

Ding expects HK & Macau youth to be builders & heirs of 'One Country, Two Systems'



Vice Premier Ding Xuexiang (front, centre) poses for a group photo with a delegation of young representatives from flag-raising teams in Hong Kong and Macau at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing yesterday.

– Photo: Xinhua

Tony Wong

Vice Premier Ding Xuexiang met with a delegation of young representatives from flag-raising teams in Hong Kong and Macau at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing yesterday morning, Xinhua reported.

Ding, who is also a member of the Standing Committee of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Committee, conveyed President Xi

Jinping's cordial greetings to all members of the delegation and extended a warm welcome to them on behalf of the central government.

The delegation comprises about 1,200 students and teachers from primary schools, secondary schools, and higher education institutions in Hong Kong and Macau. They are in Beijing for a five-day trip to pay tribute to the national flag.

According to Ding, President Xi has always cared about and supported the growth of youth in Hong Kong and Macau, and emphasised that when young Hong Kong and Macau people thrive, the two cities will thrive, and the country will thrive.

According to Xinhua, Ding noted that Hong Kong and Macau have ushered in the best development period in history. He expressed hope that the students will

understand the national flag, integrating their love for the great motherland into their blood and reflecting it in their actions; safeguard the national flag, striving to be role models of loving the country, Hong Kong, and Macau in the new era; and bring honour to the national flag, writing a brilliant life with ardent youth and serving as builders and heirs of the "One Country, Two Systems" cause.

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A toddler looks at a helicopter at the 23rd China-ASEAN Expo in Nanning, capital of the Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region, yesterday. The five-day expo, which concluded yesterday, featured an exhibition area for aerospace and space equipment such as drones and satellite navigation systems. – Xinhua

Xi to pay state visit to US on Sept 23-25

BEIJING – President Xi Jinping will pay a state visit to the United States from tomorrow to Friday at the invitation of US President Donald Trump, a foreign ministry spokesperson announced in Beijing yesterday.

During the visit, Xi and Trump will have an in-depth exchange of views on major issues concerning China-US relations and world peace and development, foreign ministry spokesperson Guo Jiakun said at a regular news briefing.

Head-of-state diplomacy plays an

irreplaceable role in providing strategic guidance for China-US relations, and the exchange of visits between the two heads of state within six months marks a historic milestone, Guo said.

China is ready to work with the US side to enrich the connotation of the constructive relationship of strategic stability, enhance dialogue and cooperation, properly manage differences, and continuously contribute to the well-being of both peoples and global peace, stability and prosperity, he added.

– Xinhua

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China rolls out AI 'classrooms' to fuel humanoid robot boom

Rows of humanoid robots repeat the same motions over and over – picking up water bottles, sliding trays into micro-waves and scanning parcel labels. Scenes like these are unfolding in embodied AI training classrooms. – *Story on p. 7*

US media outlets to sue Trump admin after White House ban

Major US television networks yesterday suspended their involvement in a rotation of broadcasters covering President Donald Trump, as three leading news outlets went to court over being banned from the White House. – *Story on p. 10*

Historically high suicide rates cause alarm in Argentina

Bereaved relatives and mental health specialists are trying to start a conversation about suicide in Argentina as more people than ever are choosing to end their own lives.

– *Story on p. 12*

Moving Beyond Neoliberalism: Lessons From the 16th IIPPE Conference

Working Group explores why China is neither capitalist nor imperialist

Commentary by Sam-Kee Cheng*

The 16th annual conference of the International Initiative for Promoting Political Economy (IIPPE) was held at the University Institute of Lisbon & ICS (Institute of Social Sciences) from September 9-12 under the theme Capitalism Moving Beyond Neoliberalism: Crises, Changes, and What Comes Next.

Over 430 scholars from 55 countries registered for the event, among whom 20 came from China. I have been the coordinator for the Political Economy of China's Development Working Group since 2017 and have witnessed the surge of interest in the political economy of China.

