made 47 appearances in all competitions for Diego Simeone's side.

Ruggeri has been capped by Italy up to under-21 level but, despite having been called up to the senior squad, is yet to make his full international debut. – AFP



Malaysia's goalkeeper Azri Ghani (centre) stops the ball going into the goal during the second leg of the 2026 ASEAN Championship semi-final against Vietnam at My Dinh National Stadium in Hanoi yesterday. Vietnam won the game 2-0.

– AFP

Senior FIFA official withdraws support from embattled Infantino



BUDAPEST, Hungary - One of FIFA's vice presidents has withdrawn his support from the world football body's embattled president Gianni Infantino, saying the "unexpected dismissal" of critic Kevin Lamour was the "final straw".

Frenchman Lamour's position as chief operating officer had become untenable after he broke ranks with senior FIFA directors last month and issued a scathing statement criticising Infantino over his now-scrapped plan to allow private investment in World Cups.

In a letter seen by AFP yesterday, FIFA vice-president and

council member Sandor Csanyi of Hungary said Infantino has "lost the confidence I previously placed in you".

"My conviction that you are capable of continuing to lead FIFA successfully and effectively in accordance with the shared values that previously formed the basis of our cooperation has been undermined," Csanyi, a billionaire businessman and banker and head of the Hungarian Football Federation (MLSZ), said in the letter sent to Infantino on Tuesday.

The letter cited "a number of controversial decisions" around

this year's World Cup, including information that Infantino had been working "on plans to outsource FIFA competitions and place them in the hands of external parties".

"The final straw was the unexpected dismissal of Kevin Lamour," it said, adding it "points to serious shortcomings in professional judgement, ethical standards and leadership".

On Tuesday, European football body UEFA vice-president Laura McAllister said FIFA's dismissal of Lamour sent a "deeply troubling message to all of us seeking change". – AFP

Alvarez can win back Atletico fans in 2 games: club chief



MADRID – Atletico Madrid president Enrique Cerezo said yesterday wantaway striker Julian Alvarez can win over the club's fans in just two matches.

The Argentina international said this summer it would be best if he was allowed to leave, with Barcelona and Real Madrid making bids for the forward, which Atletico rejected.

Alvarez was not part of Diego Simeone's squad for their La Liga opener yesterday against promoted side Malaga as he builds fitness

following post-World Cup holidays.

"I don't know if he will say sorry, but Julian is an excellent person and I am absolutely sure that he will win over the fans in two games," Cerezo told reporters.

Simeone said Tuesday he was planning on building the team around the 26-year-old, who has also been linked with Arsenal.

"I said he wouldn't be sold, he's our player and an important part of our team," added Cerezo ahead of the team's first game of the season.

"We like that he's with us and think

he will have a magnificent season."

Barcelona had hoped to replace Robert Lewandowski and Ferran Torres with Alvarez, with both forwards leaving this summer.

Atletico fans were critical of French forward Antoine Griezmann for joining Barca in 2019 after he returned to the capital in 2021.

However Griezmann's performances gradually won them back over, and he went on to become Atletico's all-time leading scorer before departing for MLS Orlando City at the end of last season. – AFP

All Blacks must get 'everything right' to beat Springboks, says legend Fitzpatrick

Rugby

JOHANNESBURG — Sean Fitzpatrick, captain of the only New Zealand team to win a Test series in South Africa, told AFP yesterday the current All Blacks must get "everything right" to match that feat.

On Saturday, world champions and top-ranked South Africa and second-ranked New Zealand begin a four-Test series marketed as the "Greatest Rivalry" at Ellis Park in Johannesburg.

Cape Town, Soccer City stadium in Johannesburg and American city Baltimore will be the venues on the following three Saturdays in the first extended tour between the giants since 1996.

The advent of professionalism in rugby saw the demise of multi-match tours apart from the British and Irish Lions visiting Australia, New Zealand and South Africa over a 12-year period.

Ahead of the first Test, the All Blacks scored 22 tries when beating the Stormers, Sharks and Bulls franchises.

"New Zealand will need to be right on their game, they cannot afford yellow cards or bad scrums," Fitzpatrick said at the unveiling of the 'Greatest Rivalry' trophy in Johannesburg.

"They need to get everything right, which is difficult, but that is what Test rugby against the best is all about.

"They need a bit of luck too. Ideally you want to go 1-0 up so you can really pile on the pressure for the second Test in Cape Town.



