

Govt aims to open Macao National Museum of Culture 1st phase in 2029

10 architectural teams to submit concept designs

Tony Wong

The local government said yesterday that it is aiming to complete the construction of the first phase of the Macao National Museum of Culture – which will be located on the waterfront area east of Macau Tower – and open it in 2029.

The museum, covering a total gross floor area of 100,000 square metres, will be constructed in two phases. The second phase will be larger than the first. For the time being, the government does not have a schedule for when the second phase is expected to be completed.

The government noted yesterday that after the first phase opens to the public, the construction of the second phase will not affect its operation. When the museum becomes fully operational after the completion of the second phase, it will be Macau's largest museum.

The government has invited 10 architectural design teams to submit concept designs for the museum, including four foreign teams, aiming to complete the evaluations and select a winning proposal within this year.

Cultural Affairs Bureau (IC)



Cultural Affairs Bureau (IC) President Deland Leong Wai Man (centre) speaks during yesterday's press conference at the Macao Cultural Centre (CCM) as other officials look on, comprising (from left to right) Un Chao Wa from the Transport Bureau (DSAT), Leong Io Hong from the Lands and Urban Construction Bureau (DSSCU), Vu Si Man from the Public Works Bureau (DSOP), and Wong Kei Lok from the Municipal Affairs Bureau (IAM). In the presentation, the area surrounded by the red dotted line shows the future location for the Macao National Museum of Culture. – Photo: Tony Wong

President Deland Leong Wai Man held a press conference yesterday to brief reporters on the bureau's ongoing preparatory work for the large-scale museum's design and construction. The press conference, held at the Macao Cultural Centre

(CCM) in Nape, was also attended by officials from four other relevant public entities: the Lands and Urban Construction Bureau (DSSCU), the Public Works Bureau (DSOP), the Transport Bureau (DSAT), and the Municipal Affairs Bureau (IAM).

The Macao National Museum of Culture will be one of the three major cultural facilities for the future Macao International Integrated Tourism and Cultural Zone. The zone is one of the government's four future large-scale projects aimed at



injecting new impetus into Macau's long-term development.

The government consulted members of the public late last year about its proposal for the Macao International Integrated Tourism and Cultural Zone. The other two major cultural facilities for the zone will be the Macao International Centre for Performing Arts and the International Museum of Contemporary Art, both to be constructed on the Zone C land reclamation area off Taipa's Ocean Gardens residential estate.

Continued on p.7



A robot inserts a letter into a mailbox during the 2026 China International Fair for Trade in Services (CIFTIS) at Shougang Park in Beijing yesterday. Themed exhibition halls are showcasing new technologies, emerging business models and innovative applications at the ongoing 2026 CIFTIS, giving visitors a firsthand look at cutting-edge innovations in trade and services. – Xinhua

Death toll from cargo ship fire in Qingdao rises to 25

QINGDAO – The death toll from a fire that erupted yesterday on a foreign-flagged cargo ship docked in a Chinese port has risen to 25, including five people who had been listed as missing, state media said.

The bulk carrier, moored in the eastern shipping hub of Qingdao, had 42 people on board when the fire broke out, according to state broadcaster CCTV.

Seventeen of those were evacuated, including five who were injured.

However, by yesterday evening "all 25 missing persons had been found, none showing signs of life", state broadcaster CCTV reported.

It said "the open flames were extinguished" by about 2:30 p.m.

Xinhua said earlier that the fire broke out at around 11:15 a.m. during the ship's port call for maintenance, without specifying the cause of the fire.

A witness from a neighbouring residential compound told AFP he saw thick smoke coming from the ship, but did not hear an explosion.

"I saw the smoke from the ship by chance, but there was no visible fire," he said.

"I didn't hear an explosion or smell anything."

Xinhua shared video of the scene showing a large ship called

the Ocean Melody docked at a yard, with dozens of rescuers swarming its decks and entering the vessel.

Several fire trucks and ambulances were stationed on the dock in front of the ship.

Ocean Melody is a 190-metre long bulk carrier sailing under the Liberian flag, according to the vessel-tracking website MarineTraffic, which located the ship as moored in Qingdao.

Qingdao is the hometown and namesake of Tsingtao beer and a major international maritime hub, connected to more than 700 ports in over 180 countries and regions, according to state media. – Xinhua

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Xi to attend New Delhi summit to boost greater BRICS cooperation

President Xi Jinping will attend the 18th BRICS Summit in New Delhi tomorrow and on Sunday, a foreign ministry spokesperson announced in Beijing yesterday.

– Story on p. 8

Trump promises Americans US\$5,000 if Republicans win Congress

US President Donald Trump yesterday promised US\$5,000 to every American adult if Republicans retain control of Congress in November, coupling the extraordinary claim with a plea for his supporters to "pretend" he was on the ballot. – Story on p. 11

Portugal harvests grapes at night to beat the heat

Equipped with headlamps and pruning shears, a team of farm workers navigate pitch-black darkness during a nocturnal grape harvest that shields them from Portugal's increasingly oppressive summer heat. – Story on p. 12

Macao's Next Five Years: Can Growth Become More Stable and Future-Oriented?

Commentary by Cheng Xianyue*

When discussing Macao's development over the next five years, it is easy to fall into a familiar line of thinking: after the era of gaming, what will become the city's next growth engine? Will it be healthcare and traditional Chinese medicine, modern finance, high technology, or culture and exhibition industries? And what role will Hengqin play in this transformation?

However, when the national 15th Five-Year Plan and Macao's Third Five-Year Development Plan for Economic and Social Development (2026–2030) are examined together, the real question is not simply what will replace gaming, but whether Macao can preserve its existing strengths and openness while building a more stable, resilient and sustainable model of prosperity.

The national 15th Five-Year Plan supports Macao's appropriate economic diversification by strengthening sectors such as traditional Chinese medicine and healthcare, distinctive financial services, high technology, exhibitions and trade. It also calls for deeper Hengqin-Macao integration, including the development of the Macao International Airport Hengqin Upstream Cargo Terminal, the Macao-Hengqin International Education (University) Town, and support for Macao universities to expand their operations in Hengqin. Macao's Third Five-Year Development Plan further advances the "1+4" diversification strategy through major projects and government-guided funds.

Together, these initiatives form a clear policy pathway: the national plan defines Macao's strategic direction, Macao's own plan sets out implementation measures, and Hengqin provides the platform to turn these ambitions into reality.

Why is Hengqin so important?

The reason lies first in Macao's long-standing spatial constraints. Industrial transformation, research and innovation, talent attraction and urban development have all been shaped by limited land resources. Under such conditions, even promising industries may struggle to move from individual projects to industrial clusters, or from research achievements to large-scale commercial applications.

Hengqin therefore represents more than an expansion of physical space. It enables Macao to extend certain urban and industrial functions beyond its traditional boundaries and creates new opportunities for regional collaboration.

The Macao-Hengqin International Education (University) Town is a prime example. According to current plans, the first phase of operations will begin in 2026, the University of Macau's Hengqin campus is expected to enter trial operation in 2028, and the main construction of the Hengqin campuses of Macao Polytechnic University (MPU) and Macao University of Tourism (UTM) is expected to be largely completed by 2030.

Its significance goes far beyond adding new educational facilities. If universities can become the foundation for a broader ecosystem involving laboratories, technology transfer platforms, start-ups, industry funds, professional services and talent communities, the project could become Macao's first large-scale knowledge-based industrial cluster.

The Macao International Airport Hengqin Upstream Cargo Terminal represents another important step. The plan proposes launching operations in the first half of 2027 and ultimately achieving an annual cargo-handling capacity of 300,000 tonnes. If successfully implemented, the project would not only increase cargo throughput at Macao International Airport, but also extend Macao's role as an international gateway by connecting it with the broader industrial hinterland of the western Pearl River region.

In this sense, it is helping Macao establish a new development structure: leveraging the national market and regional economic depth to strengthen industrial foundations, using Hengqin as a platform for industrial growth, and relying on Macao's institutional advantages and international connections to link with global resources.

This also provides a new perspective on the meaning of "appropriate economic diversification."

Diversification does not mean that the gaming industry should simply become smaller, nor does it mean adding industries for the sake of numbers. A strong leading industry

is not inherently a weakness. The real concern is whether government revenue, employment, investment, consumption and visitor flows become excessively tied to the same economic cycle.

From the perspective of risk-adjusted returns in finance, combined with the concept of urban resilience, the quality of Macao's future development should not be measured only by how much growth it can generate during normal periods. It should also be assessed by how much risk exposure underlies that growth, and whether the city has sufficient buffers and alternative pathways when external shocks occur.

From this perspective, the value of healthcare and traditional Chinese medicine, modern finance, high technology, exhibitions, trade, culture and sports industries lies not only in their potential economic output, but also in their ability to create different sources of demand, capital, employment and growth cycles.

A healthier Macao economy should resemble a well-diversified investment portfolio: maintaining its existing strengths while continuously adding new sources of growth that are less correlated with traditional industries.

However, diversification cannot be achieved simply by selecting priority industries. Every industry requires a complete ecosystem involving research, investment, talent, market access and industrial coordination. Weakness in any one link may leave an initiative at the project stage rather than allowing it to develop into a sustainable ecosystem.

Therefore, before market forces are fully mobilized, the government must focus on creating the necessary foundations: building platforms, establishing rules, developing infrastructure, attracting funds, cultivating talent and creating application scenarios. The goal is to reduce the fixed

costs and institutional barriers faced by enterprises entering emerging industries.

Macao's Third Five-Year Development Plan's emphasis on government-guided funds, while simultaneously highlighting the decisive role of the market and the central role of enterprises, reflects a shift from "government-led industrial development" toward "government-enabled industrial ecosystems."

In simple terms: the government builds the channels; the market drives the flow. The government creates the platform; enterprises create the value.

Beyond adding new industries, genuine diversification also requires stronger connections across the industrial chain.

Traditional Chinese medicine (TCM) cannot become a true industry through research alone; without manufacturing capacity, regulatory approval and market channels, its commercial potential remains limited. Technology cannot become competitive enterprises through academic papers alone; without pilot-scale testing, financing and real-world applications, innovation struggles to reach the market. Modern finance risks becoming confined to licenses and concepts if it is disconnected from real industries and cross-border capital needs. Likewise, Macao's China-Portuguese-speaking Countries platform must go beyond conferences and exchanges by developing practical capabilities in overseas expansion, legal services, finance, arbitration, logistics, and market support.

The ultimate measure of diversification is therefore not simply how many industries are introduced, but whether Macao can build complete value chains from research and development to commercialization and market application.

Structural transformation inevitably brings challenges. New industries require new skills; technology reshapes employment patterns; and

deeper Macao-Hengqin integration changes some residents' traditional ways of working and living. For this reason, employment, housing, elderly care, talent development and social protection should be viewed not as separate from economic transformation, but as essential foundations for its success.

By 2030, the success of this five-year plan should not only be judged by economic indicators. More importantly, it should be measured by whether young people have more diverse career opportunities beyond gaming and tourism; whether research achievements from Macao universities can be more efficiently transformed into enterprises and industries; whether technology and professional talent are willing to build their futures in Macao and Hengqin; whether companies that identify opportunities in Macao can find space, capital, talent and markets in Hengqin; and whether Macao can avoid a situation where a single shock affects the entire city.

If these questions gradually receive positive answers, Macao will have achieved more than the success of a five-year plan. It will have developed a more valuable capability: the ability to sustain long-term prosperity without relying on the miracle of any single industry.

*The author is a member of the Chinese Association of Hong Kong and Macao Studies.

N.B. The Chinese Association of Hong Kong and Macao Studies (全国港澳研究会) is a national non-governmental academic organization, established on December 6, 2013, in Beijing. It is registered with the Ministry of Civil Affairs and is supervised by the Hong Kong and Macao Affairs Office of the State Council. Its purpose is to co-ordinate research on the "One Country, Two Systems" theory and practice; promote academic exchanges among Hong Kong, Macao, and the mainland; and serve as a non-governmental think tank. -DeepSeek

'Felicidade Topsy Weekend' kicks off 2nd edition

Rui Pastorin

The second edition of the "Felicidade Topsy Weekend" kicked off its four-day run yesterday on Rua da Felicidade (福隆新街 – "Street of Bliss"), with the free-admission event again gathering a variety of bartenders and a lineup music acts for live performances.

The first edition was held in May this year, with 25 bartenders joining the event, which, according to a previous statement, drew close to 20,000 participants across three days. This time, the event features nearly 50 street booths, as well as almost 40 bartenders coming from Macau, the Chinese mainland, Hong Kong, and China's Taiwan region.

The event is organised by the General Union of Neighbourhood Associations of Macau and its District Development Centre. The association is commonly known as Kai Fong in Cantonese.

This year's music line-up, according to the event website, features acts from singers to DJs across Asia. Among the names are headliners Moon Tang and Sica, who are both from Hong Kong. Macau's Elisa Chan and amanda are also in the line-up. The event is open until Sunday from 3:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. ■



Revellers explore the booths set up for the second edition of the Felicidade Topsy Weekend last night. – Photo: Rui Pastorin

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MACAU POST

Macau Weather

FINE APART FROM CLOUDY PERIODS.
ONE OR TWO SHOWERS AT FIRST.
FORCE 3 TO 4 NORTH TO NORTHEASTERLY WINDS,
OCCASIONALLY FORCE 5 WITH GUSTS.
RELATIVE HUMIDITY
WILL RANGE BETWEEN
45% AND 85%.



24°C~32°C

Source: SMG

Seminar marks 130th anniversary of Gen. Ye Ting's birth

Staff Reporter

A seminar marking the 130th anniversary of the birth of General Ye Ting was held yesterday afternoon at the Macao Cultural Centre (CCM), bringing together scholars from the Chinese mainland and Macau to discuss the military leader's revolutionary career and ties to the city.

The seminar was organised by the Cultural Affairs Bureau (IC), co-organised by the Research Association of Yeting, and hosted by the Centre for Macao Studies at the private Macau University of Science and Technology (MUST), with support from the Institute of Modern History at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (CASS), the Research Centre for Macao History at the Chinese Academy of History and MUST's Institute for Social and Cultural Research.

The one-day seminar featured keynote speeches and panel discussions focusing on Ye's revolutionary beliefs, his historical connection with the Dongjiang Column*, his military strategy, his activities in Macau, the contemporary value of the "Iron Army spirit"**, and the preservation

of revolutionary heritage.

Cultural Affairs Bureau (IC) President Deland Leong Wai Man pointed out that Ye was one of the principal founders of the Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA) and a pivotal revolutionary figure in modern Chinese history.

"Macau was an important place where Ye and his family lived and stayed, and has since become a key centre for research into his historical links with the city," Leong noted.

She added that Macau would continue to deepen research into its revolutionary history and Ye's links with the city, as well as catalogue and preserve relevant historical materials.

MUST President Zhu Jian-Kang said the university would continue to promote academic cooperation between the Chinese mainland and Macau and deepen research into Ye's life and activities in the city.

"The research will provide a stronger academic foundation for patriotic education in Macau," Zhu said.