In the early years, the dominant views among Marxian political scientists were that China was a capitalist economy subordinate to the US-led system, and even if it was not totally assimilated into the neoliberal model, it was only some form of variety between state-led or party-led capitalism and could not be a genuine alternative to the profit-oriented capitalist model.

These perspectives have been challenged by some scholars who argue that the revolutionary reconstruction of the state and the economy, brought by the socialist revolution, could not be overlooked even after Reform and Opening-Up. China's integration into the world market could not be interpreted as the capitulation of Chinese socialism to US capitalism.

The IIPPE China working group has been providing space for stimulating debate between these diverse and even conflicting views. The nature of the Chinese state and the internal dynamics of its development have been the focus of intellectual and political debates around China, while the external impacts of China's rise – including its overseas investments, international finance, new technologies, ecological developments, and geopolitics – are increasingly being studied and scrutinised. These topics are always discussed in the China panels. The complexities of China's political economy, as well as its implications for world development – particularly for developing countries seeking sovereign and autonomous development – are fertile ground for research.

The continuous and valuable contributions of researchers all over the world have made the China Working Group one of the most active and talked-about groups in the organisation.

This year, our collaboration with the IIPPE World Economy Working Group has led to seven substantial panels covering wide-ranging topics, including: Mechanisms in China's Rise; China and Latecomer Development; Understanding Development in China; US-China Rivalry and Hegemony; North-South and BRICS in the World Economy; Geopolitics of Energy Transition; and Finance and Development in the Global South.

Less than a decade ago, it might have been

hard to fathom China as one of the leading forces on technological frontiers, but more and more people are taking it seriously and reflecting on how previous misperceptions had prevented them from seeing it until recently. The Communist Party of China's (CPC) leadership's advocacy of developing productive forces and the propagation of a new global governance model and people-centred development stand in sharp contrast to the deindustrialisation and declining living standards commonly experienced in advanced capitalist economies.

Social polarisation is on the rise alongside the concentration of wealth. Moving beyond neoliberalism, which requires the restructuring of existing interests, seems like a very distant dream in the West, even when the ailments of neoliberalism and the dangers of inaction are blatantly clear.

China has stood out against the destructive tide of neoliberalism and has managed to forge ahead based on its developmental needs under the banner of socialism with Chinese characteristics.

Why China Is Not Imperialist Why China Is Not Capitalist

For far too long, the arguments that China is neither capitalist nor imperialist have been pushed aside or considered unorthodox by the Western left. The China Working Group has taken on this challenge and has explained

Why China Is Not Imperialist and Why China Is Not Capitalist, based on Marxist analyses, in two consecutive years at the IIPPE Conference.

The workshops have generated traction both online and at the venue in Lisbon, but the debate is nonetheless healthy and very much necessary.

It certainly will take more than one or two workshops to learn about and understand the political economy of China's development. We may also never come to the exact same conclusion, just like the speakers at the workshop who agree that China is not capitalist but differ on what China actually is.

The most important lesson, I think, is that China has demonstrated that moving beyond neoliberalism is possible, and capital development can be guided and utilised for social development. There are many economic toolkits other countries can learn from China, but ultimately, the foundation for sovereign development relies on the political programme of those who want to move beyond neoliberalism.

**Sam-Kee Cheng is Research Assistant Professor in the Faculty of Social Sciences at the University of Macau (UM) and an Associate Researcher at the University of Macau Advanced Research Institute in Hengqin. She is also the coordinator of the Political Economy of China's Development Working Group in IIPPE.*

NBA announces legends to headline upcoming 'NBA House Macao 2026'



This image provided by NBA China yesterday shows the logo for the NBA House Macao set to take place at The Venetian Macao's Cotai Expo Halls A and B from October 7 to 11.

Rui Pastorin

NBA (National Basketball Association) China has announced its roster of legends set to headline the expanded edition of the NBA House Macao 2026 slated to take place from October 7 to 11 at The Venetian Macao's Cotai Expo, according to an NBA statement yesterday.