Bulls' South African scrum-half Embrose Papier (centre left) tackles New Zealand's scrum-half Cortez Ratima (centre) during the rugby union tour match between New Zealand and The Bulls at Loftus Versfeld Stadium in Pretoria on Saturday. — AFP

"The Springboks definitely have a lot of options in how they want to play - their defensive line speed, the size of their pack, their ability to break tackles.

"But the All Blacks know all that, (head coach) Dave Rennie knows that," said the 1987 Rugby World Cup-winning hooker capped 92 times before retiring in 1997.

"The Springboks also have some great attacking prowess, so I don't see them slowing down the game as being to their advantage.

"New Zealand will need to be incredibly well-prepared because they are up against a very good attack.

"The Springboks won't go away, but this is what you play for - taking on the double world champions and the best team in the world right now.

Fitzpatrick was pleased that the

transition from Scott Robertson, who departed after an end-of-season review last January, to Rennie had been smooth.

"I'm quite comfortable with where the All Blacks are, they have definitely moved on from the start of the year," he said.

"There is a good feeling around the camp, good messaging coming out with Dave Rennie being measured in what he has said.

"His focus will be on the World Cup and what better preparation than against the Springboks? It is a real bonus to be here for five or six weeks, 14 months out from the World Cup.

Before Fitzpatrick-led New Zealand won a 1996 Test series 2-1, the All Blacks had lost four and drawn one in South Africa. — AFP

Kyrgios admits 'huge mistake' after failing test for cocaine

Tennis

LONDON — Australian tennis star Nick Kyrgios said yesterday he had made "a huge mistake" after he was provisionally suspended for testing positive for cocaine.

The 31-year-old, who reached the final at Wimbledon in 2022, failed a doping test during an ATP event in Mallorca on June 22.

"On 17 July 2026, a World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) accredited laboratory confirmed the presence of benzoylecgonine, a metabolite of cocaine," the International Tennis Integrity Agency (ITIA) said.

Kyrgios, whose undoubted talent has been overshadowed by a suspect temperament and injuries, wrote on Instagram that he took "full responsibility".

"I made a huge mistake," he wrote.

"I'm sorry to my fans, my family, my sponsors and everyone close to me. Above all, I'm sorry to the kids who follow me.

"I know the example this sets and I'm deeply disappointed in myself."

Boasting a big serve and booming ground strokes, Kyrgios has won seven singles titles on the ATP Tour and rose to a high of 13 in the world in 2016.

His finest performance was on the grass at Wimbledon in 2022, when he reached the championship match, losing in four sets to Novak Djokovic.

Despite his natural talents that is as good as it got, with a series of injuries taking their toll.

He is now ranked 919 and has barely played in singles

tennis in recent years. His most recent high-profile on-court appearance was his 'Battle of the Sexes' exhibition match against women's world number one Aryna Sabalenka late last year.

In January, he admitted he would never be the player that he once was.

Kyrgios is one of the few players to have recorded tour-level wins over the "Big Four" of Roger Federer, Rafael Nadal, Djokovic and Andy Murray.

But the success on court came with huge problems off it, including severe injuries to his right elbow, left wrist, hip, knees, shoulders and collarbone.

He has had numerous surgeries, the most serious a complete reconstruction of his right wrist in 2024.

Yesterday, he said that the injuries had taken "a huge toll on me both physically and mentally".

"I've always said I didn't choose tennis - tennis chose me. But letting go of something that has been my whole life is one of the hardest things I've ever had to face," Kyrgios added.

"None of that excuses what I did," he said of his failed test.

"However, the good news is that this has given me a wake-up call."

He added: "I'm sorry, I'll do the work and come back better."

The ITIA said that the suspension had been in place since August 4.

It said: "While suspended, Kyrgios is not allowed to play in, coach at, or attend any events organised or sanctioned by World Tennis, WTA, ATP, the Grand Slams, or any national association." — AFP



Australia's Nick Kyrgios reacts after a point against France's Giovanni Mpetshi Perricard during their men's singles match at the Brisbane International tennis tournament in Brisbane, Australia on December 31, 2024. — AFP

Sainz signs new contract with F1 team Williams

F1

LONDON — Carlos Sainz signed a "multi-year" contract extension with Formula One team Williams yesterday to quash speculation about his future.