Ye's descendant Ye Xiaoyan also recalled her family's experiences during Ye's time in Macau, including how relatives sold their belongings to support the revolutionary cause,



From left to right: Lin Guangzhi, director of MUST's Institute for Social and Cultural Research; Ye Xiaoyan, co-founder of the Research Association of Ye Ting; Bai Bing, deputy director of the Department of Publicity, Cultural and Sports Affairs of the Central People's Government Liaison Office in the Macao SAR; Deland Leong Wai Man, acting president of the Cultural Development Consultative Council and president of the Cultural Affairs Bureau (IC); Zhu Jian-Kang, president of MUST; Zhu Hu, deputy director of the Institute of Ancient History, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences; and Li Jin Feng, researcher and deputy director of the Macao History Research Centre, Chinese Academy of History, during yesterday's ribbon-cutting ceremony at the Macao Cultural Centre in Nape.

— Photo: Sherwin Hng

adding that she would continue to organise historical archives and promote the "Iron Army spirit". ■

* The Dongjiang Column was a Communist Party of China-led anti-Japanese guerrilla force that operated in the Dongjiang (East River) region of Guangdong

and Hong Kong during the War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression. — DeepSeek

** The term "Iron Army Spirit" (铁军精神) primarily refers to the revolutionary spirit of the PLA, particularly the unit descended from the Ye Ting Independent

Regiment. The Iron Army Spirit is defined as a "family treasure" that guides troops to overcome difficulties, unite in struggle, and achieve victory. It is considered an important manifestation of the nature and purpose of the people's army. - DeepSeek

Local man, 81, critically ill with Legionnaires' disease: SSM

Staff Reporter

An 81-year-old local man was diagnosed with Legionnaires' disease and was in a critical condition after being admitted to the public Conde de São Januário Hospital Centre, according to a statement issued by the Health Bureau (SSM) yesterday.

The patient, who has a history of chronic illness, developed symptoms including a cough, phlegm, chest pain, and swelling in both legs roughly a month ago and sought medical treatment in the Chinese mainland.

He returned to Macau on Monday. As his symptoms worsened and he developed breathing difficulties, he sought treatment at a public health centre on Wednesday morning. He was subsequently transferred to the public hospital for further treatment, where a chest X-ray revealed pneumonia in both lungs.

The patient tested positive for Legionella pneumophila yesterday and was diagnosed with

Legionnaires' disease. He required ventilator support and remained in a critical condition, the statement said. His cohabiting family members were currently displaying no symptoms.

Legionnaires' disease is an infectious illness caused by Legionella bacteria, which can multiply rapidly in warm water and humid environments. People are commonly infected by inhaling contaminated droplets or mist released from artificial water systems, such as cooling towers, spa pools, and fountains.

The disease has an incubation period of two to ten days and is not transmitted from person to person or through food, the bureau noted. Men, elderly people, smokers, and individuals with weakened immune systems are at higher risk.

The SSM advised members of the public to properly maintain water systems and household devices that produce mist, and to use sterile or freshly boiled and cooled water in respiratory medical equipment. ■

Construction of Earth System Data Int'l Exchange Centre starts in Hengqin

Khalel Vallo

According to a statement by the Geophysical and Meteorological Bureau (SMG) yesterday, construction of the nation's first Earth System Data International Exchange Centre (Macao) officially began in the Guangdong-Macao In-Depth Cooperation Zone in Hengqin under a joint initiative between the China Meteorological Administration (CMA), the Macao Special Administration Region Government, and the In-Depth Cooperation Zone.

The statement noted that the three parties signed a cooperation framework agreement yesterday, setting a three-year construction period followed by, initially, a three-year operation period.

The centre aims to develop an ecosystem for the use of data resources, facilitate international cooperation on Earth system data, and support the cross-border circulation of high-quality data products and services, the statement said, adding that the centre is also intended to contribute to the development of a unified Earth system data market in the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area (GBA).

The statement quoted the China Meteorological Administration as saying that the centre is the first data exchange centre established as part of its overall development plan. The joint project is earmarked to support the country's major strategies and Macau's economic diversification, while promoting the international

application of China's "Mazu" intelligent early-warning solution*, the statement said.

Under the agreement, the three parties will draw on their respective strengths in data governance, international cooperation and the development of the In-Depth Cooperation Zone, the statement noted, adding that the three parties will also work to establish infrastructure for cross-border data exchange and develop policies and mechanisms for the secure circulation and use of Earth system data.

The parties will further explore closer co-ordination between Macau and Hengqin in weather forecasting and warning services, the statement noted.

The project is expected to strengthen data cooperation between

the Chinese mainland and Macau while supporting the development of the digital economy in the In-Depth Cooperation Zone and Macau's appropriate economic diversification, the statement pointed out, adding that it also aims to serve as a demonstration project for cross-border data cooperation under the "One Country, Two Systems" framework. ■

*China's MAZU (Multi-hazard, Alert, Zero-gap, and Universal) is an AI-powered meteorological early-warning solution developed by the China Meteorological Administration (CMA). Named after the traditional Chinese sea goddess who protects sailors, the system was launched in July 2025 to support the United Nations' "Early Warnings for All" (EW4All) initiative - Gemini



This image provided by the local observatory yesterday announces the start of construction of the nation's first Earth System Data International Exchange Centre (Macao). The centre will be located in Hengqin. Translation from Portuguese was arranged by the Post.

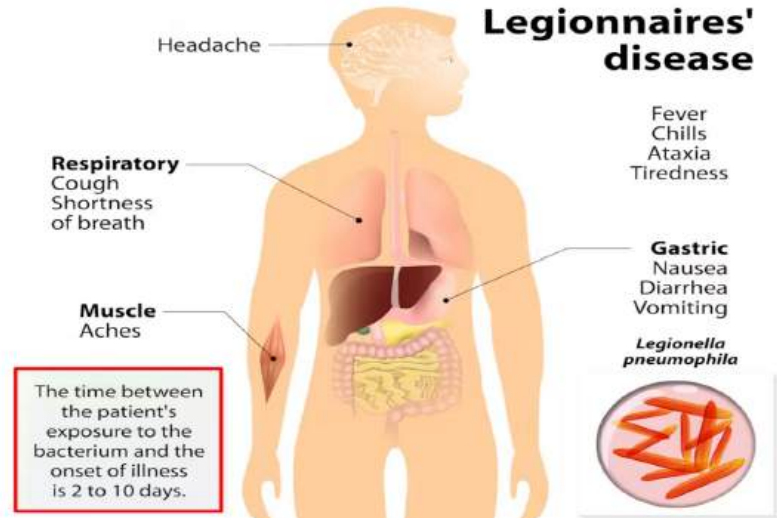


Image courtesy of University of Nevada, Las Vegas

OVERSEAS BOUND

Macau Anglican College int'l university placement rate climbs to 70.7%

True to its globally oriented education, roughly 7 in every 10 graduates of Macau Anglican College's (MAC) Class of 2026 have secured university placements abroad.

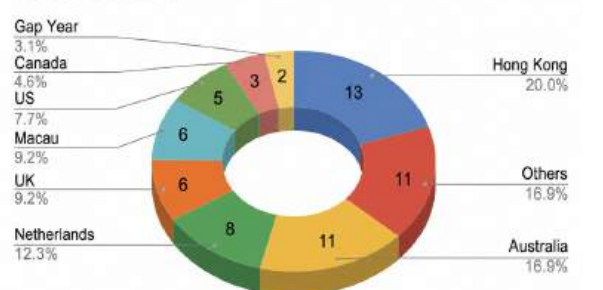
From 65% last year, 70.7% of this year's graduates received offers from various universities in Hong Kong (20%), Australia 16.9%), the Netherlands (12.3%), the United Kingdom (9.2%), the United States (7.7%) and Canada (4.6%).

The 5.7% growth in university placements abroad reflects MAC graduates' global outlook rooted in the school's Cambridge academic tradition.

Some reputable institutions include the following, indicating their world university rankings based on the Times Higher Education 2026 report:

- Imperial College London (#8)
- Tsinghua University (#12)
- University of Toronto (#21)
- Carnegie Mellon University (#24)
- The University of Edinburgh (#29)
- The University of Hong Kong (#33)
- The University of Melbourne (#37)
- King's College London (#38)
- The Chinese University of Hong Kong (#41)
- University of California, San Diego (#47)

Destinations



A student received a full scholarship at Berklee College of Music, a top-tier institution known for contemporary and commercial music.

Some students also received individual offers from institutions in Korea, Taiwan, Portugal, Switzerland, New Zealand and Mainland China.

A few graduates have yet to confirm their enrolment decisions, with offers currently held from institutions across Australia, Hong Kong, the Netherlands, the United States and the United Kingdom.

"We are extremely proud of our students' achievements and the increase in university offers. Catering to every student's potential and interest is of utmost importance," School Principal Robert Alexander said.



Macau Anglican College Class of 2026

Meanwhile, 9.2% of students have chosen to study in Macau, while 3.1% are taking a gap year.

Cambridge Results

Macau Anglican College showed favourable results in the June 2026 Cambridge exam series. Out of 556 entries, around 88.7% of students scored within the A*–C grade range in the International General Certificate of Secondary Education (IGCSE) category. With 233 entries in the Advanced Subsidiary (AS) Level, around 70.8% secured grades in the a⁺–c⁺ range. Additionally, 84.9% of Advanced Level (AL) students earned marks between A*–C out of 211 entries.

"Macau Anglican College continues to uphold its strong tradition of academic excellence in Cambridge public examinations, with students achieving outstanding results across IGCSE, AS and A Level in the June 2026 series. These achievements reflect the school's commitment to sustained excellence in teaching and learning and its dedication to nurturing students to succeed in all areas of academic pursuit," Vice-Principal Daniel Lee shared.

Lee confirmed that one student achieved A* in all five A Level subjects – a rare and impressive feat at this level of Cambridge examinations.

Global Engagement

At MAC, education extends far beyond the classroom, preparing the students to become global citizens.

The Modern Languages Department organised the "French Trip" to Shanghai and the "Portuguese Trip" to Vietnam.

Notably, teacher and student participation in the Global Citizenship Programme tripled, with different groups travelling to Korea, Taiwan and Mainland China in June.

The Model United Nations (MUN) Club has made tremendous contributions to MUN conferences in both Macau and Hong Kong, with several students earning special awards in public speaking. Plans of hosting the first-ever MUN conference on campus in January 2027 are underway.

"As a school, we believe in academic excellence which goes beyond examination results. Our young men and women understand their role in the wider world. This year's remarkable growth in our Global Citizenship Programme and international excursions has transformed them into global citizens with confidence to lead across the borders," Secondary Head of Section Andrea Munoyenda explained. *(Report by Marvin M. Enderes)*

MAC reigns at Macau Model United Nations 2026



PROOF OF EXCELLENCE: School Principal Robert Alexander (centre) congratulates (from left to right) Valerie Lee (F3B), Jamie Bierman (F4B), Cedar Leung (F3C) and Kyle Lai (F6C) after bagging the Outstanding School Delegation Award at the *The 5th Macau Model United Nations (MUN) Conference*. Not pictured is Mackenzie Costales, a recent MAC graduate who was also part of the delegation.

Living up to the vision of inspiring the next generation of learners to become confident individuals and effective contributors to society, Macau Anglican College bagged the Outstanding School Delegation Award during The 5th Macau Model United Nations (MUN) Conference, held at the University of Saint Joseph Ilha Verde Campus in Macau from August 6 to 9, 2026.

The conference required students to research their assigned countries, write position papers, debate with other delegates and use diplomacy to reach agreements.

The MAC delegation included Valerie Lee (F3B), Cedar Leung (F3C), Jamie Bierman (F4B), Kyle Lai (F6C) and Mackenzie Costales, a recent graduate. Adding another feather to their cap, Leung won the Best Position Paper award, Lai received an Honourable Mention and Costales took home the Outstanding Delegate award.

Earlier, Lai also competed in several student-led MUN conferences in Hong Kong, winning an Honourable Mention (June 27-28), NATO Best Speaker award (July 4-5) and House of Commons Most Outstanding Delegate award (July 11-12). Fellow student Lukas Polasek (F4C) also received an Honourable Mention in one of the events.

"Beyond inspiring a generation of learners, we also mould the next generation of leaders. The MUN platform provides an avenue for our young thinkers and communicators to unlock their potential," said MAC School Principal Robert Alexander.

Being part of MUN initiatives, he explained, allows young leaders to offer fresh perspectives on current global issues.

Building on the MUN club's growth on campus and its strong performance off-campus, MAC now plans to host its first-ever MUN Conference later this school year. *(Report by Marvin M. Enderes)*

O Lam urges educators to nurture virtuous and capable talent

Armando Neves

To mark Teachers' Day, the Chinese Educators' Association of Macau (EDUM) hosted the 2026 Teachers' Day Celebration Assembly yesterday at Macau Fisherman's Wharf.

In her speech, Secretary for Social Affairs and Culture Wallis O Lam expressed hope that teachers will cultivate more individuals of high virtue and outstanding talent.

Also in attendance were Chief Executive Sam Hou Fai, Zheng Xincong, director of the Liaison Office of the Central People's Government in the Macau Special Administrative Region (MSAR), Bian Lixin, commissioner of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of China in the Macao SAR, and Education and Youth Development Bureau (DSEDJ) Director Kong Chi Meng.

In her address, O Lam extended festive greetings to all educators across Macau. She noted that Macau's higher education international rankings have steadily climbed, the Macao-Hengqin International Education (University) Town is now operational, schools are continually introducing AI to enhance teaching, and patriotic education remains central to the entire educational process. She emphasised that the local government will continue to increase investment in educational resources, promote the development of AI education, refine the teacher training framework, and foster a culture of respect for educators. She encouraged teachers to champion the "educator spirit", embrace the



Pui Va Middle School Principal Lei Chao Lam speaks to the Post on the sidelines of yesterday's event at Fisherman's Wharf yesterday. – Photo courtesy of Pui Va Middle School

AI wave, advance the integration of industry and education, and nurture a new generation equipped with both moral integrity and practical ability.

Cheng Hong Kong, president of the Chinese Education Association of Macau (EDUM), extended festive greetings to all educators in Macau during the assembly. He highlighted that in PISA 2025, Macau ranked third globally in science and mathematics literacy, fifth in reading, and first in problem-solving using computational tools – achievements resulting from long-term support from the nation and the local government, alongside the dedicated efforts of local teachers and students. He said that his association will align with government policies and address issues such as low birth rates, national security, patriotic education, and teachers' rights.



Chief Executive Sam Hou Fai (front row, centre), Zheng Xincong, director of the Liaison Office of the Central People's Government in the Macau Special Administrative Region (front row, sixth from left), Bian Lixin, commissioner of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of China in the Macao SAR (front row, sixth from right) and other representatives pose with award-winning teachers. – Photo: Armando Neves

He stressed that the association will guide youth to love both the motherland and Macau through seminars, quizzes, and competitions, ensuring patriotic values are passed down through generations.

Ma lao Fong, president of EDUM's Youth Branch, described Macau's PISA 2025 achievements – third globally in science and maths, and top for computational problem-solving – as an encouraging triumph of collaborative efforts between schools, teachers, and students. He noted that achieving educational equity is an ongoing journey that requires continuous refinement of the learning environment, with a particular focus on disadvantaged and diverse families through measures such as after-school care. Facing the AI and digital transformation, he called for stronger STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) training for teachers

and more practical workshops to help apply new technology in the classroom.