Held in conjunction with The NBA China Games 2026 presented by Taobao 88VIP at The Venetian Arena, NBA House Macao 2026 will be headlined by NBA legends Ray Allen, Carlos Boozer, Chris Bosh, Jeremy Lin, Stephon Marbury, Shawn Marion, Cuttino Mobley, Mitch Richmond, Luis Scola, P.J. Tucker and Chinese

mainland basketball star Ding Yanyuhan, the statement said.

The free, interactive fan event brings together everything from basketball to food, the statement noted, adding that aside from appearances from the headliners, the event will also see an artiste lineup from across Asia including the South Korean girl group "KiiiKiii", Filipino boy band "SB19", and special appearances by Hong Kong singer-actor and Mirror member Keung To (姜濤).

Moreover, there will be "activations" by official league partners, while attendees can explore an official "merchandise village"

featuring NBA products, collectibles and lifestyle apparel, the over 1,500 square metre F&B area presented by Amap and a variety of basketball activities. No registration is required for general entry, the statement said.

The five-day event is also rounded off with official NBA trophy photo opportunities and live viewing parties for the upcoming games.

The NBA China Games 2026 will take place on October 9 and 11, with Dallas Mavericks and the Houston Rockets going head-to-head in preseason games. ■

One can find more details on <https://www.nbachinagames.com/#/>

Macau Weather

CLOUDY APART FROM SUNNY PERIODS.
A FEW SHOWERS AT FIRST.
FORCE 2 TO 3 EAST TO NORTHEASTERLY WINDS.
RELATIVE HUMIDITY WILL RANGE BETWEEN 65% AND 95%.



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Source: SMG

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MACAU POST

UM hosts GBA young entrepreneur awards

Khalel Vallo

The local session of the 7th Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area Outstanding Young Entrepreneur Award Ceremony was held at the public University of Macau (UM) yesterday, with nine young local entrepreneurs among the 95 award recipients.

Organised by the Guangdong-HK-Macao Bay Area Entrepreneurs Alliance, the award ceremony simultaneously took place in Macau and Hong Kong, attracting more than 400,000 people both in person and online, including government officials and representatives from chambers of commerce and associations across the Greater Bay Area (GBA), according to a UM statement yesterday.

UM Vice Rector Claudia Xu Juian and Interim Director of the Institute of Collaborative Innovation Elaine Leung Lai Han attended the local session.

The nine Macau awardees were selected through a process involving independent assessments by academic institutions and experts,

the statement said, adding that two are UM alumni: Wong Ngai Man, CEO of Batilo Group Limited, who received the Outstanding Young Entrepreneur Award, and Gao Ming, general manager of Boss Translation Company Limited, who received the Best Entrepreneurship Award.

Speaking to the media after receiving the award, Gao said that the recognition represented an acknowledgement of his creativity, identity, family and company after more than 10 years of development.

He noted that his company is continuing to expand and sees opportunities arising from the development of the local government's "1+4" industries. Gao added that he hopes to invest more resources into the company's development and explore opportunities in the larger market. He also said that the business would first assess the market and operating environment before considering further expansion, adding that a suitable environment would provide a sound basis for taking the next step in the company's development. ■



Gao Ming, general manager of Boss Translation Company Limited, speaks to the media after yesterday's local session of the 7th Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area Outstanding Young Entrepreneur Award Ceremony at the public University of Macau's (UM) main campus in Hengqin. – Photo: Khalel Vallo

Macau reports 1,832 notifiable disease cases in Aug, flu cases dip

Sherwin Hng

Macau recorded 1,832 notifiable infectious disease cases last month, with influenza remaining the most commonly reported disease, while influenza, scarlet fever, and salmonella infections registered the largest month-on-month decreases, according to a statement by the Health Bureau (SSM) yesterday.