Sainz agreed to stay at Williams just 24 hours after the British team confirmed his team-mate Alex Albon will be retained for the 2027 campaign.

The former Ferrari and McLaren driver has endured a disappointing season so far.

But the four-time Grand Prix winner, who has failed to score a point at the last six rounds, has

elected to remain with Williams for the foreseeable future.

"I'm thrilled to announce my continued journey with the Williams family," the 31-year-old said.

"I truly believe in the people that form this team, both at the factory and at the racetracks, and the investments and hard work that are happening in the background.

"We have what it takes to turn this around together. I'm as committed as I was on day one to helping get Williams back to where it belongs, and I look forward to creating more memories with the team."

Sainz's decision comes ahead of this weekend's Dutch Grand Prix

and was a relief to Williams team principal James Vowles.

Williams failed to make the first pre-season test, and their car has been uncompetitive throughout the opening half of the campaign.

"Carlos is a leader of this team, and I'm thrilled that he can see what's possible as we continue to rebuild it," Vowles said.

"Carlos shares the belief and ambition we have at Williams and is pushing every day to deliver it.

"Along with Alex, I truly believe we have one of the strongest line-ups on the grid, and a team capable of fighting for every ounce of performance together." — AFP

US teenager Tan shines on badminton worlds debut

Badminton

NEW DELHI — American teenager Garret Tan made his mark at the world badminton championships in New Delhi yesterday with a stunning win over India's Lakshya Sen.

The 18-year-old, who is ranked 92nd in the world, beat 14th-seeded Sen 19-21, 21-19, 21-17 in round two of the men's singles to silence

the home crowd at the Indira Gandhi Indoor Stadium.

Tan, who sometimes trains in China's region of Taiwan due to close family connections, took down the two-time All England finalist Sen despite taking a medical break towards the end of the decider.

"This is my first world championship and to beat such a great player like Lakshya is good," Tan told reporters.

"I just wanted to go in and play my best and didn't want to really think of who is standing in front of me."

Sen, 25, praised his younger opponent, saying: "I give a lot of credit to my opponent, he played a very solid game. I gave it my all but it was not enough."

Chinese Taipei's Lin Chun-yi, who beat Sen in the All England final this year, also bowed out of the tournament after he lost to Rasmus Gemke of Den-

mark 21-13, 17-21, 11-21.

Denmark's world number four Anders Antonsen survived a scare to edge out Nhat Nguyen 21-23, 21-19, 23-21 in one hour and 42 minutes and reach the third round.

Antonsen overcame two match points from Nguyen of Ireland to hold his nerve and snatch the win.

India's giantkiller Ayush Shetty registered an easy win over Sri Lanka's Dumindu Abeywickrama,

two days after he stunned world number one and defending champion Shi Yuqi of China.

In the women's singles, South Korea's world number one An Se-young saw off Thalita Ramadhani Wiryawan 21-15, 21-11 to continue her bid for a second world title.

Indian star P.V. Sindhu kept her campaign on track with a 21-16, 21-17 victory over Canada's Wen Yu Zhang.

— AFP

New ‘Insidious’ reflects anxiety of being a new parent: director

Paula Ramon

LOS ANGELES – When he sat down to write “Insidious: Out of the Further,” the sixth instalment of the blockbuster horror franchise, director Jacob Chase channelled his fears over a major life event: becoming a parent.

“I became a dad for the first time, and I was terrified of being a dad,” he told AFP.

“I was really nervous I would raise my child in the wrong way, and I was thinking about parenting almost in opposition of how I was raised.”

The resulting movie, which opens in US cinemas tomorrow, promises to take audiences into the Further – and bring back the demons who live there.

The main character is a woman who longs to be a good mother and protect her daughter from the terrible things that happened to her, but ends up becoming the worst version of herself in the process.

“I wanted to create a character who was haunted by her past...the experience with the Insidious...a character who already had this trauma from her past and was trying desperately to outrun her own sins of her mom.”

The result is an atmospheric film that gradually draws the viewer to the other side, revealing the terror that seeks to infiltrate the characters’ world.

Starring Amelia Eve, Lin Shaye, Brandon Perea, and Sam Spruell, “Insidious: Out of the Further” introduces new directions and characters to a franchise that has grossed over US\$740 million at the global box office.