Lei Chao Lam, the principal of Pui Va Middle School remarked that the PISA results validate Macau's long-term educational commitment. Lei introduced STEM education over a decade ago and equipped every teacher with a tablet, leveraging IT across disciplines combined with formative and diverse assessment to boost autonomous learning. He emphasised a student-centred philosophy where no student is left behind, with teachers providing lesson preparations, counselling, and tailored support so every learner can excel. Amid digital teaching, the school prioritises moral education alongside capabilities, using form-level and well-being teams to support teachers and students alike.

Wang Fan, the director of school curriculum development at Pui Va

Middle School, noted that Macau's PISA success reflects the collective dedication of Macau educators and the strengths of the educational system under "One Country, Two Systems". To adapt to shifting teaching paradigms, the school champions Project-Based Learning units that integrate multiple subjects, enabling students to solve problems through active learning. Adapting to these new methods requires extensive teacher training. The school also caters to diverse student needs through differentiated instruction, gamification, and tiered assignments, allowing learners to experience steady progress towards significant success. Looking ahead, teachers must understand technology trends, clarify AI application pathways across pre-class, in-class, and post-class stages, and undertake subject-specific AI training, Wang said. ■

Health programme completes over 49,000 student health screenings

Ida Cheong

The Health Bureau's Student Health Programme covered 97 school sections across Macau (including the Hou Kong Middle School Affiliated Hengqin School) for the 2025/2026 academic year, reaching a total of 52,025 students.

The actual number of participants reached 49,078 (94.3 percent), SSM Community Healthcare Services Department Chief Wong In announced in a press conference yesterday.

The press conference for the programme was held at the SSM Public Health Emergency Personnel Residence Hall on Guia Hill.

Targeting kindergarten and primary school students, the programme encompassed health screenings such as vision, hearing, and spinal examinations, as well as body weight assessments and oral check-ups, according to the press conference.

Wong noted that the overweight rate among local students stands at 13.5 percent. Furthermore, surveys revealed that 13.3 percent of obese students exhibit acanthosis nigricans*, which is a sign of insulin resistance and an early warning

signal for high-risk type 2 diabetes.

Regarding vision status, the myopia rate** among participating students reached 29.1 percent (14,265 students), while astigmatism*** and hypermetropia**** rates stood at 13.5 percent (6,611 students) and 2.8 percent (1,382 students), respectively, Wong said, adding that among 37,090 students who did not wear glasses, examinations found a refractive error***** rate of 22.6 percent (8,385 students).

Wong urged parents to seek professional ophthalmological or optometric evaluations for their children promptly upon receiving screening results and to follow medical advice for vision correction or myopia control measures.

For hearing screenings, tuning-fork tests were conducted for 3,810 kindergarten first-year students, yielding an initial abnormality rate of 0.16 percent (6 children). Pure-tone audiometry initial screenings were administered to 5,046 kindergarten third-year students, with an initial abnormality rate of 1.0 percent (48 children), Wong said.

Meanwhile, primary grade two, four, and six students were screened



Health Bureau (SSM) Community Healthcare Services Department Chief Wong In (centre) and other representatives look on during yesterday's press conference about the 'Student Health Programme' at its Public Health Emergency Personnel Residence Hall on Guia Hill. – Photo: Ida Cheong

via online computerised audiometry, with 17,849 participants resulting in an initial abnormality rate of 14.0 percent. All 2,506 students requiring hearing re-examination were scheduled for follow-up tests at health centres during the summer holidays. Among them, 1,550 attended, with 11 showing abnormal results (accounting for 0.7 percent), Wong added.

Wong pointed out that in terms of dental and spinal health, oral check-ups were provided for Primary 3 and 5 students. Among the 12,318 students examined, the suspected dental caries rate was 42.3 percent (5,214 students). Additionally, spinal examinations for Primary 5 students showed that 3.2 percent (207 out of 6,487 examined students) required

further evaluation, she said.

Wong added that all of these abnormal cases have been fully referred to specialists for follow-up.

The Health Bureau expects that the new edition of the programme will officially start in schools in October, Wong said, adding that the bureau will optimise the parent notification mechanism through the "Macao One Account" system in mid-September. ■

* *Acanthosis nigricans* is a skin condition that causes dark, thick, velvety patches to form in body folds and creases. – Gemini

** *Myopia* (near-sightedness) makes far-away objects look blurry because light focuses in front of the retina. – Gemini

*** *Astigmatism*: Causes blurred or distorted vision at all distances due to an uneven or irregular shape of the cornea or lens. – Gemini

**** *Hyperopia* (farsightedness): Makes nearby objects look blurry because light focuses behind the retina. – Gemini

***** *Refractive error* is a common eye disorder where the shape of the eye prevents light from focusing correctly on the retina, leading to blurry vision. – Gemini

43 racers to compete in FIA Karting Arrive & Drive Asia-Pacific

Rui Pastorin

A total of 43 kart racers from 16 countries and regions across the junior and senior categories will be vying for top prizes at this weekend's "2026 FIA Karting Arrive and Drive Asia-Pacific Championship" at the Coloane Karting Track, with the circuit welcoming its first FIA karting event since 2016.

The track had also previously hosted FIA Karting World Championship rounds back in 2009 and 2012.

The Asia-Pacific Championship is the second of the tri-continental Arrive and Drive Championships this year, concluding in October with the 2026 FIA Karting Arrive and Drive South American Championship set to be held at the Kartódromo de Imperatriz in Brazil, according to information provided to media after the blessing ceremony at the track yesterday afternoon.

Winners from the racing events will secure a place at the "Arrive and Drive World Cup" slated for Malaysia later this year.

Starting today with free practice sessions, two sprint races will take place tomorrow. The junior and senior finals are meanwhile scheduled for Sunday. Regarding the format and specifications, a ballot will determine the initial distribution of engines and chassis, and rotated during the competition to ensure fairness, according to the event information.

Racers in both categories meanwhile represent places including Australia, India, Japan, Singapore, South Korea and Thailand, the event also features those racing from the Chinese mainland, Hong Kong, and, of course, Macau's very own, including Chong Ian Ip, Vernice



Officiating guests and representatives pose during yesterday's suckling pig cutting ceremony for the 2026 FIA Karting Arrive and Drive Asia-Pacific at the Coloane Karting Track yesterday. — Photos: Rui Pastorin



Teams prepare competitors' karts at the Coloane Karting Track.

Lao Si Lun, Lou Chi Leong, and Henrique Quintela Borges in the senior category.

Automobile General Association Macao-China (AAMC) Secretary Davina Chu (朱妙麗) told the *Post* after the blessing ceremony that FIA representatives were happy to have a championship karting event in Macau again.

"For them to be coming back, this is something that is very significant, especially since the track has hosted some FIA World Championship Cups before", while highlighting that karting is the most common starting point

in a racer's career, including those who go on to race Formula One.

Chu further highlighted that having international FIA karting races, alongside the annual Macau Grand Prix, could create racing opportunities both for local racers and those from the Asia-Pacific.

This could also open up a path to follow, especially with the Macau Grand Prix's FIA F4 World Cup and the FIA FR World Cup. "For them, the path is already there. So, they can see their future by driving and racing in karting", possibly going on to the single-seater. ■

Farming experience activity to open registration on Monday

Ida Cheong

The Municipal Affairs Bureau (IAM) will organise the second phase of its 2026 farming experience activity at the Hac Sa Nursery (黑沙苗圃). Registration will be open from September 14 to September 20, according to an IAM statement yesterday.

The second phase of the farming experience will run from October 11 to February 14 of the following year, lasting approximately four months. A total of 140 groups will be accommodated. Each group can consist of one to six participants, with a registration fee of 270 patacas per group, the statement said.

The statement added that Macau residents aged 3 to 80 who are interested in farming and physically fit for outdoor labour can register

between September 14 and 20 via the "Macao One Account" platform, in person at the IAM Integrated Services Centre, or at any of the Public Service Centres and their sub-stations. The activity adopts a "first-register, then-draw, then-pay" registration method.

The final confirmed list of participants can be viewed on "Macao One Account" on or after October 5, the statement said, adding that the bureau will send an SMS to notify all confirmed groups to attend the "Farming Season Briefing Session" to be held on October 11.

For more details about the activity, please visit the Macao Nature Website at www.iam.gov.mo/nature, or call 2833 7676 or 2888 0087 during office hours. ■



This undated handout photo provided by the Municipal Affairs Bureau (IAM) yesterday shows participants in a farming experience activity at the Hac Sa Nursery (黑沙苗圃).

Galaxy Macau hosts Miu Miu Club debut with MINNIE appearance

Khalel Vallo

Galaxy Macau hosted the first Miu Miu Club event at its boutique on August 31, featuring a special appearance by Miu Miu* brand ambassador MINNIE, according to a recent statement by the integrated resort in Cotai.

MINNIE, whose real name is Nicha Yontarak, is a Thai singer, songwriter, and member of the South Korean K-pop girl group (G)I-DLE.

The event brought together music and fashion, with Galaxy Promenade VIPs and invited guests taking part in interactive activities, the statement said, adding that in order to mark the launch, the Miu Miu boutique showcases a curated collection exclusively for a limited period.

The collection will be available at the Galaxy Macau boutique until Sunday, the statement pointed out, underlining that the selection includes pieces from the Rendezvous, Arcadie, Vivant and Miu Miu Confidential collections, as well as the brand's ballerina flats and New Balance x Miu Miu footwear.

The statement said that the event forms part of Galaxy Promenade's efforts to collaborate with international luxury brands and offer retail experiences for visitors and local customers.

The Miu Miu Club event adds to the range of fashion and luxury retail activities at Galaxy Promenade, with the limited-edition



This handout photo provided by Galaxy Macau recently shows Miu Miu brand ambassador MINNIE pose during the first Miu Miu Club event at the integrated resort in Cotai on August 31.

collection remaining available at the boutique. ■

*Miu Miu is an Italian high-fashion house founded in 1993 by Miuccia Prada as a subsidiary of the Prada Group. Named after Miuccia's family nickname, the brand offers a playful, rebellious, and avant-garde counterpart to Prada's minimalist aesthetic, known for blending classic luxury with edgy, youthful, and subversively feminine designs. — Gemini

Integrated fare vending and validation gates launch at HZMB Zhuhai Port

Armindo Neves

Hong Kong based Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge Shuttle Bus Company Limited announced in a statement yesterday that it launched integrated fare vending and validation gates at the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge (HZMB) Zhuhai Port checkpoint on Tuesday.

According to the statement, the gates are only available for passengers travelling on Hong

Kong-Zhuhai return tickets.

According to DeepSeek, an integrated fare vending and validation gate is an automated passenger barrier used in transit systems that combines both ticket purchasing and ticket validation functions into a single unit. Instead of using separate machines to buy tickets and go through turnstiles, passengers can purchase or top up their fare and have it validated at the same barrier.

The statement indicated that this measure follows the introduction of the gates at the bridge's Hong Kong Port in June. New payment options, including WeChat Pay and Alipay QR code payments, have also been added at the Zhuhai site.

With the new gates in operation, passengers no longer need to purchase tickets in advance. Upon arriving at Zhuhai Port, commuters can simply scan their WeChat Pay or Alipay payment QR code at the gate, complete the transaction, and go through directly to board the bus — further streamlining the on-site boarding process.

The statement noted that passengers using the gates to pay will be charged the full fare of 58 yuan (70 patacas), as discounted tickets are not currently supported via direct QR code payment at the turnstiles. In addition, due to financial payment regulations, the integrated gates at Zhuhai Port do not currently support direct entry using an Octopus card tap. ■



This undated handout provided by Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge Shuttle Bus Company Limited yesterday shows integrated fare vending and validation gates set up at Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge Zhuhai Port (checkpoint).

MGM China opens 298-room hotel in Shenzhen

Rui Pastorin

The MGM Shenzhen Prince Bay officially opened yesterday, featuring 298 ocean-view rooms and suites, integrated resort operator MGM announced in a statement.

The hotel, a project developed by MGM China subsidiary MGM Hospitality Group, is located at Prince Bay, Shekou, Nanshan District, with the statement highlighting connectivity via the Shekou Cruise Home Port.

Designed by GP Architects and LTW Designworks, the hotel uses a “waterfront garden” narrative unfolding in three acts inspired by MGM cinema, while the architecture

and interiors take inspiration from the Prince Bay shoreline and its cruise-port heritage, according to the statement.

Other features include over 3,000 square metres of event space, a fitness centre, and heated swimming pool overlooking the harbour, along with five dining venues, the statement said.

The statement quoted MGM China Holdings Limited Chairperson and Executive Director Pansy Ho Chiu King as saying: “By bringing together MGM’s century-long legacy of hospitality, international operating expertise, and distinctive cultural

and entertainment DNA with Shenzhen’s spirit of openness and innovation and Prince Bay’s unique waterfront character, we hope to create an authentic local experience while establishing a premier waterfront lifestyle destination.”

Yang Lirong, chairman of Yunnan Xiangfeng Industrial Group Co., Ltd., property owner of MGM Shenzhen Prince Bay, was quoted as saying: “Together, we have created a landmark destination that combines the distinctive charm of a harbourfront setting with world-class hospitality standards, further elevating Prince Bay’s business, tourism, and cultural offerings.” ■



This photo provided by MGM yesterday shows MGM Shenzhen Prince Bay in Prince Bay, Shekou, Nanshan District.

The Parisian Macao celebrates 10th anniversary

Rui Pastorin

The Parisian Macao will be commemorating its 10th anniversary this Sunday, with integrated resort operator Sands China noting in a statement yesterday that the property has welcomed over 100 million visitors from all over the world since its opening.

According to the statement, the company has invested and enriched the property’s non-gaming offerings over the past 10 years, highlighting the integrated resort’s more than 2,540 hotel rooms, around 62,000 square feet of MICE (Meetings, Incentives, Conferences, and Exhibitions) facilities, the Shoppes at Parisian that cover around 27,600 m², family-friendly facilities, and dining opportunities. Its Eiffel Tower, built at half the scale of the original in Paris, also features a variety of experiences.

Moreover, the statement said that the 1,200-seat Parisian Theatre has presented a raft of international renowned performances, while a variety of art exhibitions have also been hosted at the property.

Sands China Executive Vice Chairman Wilfred Wong Ying Wai, was quoted by the statement as saying: “Over the past decade, The Parisian Macao has continually enriched Macau’s non-gaming tourism offerings through its diverse portfolio of hospitality, MICE, retail, entertainment and family-friendly experiences, while serving as an important catalyst

for the high-quality development of the tourism industry. Its iconic Eiffel Tower has become a defining feature of the Cotai skyline and a landmark through which myriads of visitors have come to experience, remember and connect with Macau.”

Wong added the company’s continued commitment to “advancing non-gaming development, introducing world-class events and experiences, and transforming the vitality of tourism into lasting momentum for Macau’s economic diversification.”