The bureau noted that it regularly analyses and publishes monthly surveillance data to monitor infectious disease trends and raise public awareness of disease prevention. Under Macau's mandatory notification mechanism, 45 categories of infectious diseases are required to be reported within the legally prescribed timeframe.

According to the statement, influenza accounted for the highest number of reported cases in August, with 1,506 cases, followed by 245 enterovirus infections and 20 cases of chickenpox.

However, influenza cases fell 38.7 percent month-on-month from 2,457 cases in July, although the August figure was about 1.4 times higher compared with 616 cases recorded in August last year, the bureau noted.

Scarlet fever cases dropped 57.1 percent from 14 in July to six last month, while salmonella infections fell 44.4 percent from 27 to 15 cases over the same period.

The bureau noted that scarlet fever mainly affects children aged between two and eight and is commonly transmitted through respiratory droplets and contact with oral or nasal secretions. If left untreated, it can lead to complications, including rheumatic fever, kidney disease, and pneumonia.

Salmonella infections can occur throughout the year but are more common between July and October. The infection can be transmitted through contaminated food or water, particularly raw or undercooked eggs, milk, and meat products.

The bureau also reported that no dengue fever or chikungunya cases were recorded last month.

The Health Bureau urged residents to strengthen personal protection measures to reduce the risk of influenza and other infectious diseases, including receiving a seasonal influenza vaccination, which it described as the most effective way to prevent influenza. ■

PREVENT RESPIRATORY INFECTIOUS DISEASES

PLEASE PAY ATTENTION TO PERSONAL HYGIENE



1 CLEAN HANDS



CLEAN HANDS

When sneezing or coughing, cover mouth and nose with a tissue.

2 KEEP VENTILATION



KEEP VENTILATION

Ensure indoor air circulation, avoid crowded places.

3 WEAR A MASK



WEAR A MASK

Wear a mask if you have cold symptoms or are caring for the sick.

4 SEEK MEDICAL ATTENTION PROMPTLY



SEEK MEDICAL PROMPTLY

If you feel unwell, seek care promptly and rest at home.

This infographic provided by the Health Bureau (SSM) yesterday shows how to prevent coming down with infectious respiratory diseases. The translation of the Chinese-language infographic was arranged by the Post.

Macau-born giant panda twins to move to Chengdu in Nov



Municipal Affairs Bureau Conservation of Nature Division Chief Chan Hoi Fong speaks to reporters yesterday at the Macao Giant Panda Pavilion of Seac Pai Van Park in Coloane. – Photo: Maria Cheang Ut Meng

Armando Neves

The Municipal Affairs Bureau (IAM) has announced that the first pair of giant pandas born in Macau, “Jian Jian” and “Kang Kang”, are expected to set off for the Chengdu Research Base of Giant Panda Breeding in early November to begin a journey of learning and growth.

Combined, the two names mean “healthy”.

According to a statement released during yesterday's media visit to Seac Pai Van Park in Coloane, in order to comply with quarantine arrangements, the two pandas will enter a quarantine period starting on October 9, during which they will not be on public display. Members of the public are encouraged to take the opportunity to visit them at the Macao Giant Panda Pavilion before the quarantine period begins, the statement said.

Speaking to reporters at the Macao Giant Panda Pavilion, IAM Conservation of Nature Division Chief Chan Hoi Fong said that the care team has already begun simulated transport training for the two pandas, including recreating the swaying motions and sounds they will experience during transit so that they can gradually adapt.

A joint team comprising experts from the Chengdu base and IAM's animal care and veterinary staff is continuing to monitor their

health, and has been exchanging information on matters such as their dietary preferences, personality traits, and daily training routines to ensure a smooth handover, Chan noted.

He revealed that the transport cost is initially estimated at around 700,000 patacas, with a flight time of approximately two to three hours. As for whether they will return to Macau one day, this will require coordination with the Central People's Government, and no specific arrangements have been made at present, Chan said, adding that the pavilion currently receives around 40,000 visitors per month, and attendance has risen slightly recently as “Jian Jian” and “Kang Kang” are being prepared to leave Macau.