‘Completely evolving’

This chapter follows Gemma (Amelia Eve), a young single mother



(From left to right) Lin Shaye, Island Austin, Amelia Eve and Brandon Perea pose on the sidelines of the Los Angeles special screening of Sony’s “Insidious: Out Of The Further” at AMC The Grove 14 on Tuesday in Los Angeles, California. – AFP

raising her daughter in the same home where she grew up – a house that holds traumatic memories.

It is there that Gemma discovers she can not only enter the afterlife but also bring its shadowy inhabitants into the world of the living, a power that makes her a target for terrifying entities and puts her daughter in danger.

For the 34-year-old British actress, it was an exciting opportunity.

“It’s one thing to be welcomed into this franchise, and it’s a whole other blessing to then get to introduce a new aspect to this incredible world,” Eve told AFP.

To build that protective bond with her on-screen daughter, the actress drew inspiration from her relationship with her own sisters: “The people you’d do anything for,” she said.

Eve shares the screen with Lin Shaye, who returns once again to play Elise Rainier, a character who fans consider the heart of the franchise.

In this new instalment, Rainier represents a beacon of light for Gemma, a role that taught her a lot, Shaye says.

“It’s still completely evolving, which is very exciting to me,” said the 82-year-old actress.

“You’d think it’s the same old, same old every time [but] I feel that Elise is learning something new about herself.”

The women and their allies in the world of the living will face Cyrus, a new diabolical entity played by Sam Spruell (“Fargo”), who commands the forces of evil.

“I wanted a villain that was different,” said director Chase, who was looking to create a charismatic demon.

“I wanted someone that was a bit more human and someone that had a real goal in the film.

“To me, a charming villain is so much scarier because I could see myself wanting to follow them.”

– AFP

Angélique Kidjo immortalised on Hollywood Walk of Fame

LOS ANGELES – Five-time Grammy winner Angélique Kidjo on Tuesday became the first black African to be honoured with a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame.

In a glitzy ceremony under palm trees and picture-perfect California skies, Kidjo was feted by film stars and music industry titans as she unveiled the star on the busy thoroughfare.

“We Africans don’t know what we’ve given to the world,” the 66-year-old said.

“Without us, there’s no music possible on this planet.”

After offering thanks to her team and family, Kidjo erupted into song as those present sat in rapt attention.

Born in Benin, Kidjo has built an international career spanning more than 40 years and 18 albums.

As well as being named one of *Time* magazine’s 100 most influential people, she has also been nominated as one of Africa’s 50 most iconic figures by the BBC, and one of the 100 most inspiring people in the world by *The Guardian*.

Harvey Mason Jr. of the Recording Academy hailed Kidjo as a “rare artist.”

“Your example has elevated our global music community,

and your work continues to remind us that music is more than entertainment; it’s connection,” he said.

“This star is a permanent symbol; it’s not going anywhere, and it’s a symbol of your achievements. But your legacy, it lives in the people that you’ve touched, that you’ve inspired, the barriers that you’ve broken, the connections you’ve created all around the world.”

US actor Willem Dafoe praised Kidjo’s immense energy on stage.

“The first time I saw Angélique perform live, I thought her music, her dancing, her commitment were incredible,” the “Platoon” star said.

“She is, without a doubt, the hardest-working woman in show business.”

But, he said, more impressive was her dedication to the humanitarian work of her Batonga Foundation, which strives to empower girls and young women in Africa.

“This is not a token celebrity involvement; it is an extension of what she does with her music. She stirs us, lifts us up, and reminds us that we’re all connected, and that love and understanding is the way.”

– AFP



French-Beninese musician and actress Angélique Kidjo is honoured as the first black African musician to receive a Star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame in Hollywood, California, on Tuesday. – AFP

ZZ Top drummer Frank Beard dies at age 77

NEW YORK – Frank Beard, the longtime drummer of American rock-blues group ZZ Top, has died at the age of 77, the band and their publicist announced on Tuesday.

Beard, whose beats carried hits like “La Grange” and “Sharp Dressed Man,” had stepped back from touring last year after suffering unspecified health issues.



This photo taken on May 21, 2008, shows ZZ Top band members Dusty Hill (left), Billy Gibbons (centre) and Frank Beard pose on the sidelines for the American Idol 2008 Finale held at the Nokia Theatre in Los Angeles. Beard, the longtime drummer of American rock-blues group ZZ Top, has died at the age of 77, the band and their publicist announced on Tuesday. – AFP

ZZ Top’s lead singer Billy Gibbons paid tribute to Beard as a “great friend and collaborator.”