Meanwhile, leading up to the anniversary, a raft of celebratory events has been held, including the ongoing property-wide experience “An Interstellar Dream with Le Petit Prince” and “A Dazzling 10th Anniversary Celebration”, which has been on since August 7, with 1,500 drones taking to the sky on Fridays and weekends until the anniversary.

Moreover, “The Parisian Macao 10th Anniversary Community Fun Day” drew 130 families from local social service organisations, the statement said, while the Celebrity Chefs’ Table presented fine-dining experiences at Le Cristal Parisian was well-received.

The recent “Team Member Appreciation Celebration” also recognised staff efforts and contributions over the years, the statement said, with over 2,000 staff joining management executives in celebrating the decade-long journey. ■



This undated handout photo provided by Sands China yesterday shows crowds of spectators taking pictures of The Parisian Macao’s Eiffel Tower in Cotai.

Wynn to showcase more than 20 hypercars

Khalel Vallo

Wynn will showcase more than 20 legendary hypercars from Ferrari, Porsche, Lamborghini and Pagani at Wynn Macau and Wynn Palace from September 23 to November 22, as part of the fourth “Wynn Signature – 2026 Hypercar Exhibition”, according to a statement by the integrated resort operator on Wednesday.

The exhibition, themed around the current Year of the Fire Horse, will feature vehicles spanning from the 1960s to the present, highlighting the evolution of high-performance cars from the carburettor era to modern hybrid engineering, the statement said.

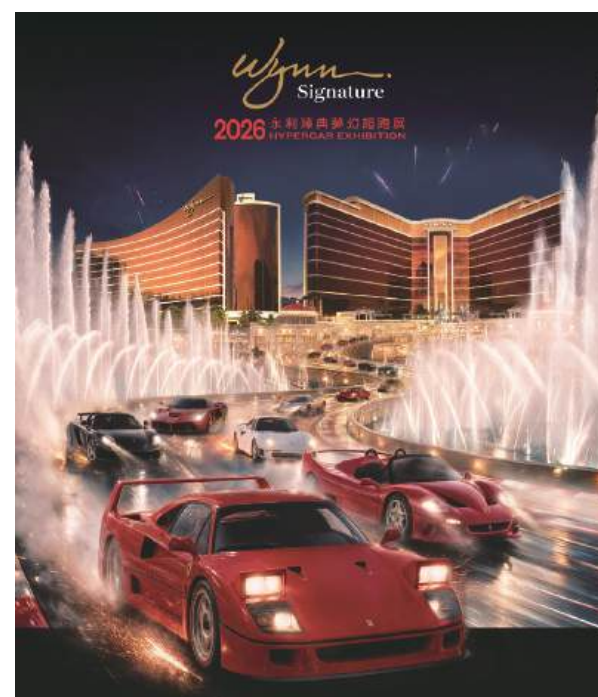
Among the highlights will be Ferrari’s F40, F50 and LaFerrari, bringing together three flagship models from different generations of the marque, the statement noted, adding that Porsche’s display will feature the 935, 959, Carrera GT and 911 GT3 RS 4.0, showcasing several decades of the manufacturer’s engineering development.

The exhibition will also feature the Lamborghini Miura, which debuted in 1966 and is widely regarded as the world’s first supercar, the statement said, adding that its 60th anniversary coincides with the Fire Horse theme of this year’s exhibition.

The statement said that the exhibition, launched in 2023, has become an annual event under its Wynn Signature lifestyle brand. The event will partly coincide with the annual Macau Grand Prix (MGP), creating a link between the cars displayed at the

exhibition and the motorsport action on the Guia Circuit, the statement noted.

The 73rd Macau Grand Prix (MGP) will take place from November 19 to 22. ■



This poster provided by Wynn on Wednesday promotes its upcoming “Wynn Signature – 2026 Hypercar Exhibition” slated to be held from September 23 to November 22 at Wynn Macau in Nape and Wynn Palace in Cotai.

Govt aims to open Macao National Museum of Culture 1st phase in 2029

Continued from p.1

The Zone C land reclamation project was completed in late 2022. The 0.32-square-kilometre man-made island is currently still undeveloped.

Among the three, the Macao National Museum of Culture located next to Macau Tower will be the first to be constructed.

The local government said earlier this year that it will run the Macao National Museum of Culture in collaboration with the National Museum of China in Beijing.

During yesterday’s press conference, Leong said that the Macao National Museum of Culture, to be constructed in two phases, will cover a total gross floor area of 100,000 square metres, comprising 80,000 square metres used for museum and exhibition facilities and 20,000 square metres earmarked for business, restaurant, and recreational facilities.

Leong noted that the museum will be a landmark, large-scale cultural facility. Given the high

technical requirements for the museum’s architectural design, which must meet top international specifications and standards, she said the local government has invited 10 architectural design teams to submit concept designs – comprising four from foreign countries, three from the Chinese mainland, and three local teams.

The four foreign teams are from the Netherlands, Portugal, Switzerland, and the United Kingdom, she said.

The 10 concept designs will be assessed by a panel including officials and experts in fields such as urban planning, architecture, culture, and museum management, Leong said, adding that the government expects to complete assessing them and select one within this year.

Afterwards, Leong noted, the government will begin the museum’s final construction design in line with the chosen concept design.

Leong said that with the aim of ensuring the first phase can be

completed and opened to the public sooner, it will be smaller in scale. She noted that the museum’s main facilities and functions will be housed in the second phase – which will be larger than the first.

Leong underlined that the government is aiming to complete the first phase and open it in 2029. She emphasised that the subsequent construction of the second phase will not affect the first phase’s operation.

Leong also noted that the current green promenade featuring various recreational facilities along the outer edge of the waterfront area east of Macau Tower will remain intact after the construction and operation of the Macao National Museum of Culture.

Meanwhile, Leong also said that the government will launch preparatory work next year for the design and construction of the other two major cultural facilities for the zone, adding that it aims to complete their final construction designs in 2030. ■

Xi to attend New Delhi summit to boost greater BRICS cooperation

BEIJING – President Xi Jinping will attend the 18th BRICS Summit in New Delhi tomorrow and on Sunday, a foreign ministry spokesperson announced in Beijing yesterday.

Over the past two decades, BRICS has grown into a major platform for cooperation among emerging markets and developing countries, with an ever-expanding role in global affairs.

China, as a staunch supporter and active participant in BRICS, has consistently upheld the BRICS Spirit of openness, inclusiveness and win-win cooperation, working with its partners to turn shared aspirations into practical cooperation and advance common development.

At the upcoming summit, Xi will join other leaders in charting a new course for the high-quality development of greater BRICS cooperation, pooling the collective strength of the Global South and contributing stability and positive momentum to a world undergoing profound changes.

BUILDING STRONGER BRICS

In March 2013, Xi attended the fifth BRICS Summit in Durban, South Africa. It was his first international summit as Chinese president.

“We, the five BRICS countries, come from four different continents. The grand goal of fostering partnership for common development and the noble cause of promoting democracy in international relations and advancing peace and development of mankind have brought us together,” he said in a keynote speech at the summit.

Xi called on BRICS countries to move toward the goal of integrated markets, multi-tiered financial network, connectivity by land, air and sea, and greater cultural exchanges.

Two years later, at the seventh BRICS Summit held in Ufa, Russia, Xi called for building a partnership for world peace, common development, inter-civilization dialogue and more effective global economic governance.

When China was the BRICS chair back in 2017, Xi proposed the “BRICS Plus” cooperation model at the ninth BRICS Summit in Xiamen, calling for getting more emerging markets and developing countries involved in the group’s concerted endeavors for cooperation and mutual benefits.

In October 2024, the 16th BRICS Summit in Kazan, Russia, marked

the first BRICS leaders’ offline summit since the group’s expansion. “It is for our shared pursuit and for the overarching trend of peace and development that we BRICS countries have come together,” Xi said in a speech at the summit.

Building on this vision, Xi proposed building a BRICS committed to peace, innovation, green development, justice and closer people-to-people exchanges.

Xi has advanced BRICS cooperation through “highly constructive proposals,” bringing more Global South countries that share a vision of a multipolar world into dialogue and practical cooperation, thereby strengthening the appeal and influence of BRICS, said Alexander Gusev, director of Russia’s Institute for Strategic Planning and Forecasting.

Today, the BRICS has expanded to 11 member countries and 10 partner countries, becoming a force for advancing a multipolar world and greater democracy in international relations.

BRICS countries account for nearly half of the world’s population, around 30 percent of the global economy and one-fifth of global trade.

“China seeks the greatest common ground for cooperation through equal dialogue, builds consensus around shared interests, and continuously strengthens the cohesion and capacity for action of BRICS cooperation,” said Mohamed Hussein, first deputy head of Egypt’s State Information Service.

BRICS is a platform with great potential while strengths and differences among its members are an asset, said Marcos Cordeiro Pires, a professor of political and economic sciences at the Sao Paulo State University.

In a world undergoing profound changes, the BRICS is amplifying the voices of Global South countries in demands for better governance, more security and the right to development, said Pires.

BRICS IN ACTION

At Xiamen Port in southeast China’s Fujian Province, a major hub for international shipping, the BRICS Go-Global Express officially kicked off in late July, providing a new bridge for Chinese companies to expand into BRICS markets abroad.

The inaugural event focused on



Official logo of BRICS India 2026 – Image courtesy of Government of India/Wikimedia Commons

Nigeria, which officially became a BRICS partner country last year. Hassan Mohammed, commissioner of the Trade Division at the Consulate General of Nigeria in Shanghai, said the BRICS Plus framework had created more platforms for exchanges and brought the two countries closer together.

At the 12th BRICS Summit in November 2020, Xi announced China’s plan to set up a BRICS Partnership on New Industrial Revolution innovation center in Xiamen.

Since its establishment, the center has facilitated more than 100 cooperation projects, with a total investment of over 62 billion yuan. It has also launched a scholarship for emerging industries, helping BRICS countries cultivate talent across a range of fields, including industry and communications.

Delivering results has been central to the BRICS agenda. As Xi once put it, “BRICS is not a talking shop, but a task force that gets things done.”

By the end of 2025, the New Development Bank, whose establishment Xi personally championed, had approved 139 projects with total financing of about US\$43 billion, bringing tangible benefits to people in Global South countries through green energy, transport infrastructure and access to clean drinking water.

In 2021, Xi proposed the Global Development Initiative at the general debate of the 76th session of the United Nations General Assembly. Five years on, the initiative is complementing and reinforcing the BRICS cooperation

mechanism, bringing development further to the forefront of the international agenda.

China has since launched initiatives to expand BRICS cooperation in areas including deep-sea resources, the digital economy, green industries and clean energy. It has also proposed new programs in artificial intelligence and digital education.

BRICS and the Global Development Initiative have increasingly complemented and reinforced each other, said Siti Mutiah Setiawati, a lecturer at Gadjah Mada University in Indonesia.

Together, they have brought greater attention to development on the international agenda, and helped translate shared aspirations into practical outcomes for emerging markets and developing countries, she said.

ADVANCING GOVERNANCE REFORM

In September last year, Xi proposed the Global Governance Initiative (GGI) at the “Shanghai Cooperation Organization Plus” Meeting in the northern Chinese port city of Tianjin.

Seven days later, when addressing a virtual BRICS Summit, Xi said the GGI “is aimed at galvanizing joint global action for a more just and equitable global governance system.”

BRICS countries are increasingly finding common ground on issues ranging from development and a more multipolar world to global governance reform. At the 2024 BRICS Summit, Xi called for building the group into “a vanguard for advancing global governance reform.”

The GGI provides an important framework for BRICS to advance global governance reform, helping strengthen the UN-centered international system and make global governance more just, equitable and representative, said B. R. Deepak, professor of Chinese and China Studies at the Centre of Chinese and Southeast Asian Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University.

This vision has also been reflected in Xi’s calls for greater cooperation among BRICS countries. At the “BRICS Plus” leaders’ dialogue in Kazan, Russia, Xi called on BRICS countries to become the main driving force for common development, play an active and leading role in the global economic governance reform, and make development the core of international economic and trade agenda.

At the BRICS Business Forum in Johannesburg, South Africa, in 2018, Xi also called on BRICS countries to firmly support the multilateral trading regime, advance global economic governance reform and increase the representation and voice of emerging markets and developing countries.

Concrete actions have accompanied these calls on reforming major international financial institutions. BRICS countries have put forward clear positions on reforms of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) quota system and the World Bank’s shareholding structure.

The Rio de Janeiro Declaration, adopted at the 17th BRICS Summit held last year in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, stressed that further quota realignment in the IMF should increase the shares of emerging markets and developing economies.

As for the World Bank, the declaration called for “increased voice and representation of developing countries, underpinned by a shareholding realignment that corrects their historic underrepresentation.”

“The greatest contribution of BRICS over the last two decades has been its role in changing the conversation about global political governance,” said Ronney Newadi, professor and director of the School of Economics, Development and Tourism at Nelson Mandela University.

“BRICS has demonstrated that emerging and developing economies are no longer just recipients of global rules, but are increasingly participating in shaping those rules,” said Newadi. — Xinhua

China, SCO members deepen basic education cooperation, with AI in focus

BEIJING – Members of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) are expanding cooperation in basic education via a new center in Beijing, with AI set to play a role alongside youth exchanges and teacher training.

The countries are expected to use the China-SCO Basic Education Cooperation Center, which was unveiled yesterday, as a platform to share experience in

developing basic education.

China is ready to use digitally enabled and AI-powered education to deepen practical cooperation with SCO members in education, science and technology, and talent, education authorities said.

The center is based in Beijing’s Chaoyang District. Education authorities from SCO member states and basic education institutions from across China

will be invited to take part in its development.

According to a report on the Global Digital Education Development Index, a composite index developed by the China National Academy of Educational Sciences, China’s ranking rose to sixth in 2025 from 24th in 2023.

The country’s national smart education platform has amassed more than 130,000

quality resources from primary and secondary schools, 12,500 vocational education courses and 145,000 higher education courses.

The platform boasts more than 178 million users, reaching more than 200 countries and regions, according to the Ministry of Education.

AI has been integrated into admissions and examinations, teaching assessment, employment

services and campus governance in China, said Yang Zongkai, director of the ministry’s advisory panel on digital transformation of education.

Founded in Shanghai in June 2001, the SCO has expanded from six founding members into the world’s largest comprehensive regional organization by geographic coverage and population, with cooperation spanning more than 50 areas. — Xinhua

Indonesia rescues 6 orangutans from fires in a week

JAKARTA — Six orangutans including two nursing infants have been rescued from fires raging on Borneo island in the past week, Indonesian authorities and rescuers said yesterday, bringing the total to 15 in a month.

The apes were saved from plantations in deep rural West Kalimantan province, on the Indonesian part of the island, where they got stuck after fires cut off access to their forest home, according to the forestry ministry and the YIARI wildlife rehabilitation foundation.

A large fire was burning just 200 metres from where the group of critically endangered primates were found, the ministry and YIARI said in a joint statement.

“This situation left the orangutans without a safe route back to their habitat; they could only move from one plantation to another,” said the statement.

“In addition to facing the threat of flames and smoke, the orangutans’ movement among plantations also has the potential to increase interactions and conflict with (human) communities.”