IAM Conservation of Nature Division official Mok Weng Han also said that both pandas are in normal health and that the care team has been carrying out transport acclimatisation training with them in the form of games every day for about two months, adding that she will accompany them from Macau to Chengdu.

Yang Ping, an expert from Sichuan, said that preparations have been made for their return to Chengdu, including quarantine arrangements, disease prevention supplies, and healthcare medication, and that their health will be closely monitored all the time. ■

Macau athletes clinch 2 more silver at Asian Games

Armando Neves

The Sports and Olympic Committee of Macau, China (CODM) announced in a statement yesterday that two local athletes each clinched silver medals at the Asian Games.

As of last night, Macau had accumulated one gold and three silver medals.

In yesterday's Wushu competition, Sou Cho Man scored 9.71 points in the women's Changquan routine event, winning a silver medal.

Meanwhile, according to a *Macau Sports Weekly* story yesterday, during yesterday's Men's Individual Kata Final, Fong Man Hou scored 8.2 points at the event, winning a silver medal.

Speaking to reporters on the sidelines at Aichi Budokan, Sou said that she was satisfied with her first Asian Games performance, having completed her training results on the arena with zero mistakes. She encouraged the younger generation to keep working hard. She candidly admitted that, as she is getting older, her technique still needs improvement, and that she will adjust and resume training afterwards to prepare for next year's competitions. Sou, 29, emphasised that performing to the best of her own ability is what matters most, and that the results are for the judges to decide. She also



Local martial artist Sou Cho Man (left) holding her silver medal poses during an award ceremony yesterday at Aichi Budokan. – Photo courtesy of Sports and Olympic Committee of Macau, China

said she feels content with her silver medal.

Fong told reporters on the sidelines at Toyohashi City General Gymnasium that winning a medal on his first appearance at a major senior-level games felt particularly precious, adding he hoped it would give his teammates confidence. In the final, facing

a world champion, he strove to perform his best, the 25-year-old karateka said, adding that although he did not win gold, he knows he still has room for improvement.

He thanked his senior teammates for their constant encouragement, which helped him keep pace, and expressed his hope of winning



Local karateka Fong Man Hou poses with his silver medal at Toyohashi City General Gymnasium yesterday. – Photo courtesy of Macau Sports Weekly

more medals in the future to prove that the team's younger members are equally capable.

The 20th Asian Games are taking place from Saturday to October 4 in Aichi-Nagoya, western Japan. The Games will run for 16 days, featuring 43 sports. ■

More on the Asian Games on page 14



DISCOVER HAPPINESS WITH 'K-LIENS' AT IO FANTASIA EXHIBITION

Rui Pastorin

Several exhibitions are being held as part of 10 Fantasia's annual Picture Book Festival at the gallery on Calçada da Igreja de S. Lázaro (瘋堂斜巷) until Sunday.

Among them, "K-liens' Mystery of Happiness" sees a total of 16 paintings and sketches in Room A on the first floor of the venue, with its "K-liens" bringing exhibitiongoers along as they embark on the search for the elements of happiness.

The characters come from a picture book written by children's literature author Lydia Leong (楊穎虹) and illustrated by Wan Ieng Meng, both of whom are from Macau. Happiness, meanwhile, serves as its core theme.

Those visiting will have a chance to get acquainted

with the works through a reading area featuring physical copies of the picture books, which, according to a statement from the gallery, aims to encourage parent-child reading. A wall display also urges members of the public to show fragments of happiness from their lives through either drawing or by jotting them down, the statement said.

Beyond this exhibition, one can explore the other showcases like the festival's main exhibition, "ANGEL's Promise" by Guangdong-born artist Lego Liang* (梁賀) on the second floor, along with other picture book exhibitions that shine a light on important messages tackling topics ranging from finding one's true self, the value of respect, to awareness of autism. Each room

offers not only a style and voice unique to each creator, but a message that might prove impactful to viewers young and old.