“The world lost one of the most naturally innovative drummers and a great and true son of Texas. His signature backbeat was key to keeping ZZ on top,” Gibbons said in a statement.

“The band of which he was part for six decades is going to keep on

keeping on as he had wished.”

Beard was in hospice care when he passed away at his ranch in Richmond, Texas, with family members at his side, band representative Bob Merlis said.

Born in Frankston, Texas in 1949, Beard joined ZZ Top in 1969 and followed the three-man band’s progression from heavy blues to its experimental synthesizer sound of the 1980s.

The trio also gained fame for their popular music videos, including “Gimme All Your Lovin,” going on to win three MTV Video Music Awards.

ZZ Top’s original bassist Dusty Hill died in 2021.

The band, which now consists of Gibbons, bassist Elwood Francis and touring drummer Michael Monahan, has cancelled dates in Salt Lake City and Colorado Springs after Beard’s passing.

The group said on social media it will continue shows this weekend at Austin City Limits in Texas, “one of Frank’s favourite venues and in a city that had been something of a second home for him.”

– AFP

World Weather

CHINA	ASIA-PACIFIC	WORLD	LUSOPHONE
Beijing 22°C~33°C	Manila 25°C~31°C	New York 19°C~27°C	Lisbon 17°C~27°C
Shanghai 25°C~32°C	Bangkok 26°C~32°C	London 12°C~22°C	Rio de Janeiro 19°C~27°C
Hong Kong 25°C~29°C	Tokyo 23°C~33°C	Frankfurt 14°C~26°C	Luanda 19°C~22°C
Taipei 24°C~31°C	Singapore 25°C~33°C	Vancouver 15°C~25°C	Maputo 15°C~28°C
Guangzhou 24°C~32°C	Kuala Lumpur 25°C~33°C	Paris 14°C~24°C	Dili 20°C~31°C
Nanjing 24°C~32°C	Jakarta 23°C~33°C	Moscow 15°C~22°C	São Tomé 24°C~28°C
Guilin 24°C~36°C	Seoul 24°C~28°C	Las Vegas 29°C~42°C	Praia 25°C~32°C
Xi'an 21°C~31°C	Sydney 13°C~22°C	Monte Carlo 22°C~29°C	Bissau 23°C~30°C



Grotto of wonder

People visit the Beni Add caves in Tlemcen, Algeria, on Monday. The main gallery of Beni Add caves extends over 700 meters, with a depth reaching 57 meters, and are home to stalactites and stalagmites of various shapes.

— Xinhua



Truly green vase

A Kashmiri artisan uses dried aquatic weeds and grass collected from Dal Lake to create sustainable handcrafted home decor items at a workshop in Srinagar, India yesterday.

— AFP

Come for a cuddle!

This photograph shows a mother cheetah stretching towards one of her cubs in its enclosure at the Safari de Peaugres Zoo near Peaugres, southeastern France, yesterday.