Four orangutans were rescued on Friday, with the help of residents and plantation workers, followed by another mother-infant pair on Tuesday.

Rescuers had to anaesthetise the animals to minimise stress and the risk of injury. All six were taken to YIARI’s rehabilitation centre in the town of Ketapang.

Orangutans are endemic to Borneo

and Sumatra islands — two of the places hardest hit by wildfires that have destroyed vast swathes of land and spewed putrid haze that has spread as far as Malaysia and Singapore.

The Indonesian government said more than 202,000 hectares of land burnt countrywide between January and July. Figures for August have yet to be released.

The Nusantara Atlas project has put the number at closer to 300,000 hectares, and yesterday gave an estimate of 895,657 hectares, which includes August.

Last week the European Union’s Copernicus Atmosphere Monitoring Service said the haze emitted by the fires was the worst for any month of August in 24 years.

Indonesia’s dry season typically runs from July to October, made worse this year by a strong episode of the El Niño weather phenomenon.

Wildfires emit dangerous levels of PM2.5 particles so small they can enter deep into the lungs and even the bloodstream, with potentially dire consequences for health.

According to Greenpeace estimates using government data, some 35 million people in Indonesia are exposed to toxic haze.

Some 43,000 firefighters were deployed to combat the blazes, national disaster mitigation agency spokesman Berton Panjaitan told reporters in Jakarta yesterday.

He said a Japanese navy ship had arrived in West Kalimantan with three helicopters to aid water bombing efforts.

— AFP



This handout picture taken last Friday and released yesterday by Indonesia’s Ministry of Forestry and Yayasan Inisiasi Alam Rehabilitasi Indonesia (YIARI) shows a rescue operation for orangutans caught up in wildfires in Pemangkat village in West Kalimantan province.

— AFP

Online and undercover: saving trafficked wildlife in Thailand

Sara Hussein and Thanaporn Promyamyai

BANGKOK — Nawee Changpirom has spent years working to rescue trafficked wildlife in Thailand, but even he can sometimes hardly believe the creatures he has found: leopards, hornbills, and once an anteater.

“We even found living corals hidden in a ceiling,” he told AFP.

Nawee heads a raid unit in the Department of National Parks, Wildlife and Plant Conservation (DNP) that tries to stop the sale of everything from African elephant ivory to monkeys wanted as pets or for laboratory testing.

Alongside weapons, drugs and human trafficking, the illegal wildlife trade is among the most widespread and profitable forms of organised crime globally, run by cross-border cartels.

Thailand occupies a rare position because of its abundant local wildlife, the availability of rare species in nearby countries, and its accessibility by sea, air and land.

The DNP set up a dedicated Wildlife Crime Intelligence Unit (WCU) in 2023 with three permanent staff charged with tracking and intercepting illegal purchases.

They spend much of their time trawling social media, which is now “the key channel” for buying and selling illegal animals, said WCU director Polawee Buchakiet.

Wildlife traders often describe animals as needing to be “rehomed”, rather than explicitly offering them for sale, and post tightly cropped images of their wares to avoid revealing their locations.

But the WCU has undercover officers who can track them down.

Undercover officers

One undercover officer — known by the pseudonym “Tee” — has shinned up electricity poles disguised as a repairman to peer into courtyards and take photos, and posed as a land surveyor to look into windows on neighbouring plots.

The WCU needs such evidence to obtain court warrants to go in and seize the animals.



This photo taken on June 29 shows a six-month-old leaf monkey that was intercepted by the Wildlife Crime Intelligence Unit at Suvarnabhumi airport bound for India, in the hands of veterinarian Thanawadee Phaichana at the Department of National Parks, Wildlife and Plant Conservation (DNP) headquarters in Bangkok.

— AFP

He is still haunted by cases where sellers could not be located, or the team arrived too late, finding the creatures either dead or so sickly they died soon after rescue.

Trafficked animals are often weakened by the process of smuggling, stressed by the loss of their habitat and family group, and vulnerable to unfamiliar diseases.

“I wonder to myself if we could have done something to get there sooner,” Tee, 43, told AFP.

“Whether they are big or small, all animals’ lives are precious.”

Exotic pets

At just six months old, the leaf monkey curled up inside DNP vet Thanawadee Phaichana’s rubber-gloved hand is very small indeed.

He was intercepted in luggage at Bangkok’s Suvarnabhumi Airport, bound for India, where demand for exotic animals as pets has been growing.

A second monkey found in the same bag died after being rescued.

“Most of these smuggled animals will be in a weak condition... some are given sedatives or even mild anaesthetic to keep them from moving or making noise,” Thanawadee said.

Animals rescued in and around Bangkok often come to the DNP’s small facility for initial treatment

before being transferred to a sanctuary.

Older, healthier animals might eventually return to the wild, but younger ones struggle to learn the skills needed to survive.

“I feel sorry for them,” said Thanawadee.

Wildlife traffickers can face up to 10 years in prison for crimes involving protected species, or 15 years for endangered species.

There has been a string of recent high-profile arrests, including a July raid that rescued a leaf monkey, a gibbon and hundreds of turtles, as well as multiple interceptions at airports.

But there have also been setbacks.

In 2019, a Thai court dismissed the case against suspected wildlife trafficking kingpin Boonchai Bach. While the Supreme Court later sentenced him to prison, he remains at large.

The team also struggles with stonewalling from social media sites and chronic shortages of staff and funds.

Officers posing as undercover buyers sometimes have to use their own money, Nawee said.

What would make a real difference? An end to the exotic pet trade, he said.

“These are wild animals, they don’t belong in a cage.”

— AFP

Philippine ferry fire kills 5, dozens missing

MANILA — Philippine rescuers raced yesterday to extinguish a fire that erupted aboard a ferry near a tourist hotspot, killing at least five people and leaving 86 others missing, according to the coast guard.

The blaze broke out on the M/V June Aster Wednesday evening about 2.2 kilometres off the shores of Palawan province, the coast guard said, adding that five bodies as well as 43 survivors had been brought ashore.

The coast guard has yet to establish the cause of the fire, but said one survivor reported hearing a “loud explosion” from the cargo hold.

“After that there was smoke and

fire. As per the testimony of the survivor, it escalated quickly. After seconds, the fire started spreading,” coast guard spokeswoman Noemie Cayabyab told reporters yesterday.

With the fire not yet extinguished, rescuers have been unable to search the vessel, Cayabyab said, adding that some people may still be trapped inside.

Waiting for nearly 24 hours for updates about the missing, hundreds of people desperate for news about the incident have left comments on the Facebook page of a local mayor, searching for relatives, friends and even a dog.

The ferry’s manifest listed 134

passengers and crew. It was also carrying goods, an electric vehicle, a pickup truck and motorcycles.

Of the 43 rescued, 38 were passengers and four were crew, said Cayabyab. The identity of another survivor was not immediately clear.

“Most of the people we rescued were those who had been swimming away from the vessel,” said the spokeswoman.

She said many were in a state of shock, and comprehensive interviews that could shed light on the incident will only take place later on.

As the search continued for the 86 people presumed missing, coast

guard, military personnel and local responders were working to tamp down the thick smoke billowing from the ferry.

Fishermen and private resort owners from the area had also joined the search, while the Philippine Army deployed rescue boats and has a military aircraft on standby.

The company that owns the ferry, Atienza Interisland Ferries Inc, said they were fully cooperating with the investigation.

“We are working around the clock and have mobilised all available resources to manage this crisis,” the company said in a statement.

“Our hearts remain with the affected families, and we will not rest until all individuals are accounted for.”

The ferry, which left from the capital Manila and was headed for the town of Coron, is currently aground on an island in Palawan province.

In January, a triple-decker ferry carrying more than 340 people sank off the southern Philippines, killing at least 52 people.

The M/V Trisha Kerstin 3 sank along nearly the same route where 31 people died in 2023 after a fire broke out aboard the Lady Mary Joy 3 ferry.

— AFP

Uneducated Afghan woman establishes dairy farm to achieve economic independence

GHAZNI — In post-war Afghanistan, economic survival is an uphill battle, particularly for illiterate women who face towering barriers to employment. Yet, in the eastern Ghazni province, 31-year-old Tahira Sarwari proved that determination and hard work can achieve economic independence.

Facing extreme hardship eight years ago, she sold her only gold bracelet to buy a single calf, igniting a remarkable journey that has since transformed into a thriving dairy enterprise, supporting her family and providing vital jobs for her community.

“A total of five women work for me on the farm. I am satisfied that I have established a cattle farm, created job opportunities, and earned a reasonable income,” Sarwari told Xinhua recently at her farm.

She also said that over two dozen people work indirectly for her dairy farm.

“We produce up to 300 liters of milk every day, and in addition, we produce yogurt, cream and cheese and supply them to the market,” said



Dairy farmer Tahira Sarwari strokes cattle at her farm in Ghazni Province, Afghanistan, on Monday.

— Xinhua

Sarwari, a mother of four children.

Employees on the farm highlight the vital role such initiatives play in their daily survival.

“I work here on the farm, and my responsibility is to provide fodder to the cows and do milking,” said Najwa, a 21-year-old girl.

“Living conditions are difficult, but we have to work to overcome the challenges and build our livelihood,” said the girl, whose income supports her family and

allows her to save independently.

While numerous women across Ghazni and other Afghan cities operate home-based businesses to sustain their households, locals note that Sarwari stands out for achieving financial independence and job creation entirely without a formal educational background.

Sarwari remains ambitious, expressing hope to expand her herd to 50 cattle in the future to further scale her production. — Xinhua

Mount Fuji ends hiking season with landslide, 2 rescues

TOKYO — A landslide struck a car park on Japan’s Mount Fuji, with the final day of the volcano’s summer climbing season yesterday marred by downpours and dense mist.

Three vehicles belonging to people working on the mountain were partially buried Wednesday, as powerful gusts and torrential rain battered the popular hiking destination, a local official told AFP.

No injuries were reported in the incident, which occurred in a parking lot at one of the 3,776-metre volcano’s four main access gates, said Hisayuki Motohashi, a road maintenance official for the Shizuoka regional government.

Separately, Shizuoka police said yesterday they had been called to help rescue two hikers.

A man who appeared to be in his 30s or 40s was found collapsed near the summit Wednesday while another man who appeared to be in his 60s was found fallen on a trail the same day, according to a local police official, who spoke on condition of anonymity.

She did not provide details about the condition of both individuals.

The local Shizuoka government and official mountain guides posted video clips and photos from the mountain yesterday morning, showing access roads and gravel trails covered with dense mist and rain.

Mount Fuji attracts more than 200,000 hikers every year during its official opening period from July through September.

Local police rescue dozens of people and report a few deaths every year.

In recent years, communities around the popular mountain have tightened access rules to Mount Fuji to ease severe overtourism problems.

They have also tried to stop poorly equipped climbers from summitting and mandating that visitors spend at least one night at one of the huts on the trails.

On Tuesday, hundreds of Asian Games athletes in Japan were briefly evacuated from their accommodation as record rainfall lashed host city Nagoya. — AFP

Nepal estimates US\$4.74 billion needed for post-flood reconstruction, recovery

KATHMANDU — Nepal is estimated to need US\$4.74 billion for reconstruction and recovery following a devastating mudslide that struck its northern districts on August 26, the Prime Minister’s Secretariat said yesterday.

The estimate is based on a Rapid Damage and Needs Assessment (RDNA) report prepared by a joint technical team comprising the National Planning Commission, a planning body of the Nepal government, and the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Authority (NDRRMA).

The deadly mudslide had killed 1,377 people and left 5,130 people missing as of 11:00 a.m. local time yesterday, according to NDRRMA.

Citing the RDNA report, the Prime Minister’s Secretariat said the infrastructure sector suffered the largest share of the damage, requiring US\$3.1 billion for recovery, equivalent to about 75 percent of the total estimated recovery needs.

The energy sector has been particularly hard hit, with the mudslide affecting 13 hydropower projects with a combined capacity of 759 MW and five solar plants with a total capacity of 24 MW.

The report estimates that US\$2.56 billion will be required to restore the energy and power grid systems.

The report puts the cost of restoring transport infrastructure at 481 million dollars.

The mudslide also caused significant damage to homes and other social infrastructure in Rasuwa, Nuwakot, Dhading, Gorkha and Chitwan districts.

The RDNA report has divided the reconstruction process into short- and long-term phases. It estimates that US\$57.28 million will be needed over the next six months for immediate relief and short-term reconstruction.

The remaining amount will be required for long-term reconstruction, the report said, highlighting the enormous financial burden the disaster has placed on the government and affected communities. — Xinhua

Sri Lankan court revokes monk’s pardon, orders return

COLOMBO — Sri Lanka’s Supreme Court overturned yesterday a presidential pardon granted to a hardline Buddhist monk and ordered him to serve the remainder of a six-year prison sentence for intimidating the wife of a missing cartoonist.

The ruling marks a major setback for Galagodaatte Gnanasara, 51, a Buddhist nationalist monk whose critics accuse him of fuelling anti-Muslim sentiment and religious tensions in Sri Lanka.

A three-judge bench ruled that the pardon granted by then president Maithripala Sirisena in May 2019 was “arbitrary and invalid”.

The court reinstated Gnanasara’s sentence and ordered his return to prison.

The case was brought by the Centre for Policy Alternatives (CPA) and Sandya Eknaligoda, whose husband, political cartoonist Prageeth Eknaligoda, disappeared in 2010 and remains missing.

Rights groups had opposed the clemency, arguing it undermined the rule of law.

Gnanasara, leader of the nationalist Bodu Bala Sena (BBS), or Buddhist Force, was jailed in 2018 after being convicted of intimidating Sandya Eknaligoda during proceedings linked to the investigation into her husband’s disappearance.

The monk had appeared at a magistrate’s hearing to support military intelligence officers accused of abducting Prageeth

Eknaligoda, whose cartoons were critical of former president Mahinda Rajapaksa.

During heated exchanges in court, Gnanasara accused the missing cartoonist and his wife of supporting Tamil extremists and damaging the reputation of the military.

The court later convicted him of criminal intimidation and sentenced him to six years in prison.

However, Sirisena personally intervened and granted Gnanasara a presidential pardon in 2019 after the monk had served less than a year of his sentence.

The decision drew condemnation from rights advocates.

The monk remained politically influential after his release.

In 2020, then president Gotabaya Rajapaksa appointed him to head a committee on legal reforms.

Gnanasara later served a separate nine-month prison term over remarks deemed insulting to Islam and for inciting religious hostility in the Buddhist-majority nation.

He allegedly has close ties with Myanmar’s ultranationalist monk Wirathu, who is accused of stoking religious tensions there.

Wirathu visited Sri Lanka at Gnanasara’s invitation shortly after anti-Muslim riots in 2014 that left four people dead.

Both monks have portrayed themselves as defenders of Buddhism against what they describe as Islamist extremism, although Gnanasara has denied any role in the riots. — AFP

Countries demanding rights for Afghan women while cutting aid is ‘hypocrisy’: Norwegian Refugee Council to AFP

KABUL — The head of the Norwegian Refugee Council aid group, Jan Egeland, criticised yesterday what he called the “hypocrisy” of countries demanding rights for Afghan women while cutting humanitarian assistance.