Meanwhile, aside from the exhibitions, the picture book festival also recently presented a series of activities, including those geared towards parents and children with topics such as managing emotions through the power of picture books, a discussion and art session, and a reading carnival and market that was held across two weekends.

With six days left to go, one can visit the exhibition, along with the other concurrent showcases, until Sunday from 11:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.

*Read more about Liang's exhibition on: <https://www.macaupostdaily.com/news/29179>

A series of works in the K-liens' Mystery of Happiness exhibition is on display at the 10 Fantasia Gallery for six more days. -Photos: Rui Pastorin



2 car-free zones to run 6 days for National Day holiday

Tony Wong

The pedestrianisation of a major part of Taipa Village and the Macau peninsula's Rua de Nossa Senhora do Amparo (關前後街) will be implemented during the first six days of the upcoming seven-day National Day Golden Week holiday period in the Chinese mainland – which will start on Thursday next week, the local government announced yesterday.

This year, the mainland's National Day holiday period will run between October 1 and 7.

The festive-period pedestrianisation of Taipa Village was first implemented during the Chinese mainland's New Year Golden Week holiday period and National Day Golden Week holiday period in 2024. Last year, the measure was

extended to the mainland's Labour Day holiday period.

In addition to Taipa Village, the government's festive-period pedestrianisation initiative was extended to Rua de Nossa Senhora do Amparo during last year's National Day holiday period.

Rua de Nossa Senhora do Amparo is a street in a neighbourhood colloquially known in Cantonese as "Laahn Gwai Lau" (爛鬼樓 – "Dilapidated Ghost Building").

The government decided early this year to formalise the implementation of the festive-period pedestrianisation of the two areas during the mainland's Chinese New Year holiday period, Labour Day holiday period, and National Day holiday period.

The government announced



A car travels along the one-way Rua de Nossa Senhora do Amparo yesterday.

– Photo: Tony Wong

details of the upcoming pedestrianisation of the two areas in a joint statement released through the Macao Government Information Bureau (GCS) yesterday.

Initiated by the Economic and

Technological Development Bureau (DSED), the holiday-period pedestrianisation of the two areas is implemented by the bureau in collaboration with six other public entities – the Municipal Affairs Bureau

(IAM), the Macao Government Tourism Office (MGTO), the Public Security Police Force (PSP), the Fire Services Bureau (CB), the Cultural Affairs Bureau (IC), and the Transport Bureau (DSAT). Yesterday's statement was jointly issued by these seven public entities.

While the upcoming National Day holiday period in the Chinese mainland will run between October 1 and 7, the pedestrianisation of the two areas will be implemented between October 1 and 6.

As previously, the temporary car-free zones will be set up between noon and 7 p.m.

Details on the two pedestrianised zones, only available in Chinese, can be checked at: <https://www.dsedt.gov.mo/zpt>. ■

Gao Xiaowu's 'Dream Voyage' kicks off at Galaxy Macau



Artist Gao Xiaowu prepares to sign one of his exhibits during yesterday's opening ceremony for the "Dream Voyage @ Galaxy Resort" exhibition at Galaxy Macau in Cotai.

Rui Pastorin

A new exhibition called "Dream Voyage @ Galaxy Resort" officially kicked off yesterday afternoon at Galaxy Macau in Cotai, displaying a collection of works from different series by Chinese mainland contemporary artist and sculptor Gao Xiaowu throughout Promenade Central at Galaxy Promenade until November 17.

The award-winning artist was born in Fujian Province and has had works collected by various Chinese and international art institutions, public spaces and private collectors, according to his website.

The artworks on display in Macau include the colourful balloon figures in "Future Dreams", along with "Thank You" and "I Love You", both of which are from his "Our Generation" series, all hoping to inspire reflection on the pursuit of dreams and their possibilities, as noted on the Galaxy Macau website.