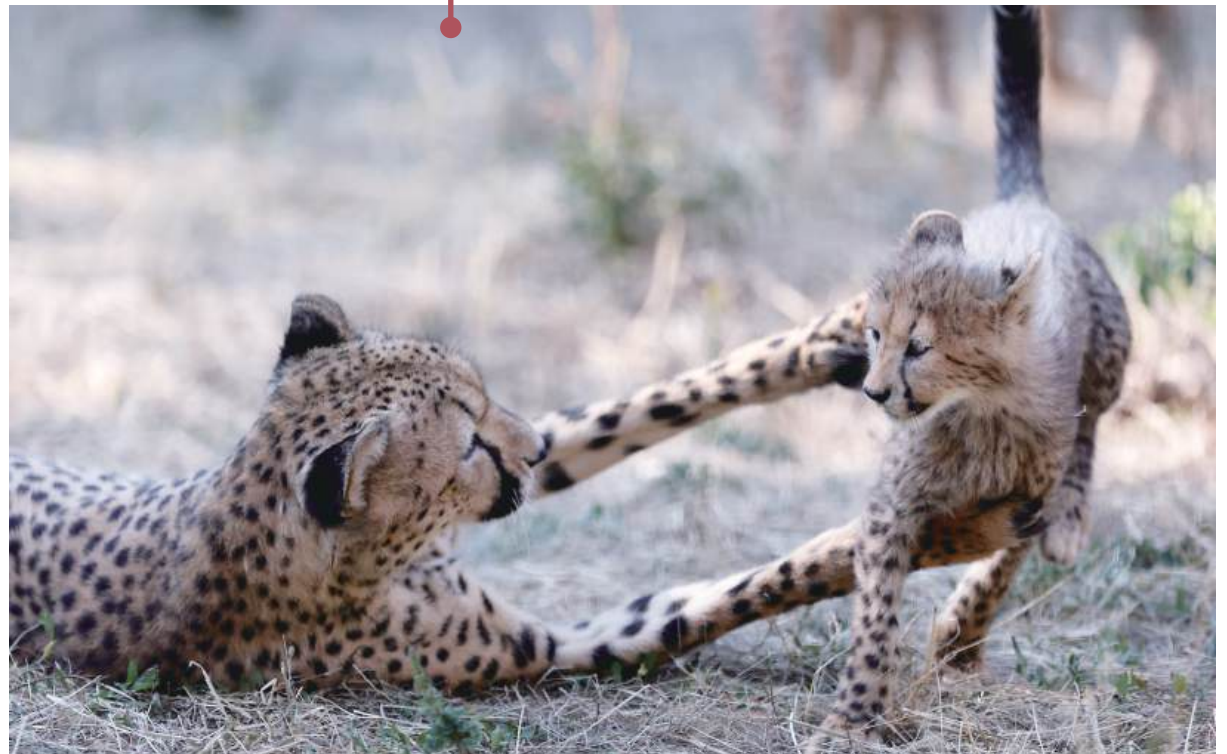
— AFP



Unlikely angel

A Corgi takes part in the costume contest during the Corgi Race in the Vingis Park in Vilnius on Saturday.

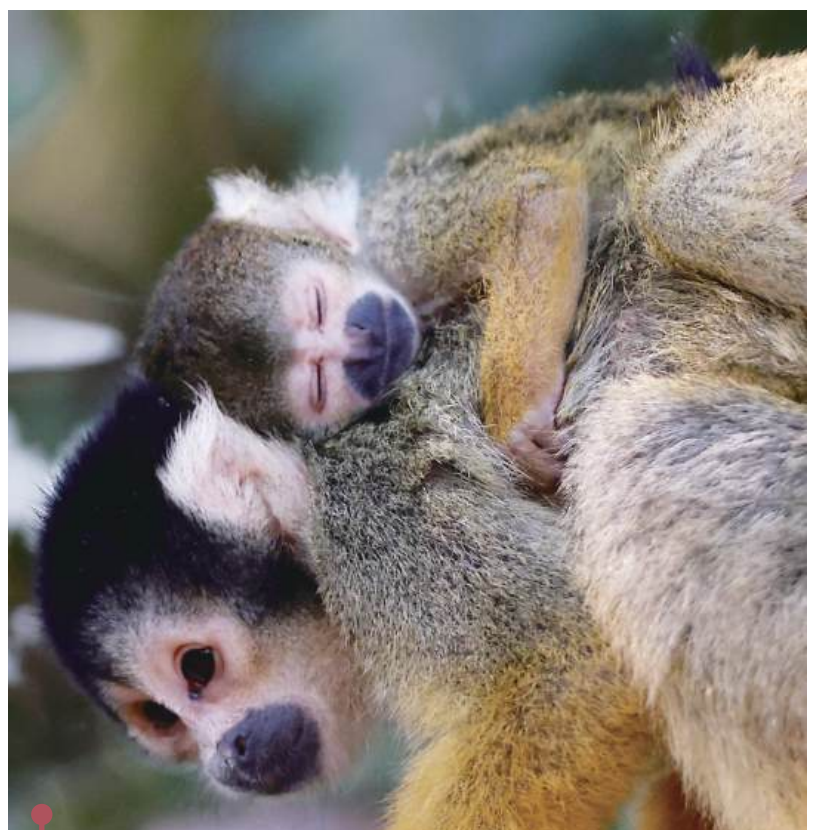
— AFP



Quiet dawn

Fishing boats are seen on the Mekong River at sunrise in Phnom Penh on Sunday.

— AFP



Sleepy head

This photograph shows a mother squirrel monkey carrying her infant on her back at the Safari de Peaugres Zoo near Peaugres, southeastern France, yesterday.

— AFP