Afghanistan has seen a sharp decrease in international aid since 2021, when the Taliban authorities returned to power. They have since imposed a series of rules limiting women’s access to education and public life.

In an interview with AFP in Kabul, Egeland said that it was “right” for foreign countries “to demand, like we do, education for Afghan girls, work

rights for Afghan women”.

“But it is hypocrisy when one does that from abroad in a seminar in some capital in Europe and cut aid for food to Afghan girls and even for primary education for Afghan girls,” he said.

As the country grapples with a humanitarian crisis, the United Nations said that by late August it had less than 30 percent of the funds needed “to deliver life-saving assistance to people in need”.

Egeland, who is visiting his organisation’s projects in Afghanistan, said that it was forced to lay off “female aid workers and

female teachers on the primary school level for girls because we don’t have enough money”.

Following their 2021 return, the Taliban authorities have closed high schools and universities to women and girls over the age of around 12, alongside imposing a series of rules on women’s access to public life.

It is the only country in the world where girls’ education is banned after primary school.

“My message to Taliban authorities... is by not giving education to girls beyond primary school you will have a catastrophe on your hands,” Egeland said. — AFP

Trump promises Americans US\$5,000 if Republicans win Congress

Danny Kemp and Frankie Taggart

DALLAS – US President Donald Trump yesterday promised US\$5,000 to every American adult if Republicans retain control of Congress in November, coupling the extraordinary claim with a plea for his supporters to “pretend” he was on the ballot.

“If the Republicans win, you win with us and you get US\$5,000. It will be called the Trump dividend,” he told the Republican midterm convention in Dallas, as the party struggles in polls against the Democrats.

The president did not disclose where the money would come from – with the theoretical bill likely topping \$1 trillion – saying only that “our country is making so much money.”

Doubling down on his bet that he can help Republicans defy opinion polls and retain both houses of Congress on November 3, Trump said: “I’m asking you to pretend that I’m on the ballot.”

“I’m on the ballot, I’m on the ballot – just one more time,” he told the crowd.

Opinion polls overwhelmingly show that Trump’s approval ratings are in the low 30s, as voters become increasingly angry about high prices and the war he launched against Iran.

Decision Desk HQ projects Democrats to win the House 230-205 and the Senate to finish 51-49 in their favour in November.

Vice President JD Vance said US tariffs “generated a lot of revenues” and that the Trump dividend was a way to benefit Americans.

“What the president is just saying is... If you keep us in power



US President Donald Trump speaks during the Republican National Midterm Convention at the American Airlines Center in Dallas, Texas, on Wednesday.

– AFP

and allow us to continue to do these things, then you are going to share in some of the benefit of this incredible wealth,” Vance said in a Fox News interview.

“I don’t think it’s a controversial idea,” he added.

Trump defends Iran war

Trump strongly defended the unpopular Iran war, predicting victory and linking it directly to lower oil prices – before suggesting the strategically vital Strait of Hormuz should be renamed after him.

“Food prices and almost every other item are rapidly going down. And by the way oil will be going down as soon as we win the war

with Iran, which is taking place right now,” Trump said.

Trump also echoed other Republicans at the convention stirring up what he said was a wave of communism threatening the United States.

“It’s going to be a communist country if they win,” he said.

“Your vote will decide whether our country stumbles at the starting gate of the next 250 years or surges forward and never ever looks back,” he said.

The central Republican gamble is whether Trump can mobilise voters personally loyal to him even when he is not actually running, without further alienating

independents who have soured on his presidency.

Political headwinds

Inside the American Airlines Center, there was little sign of Republican anxiety about November.

The convention even featured a video address from Democratic Senator John Fetterman, who has become increasingly at odds with his party’s left wing over issues including Israel.

Republicans highlighted tax cuts and immigration enforcement, touting boosted manufacturing and lower prescription drug prices.

The cavernous arena was festooned with Trump posters

as supporters milled around in sequined jackets patterned with his name, image and the American flag, some topped with ten-gallon hats.

Food stalls hawked snacks while merchandise stands did brisk business in T-shirts, mugs, posters and copies of the latest literary offering from the Trump clan, “Under Siege” by the president’s second son, Eric.

Despite the political headwinds facing Republicans, the mood was festive. Chants of “USA! USA!” – familiar from Trump’s campaign rallies – echoed around the hall as the national anthem opened the program.

Trump’s speech was received warmly in the room, with spontaneous bursts of chanting after each applause line, and the enthusiasm spilled into the vast atrium outside.

Dallas local Tracey Wroblewski, 59, said Trump was “on fire” with his inspiring midterm messaging.

“It’s awesome, it’s meaty, it’s we’re fixing our country,” she told AFP.

“He’s funny, and he’s, he’s on point. We’re not going to communism. We’re staying Republican, thank you very much.”

The gathering was the first Republican national convention held specifically for a midterm election, although no candidates are being nominated and no formal party business is planned.

Instead, organisers constructed what amounts to a two-night television rally touting Trump’s record and Republican candidates.

More than 100 House members and candidates attended, with over 50 speakers or presentations each night.

– AFP

Defiant Iran seeks to bruise Trump ahead of midterms

Stuart Williams

PARIS – Iran is intensifying confrontational actions against the United States in the hope of further raising the cost of the conflict for President Donald Trump less than two months ahead of the US midterm elections, analysts say.

Over half a year after the war erupted on February 28 with US-Israeli attacks that killed supreme leader Ali Khamenei, Iran is upping the ante, even risking a return to all-out fighting, rather than dialling down and looking into diplomacy.

Trump, under pressure to end the war as midterm elections loom on November 3, declared on Wednesday: “I think the war will end immediately after the election” because Iran “can’t hold out any longer”.

But even as the chain of command in Tehran remains nebulous with Khamenei’s successor and son Mojtaba still yet to make a public appearance, the leadership has doubled down on the Islamic republic’s traditional policy of confrontation with the United States.

Far from allowing the return of free shipping through the Strait of

Hormuz – a vital energy conduit that normally carries around a fifth of the world’s oil and liquefied natural gas – it has announced and then expanded a new prohibited zone in the area.

“Iran perceives that it is winning the war and that the US is losing,” Thomas Juneau, professor at the University of Ottawa, told AFP.

“It perceives a window of opportunity to exploit US weakness and vulnerability to reshape the regional order to its benefit,” he added.

‘Exploit US vulnerabilities’

Sanam Vakil, director of the Middle East and North Africa programme at UK-based think tank Chatham House, said Iran “is trying to convert escalation into increased leverage”.

“Tehran believes that pressure on Hormuz and the threat of wider disruption can exploit US vulnerabilities, especially the political and economic costs of another Middle East crisis ahead of the midterms,” she added.

Iran’s Revolutionary Guards said on Wednesday they targeted

10 vessels that were attempting to cross this prohibited area of the Strait of Hormuz.

The Guards also said they struck a US military base in Jordan in response to US forces destroying five Iranian oil tankers a day earlier. CBS News reported that roughly eight US F-15s sustained light damage in the Iranian strikes overnight Tuesday.

Iran believes that ahead of the midterms “the US is constrained from escalating and because of that, an easily distracted president Trump is ceding the momentum to Iran,” said Juneau.

On the streets of Tehran, there is no let-up from the ideology of confrontation, with banners proclaiming “We will kill Trump” and showing coffins of American forces being brought home, according to AFP images.

‘Hopes to weaken Trump’

The new prohibited zone was announced on state television on Sunday by Mohsen Rezaei, new head of Iran’s supreme national security council, one of several veteran hardliners elevated to key

posts by the still unseen Mojtaba Khamenei.

“We don’t trust the United States, and we will not take further steps unless they engage in trust building measures... They need to deliver,” Rezaei, wearing a full military uniform, declared confidently.

Revolutionary Guards spokesman Hossein Mohebi on Wednesday issued a string of demands for ending the war, ranging from the withdrawal of Israeli forces operating in south Lebanon to the release of some US\$24 billion in frozen Iranian assets.

Iran is hoping that bruising Trump ahead of the midterms could prompt his Republicans to lose control of the House of Representatives and even the Senate, reducing the president to lame duck status for the last two years of his presidency, analysts say.

“Iran cannot defeat the United States militarily,” said Ali Alfoneh, a senior fellow at the Arab Gulf States Institute.

“Instead, Tehran hopes to weaken President Trump politically by contributing to a Republican defeat in the midterm elections – keeping gasoline prices high and

reminding American voters that the president has entangled the United States in the very ‘never-ending war’ he promised to avoid,” he added.

‘Anger will mount’

Contrary to Trump’s confidence that the war can end soon, The Wall Street Journal reported the president had been warned by advisers that Iran could resist the United States up to even after he is due to leave office in January 2029.

Vakil of Chatham House said Iran “could be overestimating how much escalation Washington will tolerate but sees this strategy as the only pathway to pressuring Trump.”

Beyond the continued public absence of its supreme leader, Iran’s leadership is facing a host of problems including an economic crisis that in January sparked protests put down by a crackdown that left thousands dead.

“There absolutely is a risk of Iran overplaying its hand,” said Juneau, adding the leadership is “very vulnerable domestically” and “popular anger will only mount as economic problems worsen”. – AFP

Portugal harvests grapes at night to beat the heat

Levi Fernandes

ESTREMOZ – Equipped with headlamps and pruning shears, a team of farm workers navigate pitch-black darkness during a nocturnal grape harvest that shields them from Portugal’s increasingly oppressive summer heat.

“At night, it’s much cooler, and with this light we see the bunches of grapes better,” Maria Jerônima Mendes, 70, told AFP on a rural estate lined with lush vines.

Climate change is intensifying and lengthening spells of extreme heat and drought across Europe, with EU’s climate monitor reporting yesterday that western Europe sweltered through its warmest summer this year, while August was the hottest single month ever recorded globally.

The heat has forced adaptations in the continent’s wine-making south that includes Portugal, Spain, Italy and Greece.

At Herdade das Servas, an estate of around 350 hectares located some 150 kilometres east of Lisbon, nighttime grape harvests were fully

adopted last year after a successful test in 2024.

At first, the shift came up against the reluctance of its around 20 workers from Portugal, Romania and Southeast Asia, in a sector already struggling to recruit.

But the harvesters have now come to terms with working at night in cooler temperatures that make the manual work more bearable.

“Working at night isn’t more tiring, it’s just a matter of habit,” said Mendes, who has worked in the fields since she was 12 and is the oldest member of the team.

Under a clear sky illuminated only by the stars and the Moon, it was still 28C at midnight at the estate in southern Portugal’s Alentejo region.

But the temperature was much lower than the daytime peak of 40C, with such highs creeping into September as well as baking the country during the summer months.

The nighttime harvests “have become a necessity” to spare the workers from “temperatures of more than 40 degrees”, said Renato



Workers from Portugal's Herdade das Servas winery use headlamps during a night grape harvesting in Estremoz last Thursday. – AFP

Neves, director of production at Herdade das Servas.

‘Response to climate change’

As in other European regions struck by an exceptionally warm and dry summer, the grape harvest in Alentejo started in early August – two weeks earlier than usual.

The new working conditions also offer an advantage for the wine-making process at the estate, which produced some 277,000 litres

of red, white and rose wine in 2025.

“At night, the grapes arrive fresher, which delays the start of fermentation,” making it possible to “obtain better decanting” and a better “extraction of aromas”, explained Neves.

As well as adapting the working hours, Neves’s estate no longer removes the weeds that grow at the base of the vines to try to retain soil humidity and thwart the increasingly hot, dry conditions.

At daybreak, the workers leave the vines and the harvest is taken to

vats, where the grapes are washed and sorted before being crushed.

The night harvest then provides another advantage, as the cellar works at full capacity during the day, when the estate’s solar panels are at their most productive.

The spread of harvesting at night across several European countries “is a response to climate change, and in Mediterranean climates I think this practice is here to stay”, said oenologist Rui Reguinga.

The wine expert believes the new method is “another step in the transition towards a more sustainable viticulture”.

But fellow oenologist Tiago Macena, a specialist in grape varieties native to Portugal, said the adaptation had its limits as it requires a specific organisation and a workforce prepared to work at night.

The practice is for now “limited to large wine estates” that characterise the country’s south, but is yet to find an uptake among the smaller producers in the north, he said. – AFP

Brazilian court debates fracking for oil and gas

BRASÍLIA – A high Brazilian court began debating on Wednesday whether to authorise fracking for shale oil and gas deposits, an extraction technique for hard-to-reach reserves which is opposed by environmental advocates.

Fracking has been banned in France and Germany but in Latin America, Argentina and Chile allow it.

The technique has been used in thousands of Brazilian wells, but some states have passed local bans to prevent environmental damage, and the courts have blocked projects on similar grounds.

The decision expected from Brazil’s Superior Court of Justice on October 8 will apply throughout the country.

The process of fracking involves injecting water, sand and chemicals underground to break up rock formations where oil or natural gas have accumulated.

Environmental damages and dangers posed by fracking include contamination of groundwater and the possibility of inducing earthquakes.

The case under review by the court dates back 12 years, when the National Petroleum Agency (ANP) auctioned off several unconventional deposits in western São Paulo state. The public prosecutor’s office blocked their exploitation.

Brazil is the world’s ninth largest crude oil exporter, and fracking is considered a new frontier by the country’s oil industry, with ANP arguing current environmental regulations are sufficient.

But the public prosecutor’s office warns “there are scientific uncertainties about serious and potentially irreversible risks” associated with fracking, and seeks to make it conditional on a “prior and robust study demonstrating its safety.” – AFP

Brazil’s Supreme Court moves to end bitter judges’ feud

Facundo Fernández Barrio and Ivan Pisarenko

BRASÍLIA – Brazil’s Supreme Court president attempted on Wednesday to end a crisis in the court by suspending a series of conflicting rulings by rival judges that have dominated a bitter election campaign.

The court is reeling from a scandal involving the alleged links between leading Justice Alexandre de Moraes and a disgraced banker charged with massive fraud.

The case has descended into open warfare between Moraes, who famously led the coup investigation into far-right former president Jair Bolsonaro, and fellow Justice André Mendonça, a Bolsonaro appointee.

On Tuesday, the country’s top policeman, Andrei Rodrigues, got swept up in the infighting, when he was suspended by Mendonça, who accused the police of spying on him.

A day later a third justice, Flávio Dino, a former minister under Lula, reinstated the head of the federal police.

The court’s president Edson Fachin promptly waded into the dispute and suspended both rulings, according to a ruling seen by AFP.

Fachin gave Rodrigues 48 hours to provide information before deciding his fate.

The eruption in the court has overshadowed the run-up to next month’s presidential election, in which Bolsonaro’s senator son, Flávio Bolsonaro, is trying to unseat left-wing incumbent Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva.

Mendonça fired the opening salvo in the row by ordering the publication last week of text messages from banker Daniel Vercaro to Moraes, asking for information about the case against him.

Moraes hit back, accusing Mendonça of abuse of power on the basis of confidential police intelligence reports, whereupon Mendonça suspended Rodrigues.

‘Selective leaks’

The texts from Vercaro, whose private bank Banco Master collapsed last year in a multi-billion-US-dollar pool of debt, have become fodder in the presidential race.