Aside from these main exhibits, a section featuring pieces crafted by local artists inspired by Gao's works are also on display.

Speaking with reporters following yesterday's opening, Gao talked to the *Post* about the theme, saying that it harkens

back to one of his earlier series of works, particularly "City Dreams" in 2006.

The word "dream" proved particularly significant to Gao while he was growing up, he said, noting that when he heard the word, it left an impression deep within his heart that only got bigger and prompted more reflection with time. And with this came achievements, reflections on ideas like what makes an "effective" or achievable dream, along with paving the way for a series of other related works.

On what he hopes could be achieved throughout the exhibition's run, Gao, whose remarks were translated from Putonghua, also told the *Post* that Macau serves as a popular attraction that gives people the impression of being in a luxury paradise. But, over the past few years, visitors might be looking for something beyond these factors, adding that he hopes to bring a different kind of experience through his art on display as well as share his artistic concepts.

An installation, he added, is also a good way to highlight something positive in one's daily life, noting that in this case, some visitors to Galaxy Macau could find something to brighten up their day by savouring colourful art. ■

5 residents lose 950,000 patacas in fake 'Douyin' customer service scams: police

Sherwin Hng

Five local residents have separately lost a total of 950,000 patacas after falling victim to a phone scam involving individuals impersonating 'Douyin' customer service representatives, Judiciary Police (PJ) spokesman Cheong Kim Fong said during a regular press conference yesterday.

Cheong added that a sixth resident avoided financial loss after identifying the scam.

The six victims, comprising one man and five women, are all middle-aged residents. They reported their respective cases to the Judiciary Police between September 17 and 20.

According to Cheong, the victims received calls from people claiming to be 'Douyin' customer service representatives, who falsely told them that their "membership services" were about to expire and that they would subsequently be charged about 800 patacas per month.

The scammers offered to help cancel the service and instructed the

victims to contact a purported "bank customer service" representative.

Cheong also said that, in the most serious case, the female victim was instructed to activate her mobile phone's screen-sharing function and open her online banking application. She subsequently transferred a total of HK\$126,000 to a designated account in two transactions.

The scammers then instructed her to provide details of several credit cards in her name. The cards were subsequently used in 14 unauthorised transactions, involving a total of about 705,000 patacas.

When the victim questioned the purported customer service representative, the scammer claimed that the money would be refunded together with the unauthorised transactions after the cancellation procedure was completed. However, the victim received no further response and later realised that she had been deceived.

She reported a total loss of about 845,000 patacas, Cheong said.



Judiciary Police (PJ) spokesman Cheong Kim Fong looks on during yesterday's regular press conference.

– Photo: Sherwin Hng

The other five victims encountered similar scam tactics. One suffered no financial loss, while the remaining four reported losses ranging from more than 5,300 to over 46,000 patacas.

Cheong also mentioned that no arrests have been made and the investigation is continuing. ■

Health Bureau launches activities for World Alzheimer's Month

Khael Vallo

The Health Bureau (SSM) said in a statement on Sunday that it has organised a series of activities this month to mark World Alzheimer's Month and raise residents' awareness of the importance of early detection, diagnosis and treatment of dementia.

The initiative follows this year's theme, "The Earlier You Know, The More You Can Do: A Dementia Diagnosis Matters", designated by Alzheimer's Disease International (ADI) for World Alzheimer's Month, which takes place every September, the statement said.

According to ADI, yesterday marked the World Alzheimer's Day.

The bureau's Dementia Medical Centre and Senior Health Support Hotline (長者健康支援熱線) have jointly organised the "Let's Get Moving to Start a Happy Later

Life" activity for elderly people, people with dementia and their families, the statement said, adding that the activity aims to maintain community participation among patients and promote their physical and mental wellbeing.

The bureau has also produced promotional materials to improve residents' understanding of the early symptoms of dementia, the statement noted, adding that dementia is a common chronic condition among elderly people that affects not only patients but also families and society.