Lula on Wednesday said “greater

transparency” was needed in the case, as well as an end to “selective leaks that impact the electoral race.”

“It is urgent to fully lift the secrecy of the investigations into all those involved in the Master case, whoever they may be, no matter who it hurts. Brazil needs to know the truth,” he insisted on X.

Vercaro had boasted of having “friends in all branches of government” before becoming embroiled in one of Brazil’s biggest-ever financial scandals.

The Master case is a “toxic” affair, a Supreme Court source told AFP, adding that police suspect the banker “put money into various places in order to later collect favours.”

In the days leading up to his arrest in November, Vercaro sent around 30 text messages to a phone number police say belonged to Moraes.

“Do you think I need to be out of the country as early as Monday?” he asked in one message, just before his arrest while boarding a private jet.

Flávio Bolsonaro has pounced on the texts to bash Moraes, a hate figure for the Brazilian and US right for having spearheaded the coup trial of his father.

A fraud-accused banker

Jair Bolsonaro, an ally of US President Donald Trump, is serving a 27-year jail sentence after being convicted of trying to cling to power after losing the 2022 election to Lula.

But Flávio Bolsonaro’s own links to Vercaro have been questioned after it emerged that the banker transferred millions of US dollars to an intermediary at the senator’s request.

The younger Bolsonaro said the money was intended for use towards a film about his father.

The scandal engulfing the Supreme Court has sown alarm in the Brazilian business community.

Some 3,000 business organisations released a manifesto on Wednesday, warning of an “extremely serious institutional crisis.”

“If the legitimacy [of the judges] is questioned, everything else becomes uncertain: legal certainty, trust in institutions, and even social peace,” they argued. – AFP

WORLD NA TCHA FOLK BELIEF CULTURE FESTIVAL 2026

NA TCHA FOLK BELIEF EXHIBITION

Sept 15th - 18th

WELCOMING DINNER

Sept 15th 19:00 Barra Kitchen

NA TCHA JOINT PARADE

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

PARADE ROUTE

Ruins of St. Paul's to Senado Square

BLESSING CEREMONY

Sept 16th 16:00 Barra Kitchen

FAREWELL DINNER

Sept 16th 18:30 Barra Kitchen

Football shorts

Indonesia, HK to host new 14-team FIFA ASEAN Cup

Hong Kong – An inaugural FIFA ASEAN Cup will take place later this month featuring 14 teams with matches played in Indonesia and Hong Kong, organisers said yesterday.

The 11 members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and three guest sides - Hong Kong, Pakistan and Bangladesh - will play in two divisions from September 24.

Eight teams will contest the top-tier Division 1 – hosts Indonesia, Bangladesh, Malaysia, Pakistan, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam.

They will be split into two sections of four with the winners contesting the first FIFA ASEAN Cup final on October 5.

The second-tier Division 2 will be hosted by Hong Kong and also involve Brunei, Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar and Timor-Leste, split into two three-team sections with the winners advancing to a final on October 3.

“The FIFA ASEAN Cup was launched to provide national teams with meaningful competitive opportunities,” said FIFA president Gianni Infantino.

“The tournament will strengthen football ties across Southeast Asia.” – AFP

Messi to buy 2nd Spanish lower league club

BARCELONA – Argentina icon Lionel Messi has agreed to take over Spanish club Eldense, the second division side confirmed yesterday.

Eldense, based just in-land from Alicante, will become the former Barcelona attacker’s second venture into Spanish football ownership having bought fourth-tier Cornella in April.

The 39-year-old plays for Inter Miami and retired from international duty after Argentina’s loss to Spain in the World Cup final this summer.

“CD Eldense can confirm that Lionel Messi has reached an agreement in principle with the club’s current owners to acquire the shares currently held by Grupo TH Soluciones, which would make him the majority shareholder of CD Eldense,” they told AFP.

“At this time, the transaction is pending completion of the final legal and contractual procedures, including the due diligence process, as well as the required authorisation from the Spanish Sports Council (CSD).

“For now, the club is unable to provide details on the financial terms of the transaction or set a definitive date for its completion, as the process has not yet been finalised.

“Once the relevant procedures have been completed and the necessary authorisations obtained, CD Eldense will officially report any developments in this regard,” the club founded in 1921 added. – AFP

This photograph shows AS Roma’s jersey supporting the relief effort in Nepal ahead of the UEFA Champions League first round day 1 match against Fenerbahce SK at the Fenerbahce Chobani stadium in Istanbul yesterday. The one-off jersey bearing the logo of the WFP, a Rome-based agency of the United Nations, also featured the message “Together for Nepal”. “The shirts worn by Gian Piero Gasperini’s players during the match will be auctioned, with all funds raised going towards supporting the people of Nepal through the WFP’s relief efforts,” Roma added. The game finished at 1-1. – AFP



Pochettino calls for Chelsea to lose 2016-17 Premier League title



LONDON – Former Tottenham manager Mauricio Pochettino says Chelsea should be stripped of their 2016-17 Premier League title for financial rule breaches and the honour awarded to the side he led to the runners-up spot.

Chelsea were fined £10 million (US\$13.4 million) in July and given a suspended two-window transfer ban in relation to breaches of Premier League rules during the Roman Abramovich era.

The club had admitted to 74 breaches of FA regulations covering agents, working with intermediaries and third-party investment in players.

Owners Todd Boehly and Clearlake Capital self-reported the breaches to football authorities in 2022, when they were in the process of buying the club from Russian billionaire Abramovich.

The breaches involved deals to take Eden Hazard, Willian, David Luiz and Nemanja Matic to Stamford

Bridge, all central to Chelsea’s 2016-17 triumph under Antonio Conte.

Pochettino, whose Spurs team finished seven points behind Conte’s Chelsea, believes the authorities did not go nearly far enough.

“We should win one Premier League, we should have been awarded it,” Pochettino told reporters.

“If that was true, then we deserve to be champions that year, for sure. They were punished, they admitted it? So that’s it. The title should be for the team that was second.

“We can say that they scored goals, they won games. OK. But it’s completely fair to say that we didn’t compete before the start of the season with the same card.

“Maybe with the same rules, we could’ve signed some players that would have made the team better or scored more goals.”

Pochettino, who currently coaches the USA national team, went on to manage Chelsea in 2023-24.

“I have no doubt and I’m not

scared to say the truth. The Chelsea fans will be upset with me but if we were at Tottenham and broke the rules, I’d admit the same: ‘We don’t deserve the title because we broke the rules.’

“It’s impossible if only some clubs play with offside and another plays with no offside. Or one plays with VAR and another plays with no VAR.

“For everyone it needs to be the same rules. And then you have the capacity to create the best team.

“I don’t say that Chelsea didn’t play well, that Conte was not great. I don’t say that. I don’t want the message to be twisted.

“But if you broke the rules then ciao, you need to give it to another team. I don’t know why that didn’t happen.

“What is being promoted and incentivised is to break the rules.”

Pochettino was in charge of the USA during the World Cup and last month signed a contract extension to remain in position until the 2030 World Cup. – AFP



Rafael Marquez Alvarez (left), known as Rafa Marquez, holds a jacket with Mexican Football Federation President Mikel Arriola during his presentation as the new head coach of the Mexican men’s national team at the High-Performance Centre (CAR) of the Mexican Football Federation in Mexico City, yesterday. – AFP

France withdraws support for Infantino in FIFA presidential election

Football

PARIS – France will not support the candidacy of Gianni Infantino, who is running for a new term as FIFA president in March 2027, the French Football Federation (FFF) announced yesterday.

The FFF is aligning itself with the position of other European federations such as Belgium, Italy, Scotland, Sweden and Wales, who have also publicly withdrawn support for Infantino.

FIFA confirmed last weekend that Infantino will stand for president in an election next March, despite the backlash over his now-abandoned plan to bring private investment into the men’s and women’s World Cups.

At this stage, the 56-year-old from Switzerland is the only candidate. However, CONCACAF president Victor Montagliani is widely seen as a likely challenger to the incumbent.

“We believe that the trust placed in the FIFA president has been betrayed, and that the way in which the governance of world football is envisaged no longer reflects us,”

FFF president Philippe Diallo said in a statement.

“That is why, by a unanimous decision of its members, the French Football Federation has decided to withdraw its support for Gianni Infantino’s candidacy for the FIFA presidency.”

The move by the French federation, while expected, is likely to sting Infantino.

Diallo added that France “has a historic legitimacy as one of the founding nations of FIFA, and it has the right to intervene when it has the feeling that FIFA and its president are going off course in their governance of world football”.

“It also has sporting legitimacy, having been in the top three in the FIFA rankings for the last 10 years.”

Infantino replaced Sepp Blatter as president of world football’s governing body in 2016. He has come under severe pressure since the announcement in late July of proposals to create a commercial subsidiary to run its biggest events, such as the World Cup and Club World Cup.

The plan would have allowed private investors to acquire stakes in

a company created under the FIFA Forward Enterprise (FFE) initiative. The backlash that followed led to the proposals being quickly shelved.

European football’s governing body UEFA had threatened to boycott FIFA competitions in response. It later suspended that threat, but has urged Infantino to resign and has been preparing possible legal action against him for alleged “criminal mismanagement”.

The FFF said it would begin a consultation process before deciding who to support against Infantino in the election, which will take place at the FIFA Congress to be held in the Moroccan capital Rabat.

Montagliani, a FIFA vice-president, had long been regarded as a close ally of Infantino, but there were signs of him distancing himself even before the now-scrapped private investment plans.

However, Infantino is not without friends - 2034 World Cup hosts Saudi Arabia came out in support last month, with African football’s governing body CAF and South America’s CONMEBOL also supportive. – AFP

Brazil turns to youth for friendlies

Football

RIO DE JANEIRO – Brazil manager Carlo Ancelotti named eight newcomers in his squad on Wednesday for friendlies against Australia and India.

The uncapped players include Coritiba goalkeeper Pedro Morisco, Cruzeiro goalkeeper Otavio, Corinthians full-back Matheusinho and Athletico Paranaense defender Arthur Dias.

Other new faces were Nottingham Forest center-back Jair Cunha, PSV full-back Mauro Junior, Corinthians midfielder Breno Bidon and Santos midfielder Gabriel Bontempo.

“There is no closed door,” Ancelotti told reporters. “The door is open to everyone. Of course, right now I prefer to focus my work on the young players and follow their progress.”

Only 10 of the 26 players named by Ancelotti were part of the squad that was eliminated by Norway in the round of 16 at this year’s FIFA World Cup in the United States, Mexico and Canada.

Missing were Neymar, who has retired from international football, Casemiro, Alisson, Ederson, Danilo and Weverton, among others.

Those who retained their places included Vinicius Junior, Raphinha and Endrick.

“The World Cup was a huge disappointment for us and for me,” Ancelotti said. “We didn’t reach where we wanted to be. The elimination was very painful, and we regret it.

Brazil will play Australia in Townsville and Brisbane on September 25 and 29 before facing India in Kolkata four days later. – Xinhua

'Bragging rights' up for grabs at game-changing Ultimate Championship, says Coe

Luke Phillips



BUDAPEST, Hungary – Global “bragging rights” are up for grabs at the Ultimate Championship in Budapest, World Athletics president Sebastian Coe said yesterday, hailing the inaugural three-day event as an “incubator for change”.

The Ultimate will feature 381 athletes from 65 federations competing for unmatched prize money totalling US\$10 million.

Automatic qualifiers for the season-ending Ultimate event include 26 Olympic champions from the 2024 Paris Games, 26 world champions from Tokyo last year and 25 Diamond League winners from the 2026 season, along with the best performers of the year based on the world rankings qualification system.

With 2026 having neither a world championships nor an Olympic Games, World Athletics introduced the Ultimate as a way of sealing the season with 28 disciplines delivered in a fast-paced, made-for-television format.

“We’ve created a stage that I really genuinely think that our best athletes will respond to,” said Coe, a two-time Olympic 1,500m gold medallist for Britain.

“There’s the bar room, coffee house discussions: who’s the best?”

“Nobody goes into the sport to sort of figure out who’s second best.



Former Jamaican athlete Usain Bolt arrives for a red-carpet event ahead of the World Athletics Ultimate Championship at the Gyula Zsivotzky National Athletics Centre in Budapest yesterday. - AFP

“They go in wanting to know who’s the best. At the end of these championships, we will have gone a long way to identifying that.

“There are no few bragging rights involved in this.”

Extraordinary season

Coe said the Ultimate was the perfect way to bring an end to what he said had been “an extraordinary season”.

“I think we will see some compelling competitions, a compelling glimpse into the future and the potential of this sport, which at its best, and we’ve seen that in the last two weeks, is untouched,” he said.

The idea behind the Ultimate, he added, was “to spotlight the stars and to create new formats, a reimagined field of play and a reimagined timetable that will eliminate downtime”.

It was like “a blast furnace, ultimately casting and shaping what our sport can look like going forward and we want to take some of those innovations into the world champi-

onships, into the Olympic Games”.

“We want this to be really the start of an innovative journey through every aspect of our sport.”

Coe drew criticism by unilaterally introducing prize money for winners of athletics events at the 2024 Paris Olympics.

But he insisted yesterday that financial incentives were crucial.

“I am unapologetic and we are unwavering in athletics about our support for the athletes and their financial welfare,” he said.

“It is the third critical pillar that has to sit alongside our mental and physical approach.”

Jamaican sprint legend Usain Bolt, in his role as an ambassador for the Ultimate nine years after retiring from the track, said it was “great to see track and field going in a different direction”.

“It’s going to be great to see the best of the best,” said the eight-time Olympic gold medallist.

“This was one of my greatest things. I’ve always lived to compete against the best and I would strive in this moment.” – AFP



Chen Xingtong, Zhou Qihao reach last 16 of WTT Champions Macao

MACAO – Chinese paddlers Chen Xingtong and Zhou Qihao advanced to the last 16 at the WTT Champions Macao 2026 yesterday.

Facing Germany’s Nina Mittelham, Chen produced a composed performance to win comfortably 11-5, 11-6, 11-3 and reach the women’s round of 16.

“The match went more smoothly than I expected; I didn’t anticipate both the scoreline and the process,” Chen said. “We were both playing our first match, so our touch wasn’t completely hot yet. I believe each match will get better.”

Looking ahead to her next opponent, Egypt’s Hana Goda, Chen said the two had met recently and the contest had been intense.

“The next match won’t be easy, but I’ll give it my all,” said Chen, who beat Goda at the Europe Smash in Sweden in August.

In the men’s round of 32, China’s world No. 24 Zhou came back from 2-1 down to eliminate seventh seed Qiu Dang of Germany 11-9, 10-12, 6-11, 11-9, 11-5.

Zhou said: “Being down 1-2 caused me a lot of difficulty and pressure. At 0-2 in the fourth

game, I took a timeout and tried to prolong rallies as much as possible so I wouldn’t be unsettled by his variations in the first three balls, and to open up the score.”

Zhou will face American Kanak Jha in the round of 16.

Elsewhere, Japan’s Hina Hayata, Honoka Hashimoto and Shunsuke Togami all won their first-round matches to advance.

The round of 16 also began, with Japan’s Tomokazu Harimoto and Miwa Harimoto both winning in straight games to reach the quarterfinals. – Xinhua

Rybakina books US Open semi against Gauff, secures No.1 ranking

Rebecca Bryan



NEW YORK – Elena Rybakina ended Zheng Qinwen’s spirited US Open run on Wednesday, guaranteeing her rise to world No. 1 as she booked a semi-final showdown with Coco Gauff.

Rybakina beat Zheng 3-6, 6-1, 6-4 and is assured of ending Aryna Sabalenka’s reign atop the standings - even if the Belarusian wins a third straight title.

“It’s just a number right now,” Rybakina said. “It’s a different achievement ... but mostly you think about the titles in the end of the day.”

Therefore the 27-year-old Kazakh star will be focused on Gauff, who saved two match points in a 2-6, 7-6 (9/7), 6-2 victory over Russian 19-year-old Mirra Andreeva, the fifth-ranked reigning French Open champion from Russia.

Sabalenka will play third-seeded Jessica Pegula in last night’s semi-finals [7 :00 a.m. this morning Macau time] - the first time since 1975 at the US Open that the top four women all made it to the penultimate round.

Top-seeded Alexander Zverev completed the men’s semi-final lineup, cruising past Botic van de Zandschulp 6-2, 7-5, 6-1.

Gauff made it by the skin of her teeth, struggling early and saving two match points in the tiebreaker.

She rallied with some inspiration from Frances Tiafoe’s come-from-behind five-set victory over Alex Michelsen.

“I just had to reset,” Gauff said. “Honestly, I was thinking about Frances Tiafoe and how he came back. I was just trying to leave the court without regrets.”

Rybakina, the first Kazakh player to reach number one, is chasing a third Grand Slam title after winning the Australian Open in January - four years after winning Wimbledon.

“I feel like you will appreciate and think about it even more when you finish your career,” she said of the ranking. “Like now, you still need to keep on going.”

Reigning Olympic champion Zheng, a former world number four ranked 121 after missing about eight months due to elbow surgery, went through qualifying and won seven matches in New

York, including comeback wins over six-time Grand Slam champion Iga Swiatek and former Australian Open winner Madison Keys

She rocked Rybakina early behind fierce serve and a variety of shots, effectively neutralising the Kazakh’s power until a slight dip allowed Rybakina to seize control in the second set.

In a close third Zheng missed a chance to break in the third game. Rybakina broke her in the next and rocketed to victory.

“I got lot of chances in the third set, but I didn’t take it,” Zheng said. “That was a bit pity for me to lose this match, but obviously I could take positive things from US Open this year.”

Zverev rolls through

Zverev was largely untroubled against Dutch veteran van de Zandschulp, who upset Carlos Alcaraz in the second round two years ago and beat sixth-seeded Australian Alex de Minaur in the second round last week.

The reigning French Open champion won the last five games of the opening set to go one set up after just 37 minutes, and saved a set point in the penultimate game of the second before breaking van de Zandschulp to pocket the set.

He ran away with it in the third to give himself another early night in a tournament that saw him labour into the early hours of the morning in first- and second-round five-setters.

Zverev will face veteran Karen Khachanov for a place in Sunday’s final.

Khachanov advanced when Belgian Alexander Blockx retired from their quarter-final with the Russian leading 6-2, 7-5, 3-2.

“I saw really that he was suffering all over his body,” Khachanov said of 21-year-old Blockx, who had already been on the verge of retiring from his fourth-round win over Francisco Cerundolo with a rib injury.

On Wednesday he played with one thigh wrapped and had medical timeouts for treatment on one foot and pain in his lower back that hindered him much of the match.

“I think today my body just gave up,” Blockx said. “I think I finally understand how physical the slams are.” – AFP/MPD

Kung wins Vuelta time-trial as Mas retains lead

Cycling

JEREZ DE LA FRONTERA, Spain – Swiss Stefan Kung won yesterday’s stage 18 time-trial as Spaniard Enric Mas retained the overall lead at the Vuelta a Espana.

But four-time winner Primož Roglic finished more than 30 seconds quicker than Mas and trimmed down the Movistar rider’s lead to 1min 37sec as the Slovenian leapfrogged

Felix Gall into second place.

With just three stages left, including two successive mountain top finishes, Mas is looking increasingly likely to finally claim his first home Grand Tour.

“The whole race went well, I lost less time than I expected, I’m happy with my day,” said Mas.

The 31-year-old has finished second three times, to Simon Yates in 2018, to Roglic in 2021 and to

Remco Evenepoel the year after that.

He was also third behind Roglic and Australian Ben O’Connor two years ago.

Roglic, 36, is his closest challenger after finishing yesterday’s 32.1km time-trial in fourth, just 19sec behind Kung, with Briton Callum Thornley second at 3sec and Portugal’s Joao Almeida third at 9sec.

“In the end, you have to win. (It) doesn’t matter how big the margin

is,” said the Tudor Pro Cycling rider, who won his 24th time-trial as a professional.

“I’m super happy to take the win here. I’m alone on the podium today, but it’s a victory from the whole team.”

Roglic finished 33sec quicker than Mas and 1:28 faster than Gall.

Austrian Gall is just over three minutes behind Mas but has a buffer of more than two minutes

to fourth-placed Richard Carapaz, who finished eighth at July’s Tour de France.

Briton Oscar Onley, who is fifth overall, extended his lead in the best young rider white jersey category to almost a minute ahead of Slovenian Jakob Održal.

Today’s stage 19 is a hilly 210.8km ride, starting from Velez-Malaga and culminating in an altitude finish at Penas Blancas. – AFP

‘Like a jewel’: Japan’s luxury ice revered by bars worldwide



A worker packs ice cubes into a basket at the Kuramoto Ice Factory in Kanazawa, Ishikawa Prefecture, Japan, on June 15. – AFP



CEO and fifth-generation owner Kazuhiko Kuramoto stirs ice at the Kuramoto Ice Factory on June 15. – AFP

Natsuko Fukue

KANAZAWA, Japan – In the historic Japanese city of Kanazawa, craftsmen painstakingly shape and slice blocks of ice destined to chill negronis* in some of the world’s trendiest bars.

The men work for Kuramoto Ice, a century-old company in Ishikawa on the Sea of Japan coast and one of dozens of Japanese firms producing ultra-clear, premium ice.

This luxury product, believed by those in the industry to melt more slowly than regular blocks, is a staple of Japan’s cocktail culture.

But its popularity is also spilling over to bars abroad, from the United States to Australia, who pay as much as 200 yen (US\$1.25) per cube.

Kuramoto Ice is of the country’s few international exporters, and has seen total sales more than double since exports began in 2019.

“We take our time and freeze water slowly, keeping it in motion... That’s how we end up with good ice,” Kazuhiko Kuramoto, the firm’s fifth-generation head, told AFP at their Kanazawa factory.

“My heart leaps with joy when I see ice that looks like a jewel,” said the 41-year-old, as he poured cold hojicha** tea into a glass filled with a large, clear sphere.

Using a technique that originally came from the United States, specialist Japanese ice makers freeze water over a period of 48 to 72 hours, far longer than the few hours typically required for homemade ice or the 30 minutes it takes industrial ice machines.

As freezing begins and the ice forms from outside in, various impurities in the water get pushed towards the centre. But the Japanese method involves removing that tainted water and replacing it with a fresh batch. Constant stirring helps remove air bubbles, resulting in completely transparent ice, known as “junpyo”*** in Japanese.

Although there is little scientific evidence, it’s said the technique also results in a colder, denser product that will cool rather than dilute a cocktail.

Native – a trendy bar in Singapore that made this year’s Asia’s 50 Best Bars list – imports around 900 kg of ice from Kuramoto each year.

“Local ice is more economical, but Kuramoto Ice is clearer, denser and melts more slowly,” co-owner Yong Wei told AFP.

‘Lingering aftertaste’

In Kanazawa, workers dressed in full-body overalls haul large blocks of ice across the

factory floor, before starting on the delicate work of carving perfect spheres, cubes and rectangular blocks with cut corners.

Once packaged, the finished products – which can be made to precisely fit any glass – are stored in a room at minus 10 degrees before shipment.

Boss Kuramoto is not blind to the environmental cost of transporting cubes of ice thousands of kilometres across the world, but insisted that small goods like his have a relatively low environmental impact.

He said he had dreamed of reaching American bars since visiting Las Vegas more than a decade ago and realising low-quality ice that melts easily and waters down the flavour was being used in expensive cocktails. The time-consuming ice-making technique often used in Japan, which tends to produce a higher quality product, had largely been phased out in the US.

At a Hilton Hotel bar near Tokyo, bartender Shingo Miyachi prepares a negroni*** with one of Kuramoto Ice’s big, clear cubes.

The ice fits perfectly in the glass, and its clarity makes it almost invisible.

“Ice really has a huge impact on the taste of a cocktail,” Miyachi told AFP.

If it melts, “it especially affects the

lingering aftertaste once you’ve taken a sip.”

Ice handling is considered an essential skill for Japanese bartenders, who often begin their training by learning to break it with precision.

“When you look at the ice and see the level of attention to detail, you can pretty much tell how seriously the bartender takes the flavour of the cocktail and how much care they’ve put into it,” he explained.

“A cocktail only really comes into being when the glass, the ice, and the liquid become one as a single unified whole.” – AFP

*A negroni is a classic Italian cocktail made of equal parts gin, sweet red vermouth, and Campari, typically served over ice in an old fashioned glass and garnished with an orange peel. – Gemini

** Hojicha (“roasted green tea”) is a Japanese green tea made by roasting steamed green tea leaves, stems, or twigs over charcoal at a high temperature. Distinct from typical Japanese green teas, the roasting process alters its colour to a deep reddish-brown and replaces the usual vegetal, astringent notes with a nutty, caramel-like flavour. – Gemini

*** Junpyo (“pure ice”) is a high-grade, crystal-clear, factory-made ice produced in Japan using a specialised slow-freezing process. – Gemini

‘Metal Gear’ creator moves to Xbox after Playstation cancellation

PARIS – Legendary Japanese video game creator Hideo Kojima said yesterday he had partnered with Microsoft’s Xbox for his next project after its development for the PlayStation console was cancelled by Sony.

Kojima, whose pioneering “Metal Gear” spy soldier franchise was a key element of the PlayStation’s success since the 1990s, has been working on a new project, “Physint”.

However, “in mid-June of this year, we unexpectedly received notice from PlayStation Studios that they would cancel the Physint project”, the 63-year-old posted on X.

PlayStation did not give a reason for cancelling, saying only in an X post yesterday: “After careful consideration, we have made the difficult decision to step away

from collaborating with Kojima Productions on its project Physint.”

“We have spent the last three months searching tirelessly for a new partner,” he said, adding that Xbox and his studio shared a “common vision”.

Kojima’s post-apocalyptic “Death Stranding 2” was considered a top contender at last year’s Game Awards in Los Angeles,

and “Physint” has been billed as a return to his spy-game roots.

“Development of Physint, our genre-defining action-espionage title, is ongoing and will continue moving forward,” Kojima said.

He did not indicate a release date, or say if the game would be exclusive to the Xbox console. – AFP

Oslo bans smart glasses in schools

OSLO – Norway’s capital Oslo said yesterday it had banned smart glasses in schools, saying the move was aimed at preventing children becoming “extras in Meta’s data collection”.

The ban applies throughout the entire school day and at all levels of education, the municipality said in a statement.

“We politicians must have the courage to be honest about what this is really about: one of the world’s richest companies has launched a product whose entire business idea is to make it impossible to know when you are being filmed,” Oslo’s Vice Mayor for

Education Julie Remen Midtgarden said.

“In Oslo we refuse to let our children become extras in Meta’s data collection,” she said.

The conservative politician also slammed Norway’s left-wing government, which has said it had created an expert group as it mulled regulating such devices and the use of facial recognition in public.

“The glasses are being sold in Norway today, they are being used in Norwegian school playgrounds today, and the problem is here now. Looking into the issue is not taking action,” Midtgarden said.

Smart glasses allow the wearer to shoot photos and videos, listen to music, take phone calls, translate signs in a foreign language, project text or maps into the field of view, or interact with an integrated AI assistant.

Meta has reportedly developed a facial recognition feature ready to be integrated into its smart glasses.

The ban in Oslo’s schools went into effect on August 27, but the announcement was postponed until yesterday because of the political truce agreed by Norwegian parties following the death of King Harald V on 28 August. – AFP

World Weather			
CHINA	ASIA-PACIFIC	WORLD	LUSOPHONE
Beijing 15°C~32°C	Manila 24°C~30°C	New York 17°C~28°C	Lisbon 17°C~31°C
Shanghai 21°C~29°C	Bangkok 24°C~32°C	London 12°C~22°C	Rio de Janeiro 22°C~30°C
Hong Kong 24°C~31°C	Tokyo 18°C~21°C	Frankfurt 12°C~24°C	Luanda 19°C~23°C
Taipei 23°C~29°C	Singapore 25°C~32°C	Vancouver 13°C~18°C	Maputo 17°C~29°C
Guangzhou 21°C~32°C	Kuala Lumpur 25°C~32°C	Paris 13°C~25°C	Dili 21°C~32°C
Nanjing 20°C~26°C	Jakarta 24°C~34°C	Moscow 9°C~17°C	São Tomé 24°C~30°C
Guilin 17°C~28°C	Seoul 16°C~27°C	Las Vegas 26°C~41°C	Praia 23°C~33°C
Xi'an 14°C~22°C	Sydney 10°C~19°C	Monte Carlo 19°C~26°C	Bissau 24°C~33°C



1. All in one place

A vendor along with his children and wife rides a motor-cart loaded with goods at Green Takoeng village in Kuleaen district of Cambodia's Preah Vihear province on Wednesday. – AFP

2. Race you!

Two one-year-old white lions (Panthera leo) from South Africa are seen during a press presentation at La Aurora Zoo in Guatemala City, Guatemala on Wednesday. – AFP

3. Unseen by many

This photo taken on July 7 shows a ceramic micro-calligraphy artwork, in which the images of mountains consist of over 11,000 tiny little Chinese characters excerpted from poems depicting mountains and waters by prestigious authors in history, in Jingdezhen, Jiangxi Province. There goes an old Chinese saying that "the scenery changes with each step." This saying can be true when you look at a ceramic micro-calligraphy artwork, on which Chinese characters are written in tiny little sizes so that you can not even notice them from a distance. – Xinhua



4. Can be used as dog treats

A vendor displays a string of cheese called Chhurpi, recognised as the world's hardest cheese, at his shop in Paro, Bhutan last week. – AFP

5. Contemporary everywoman

A new work of art entitled "Lady in Blue" by US artist Tschabalala Self is unveiled on the Fourth Plinth in Trafalgar Square in London yesterday. The "fourth plinth", which marks one corner of Trafalgar Square, is one of the most coveted art commissions in the world, and is often the source of controversy. – AFP

6. Superheroes are go...

Visitors look at kites depicting Batman and Spiderman during the Festival du Vent (Wind Festival) in Portiragnes-Plage, southern France on Sunday. – AFP