The bureau pointed out that 209 organisations have joined the "Dementia-Friendly Alliance" (失智症友善大聯盟). The Health Bureau, Social Welfare Bureau (IAS) and Macau Alzheimer's Disease Association (MADA) have also held recruitment sessions for leisure

businesses, banking sector, social service organisations and medical groups, the statement said.

Meanwhile, 120 "Dementia-Friendly Citizen" ambassadors have been trained to promote information about dementia and encourage community support for patients, families and caregivers, the statement underlined.

According to the statement, the Health Bureau provides cognitive function assessments to more than 3,000 people annually, with about 650 new cases subsequently referred to the Dementia Medical Centre's memory clinic. The average waiting time for new cases is less than four weeks, the statement said, adding that residents who notice suspected symptoms in themselves or others are advised to arrange a cognitive assessment through their local health centre. ■

Ding expects HK & Macau youth to be builders & heirs of 'One Country, Two Systems'

Continued from p.1

Xia Baolong, who heads both the Hong Kong and Macao Work Office (HKMWO) of the CPC Central Committee and the Hong Kong and Macao Affairs Office (HKMAO) of the State Council, also attended the meeting, according to Xinhua.

According to Hong Kong and Macau media reports, the 1,200-strong delegation comprises 1,000 students in flag-raising teams from primary schools, secondary schools, and higher

education institutions in Hong Kong and Macau, and 200 other members including their teachers, other staff, and officials from the two special administrative regions of Hong Kong and Macau.

The delegation comprises 300 from Macau and 900 from Hong Kong.

The Macau delegation and Hong Kong delegation departed from the two special administrative regions (SARs) on Friday last week. They are scheduled to return home today.

The delegation was headed by Hong Kong's Chief Secretary for Administration Eric Chan Kwok-ki and Macau's Secretary for Social Affairs and Culture Wallis O Lam.

The delegation's visit to Beijing was jointly organised by the HKMWO-HKMAO, the Beijing Municipal People's Government, the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) Government, and the Macao Special Administrative Region (MSAR) Government. ■



Workers pack ginseng products at a ginseng processing company in Wanliang Town, Fusong County, Jilin Province, on Saturday. In the autumn, Fusong, located in the hinterland of Changbai Mountain, is engaged in the harvest and dealing season for locally grown ginseng. As the largest planting, processing and trading center of ginseng in China, Fusong is also called "the hometown of ginseng." In recent years, Jilin has promoted the ginseng industry as a key mission in high-quality development, with the comprehensive output value of the ginseng industry exceeding 100 billion yuan last year, a 30.5 percent increase from that of the previous year, the biggest increase in the last 10 years.

— Xinhua

Wang Yi urges China, Germany to boost cooperation, uphold free trade

BEIJING — Strengthening mutually beneficial cooperation between China and Germany serves the interests of both sides and is the right choice for both, Foreign Minister Wang Yi said yesterday.

In a phone conversation with German Foreign Minister Johann Wadephul, Wang, also a member of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of China Central Committee, called on China and Germany to send a positive signal of jointly upholding multilateralism and free trade, boost confidence in the development of China-Germany relations, and play a constructive role in the development of China-EU relations.

Noting that China and Germany are major economies in the world and all-round strategic partners, Wang said that in the face of unilateralism and deglobalization, it is necessary for both sides to strengthen strategic communication, enhance mutual trust, and deepen practical cooperation.

The two sides should cherish the progress achieved so far, push China-Germany cooperation to greater depth and solidity, and continue to produce new results, Wang said.

Wang pointed out that the one-China principle is the political foundation of China-Germany relations. He expressed the hope that Germany would cherish and build on the tradition of mutual

trust and friendship between China and Germany, adhere to the one-China principle, and take concrete actions to safeguard China-Germany relations as well as peace and stability across the Taiwan Strait, thereby creating the necessary conditions for high-level exchanges between the two sides.

Noting that China and the EU are comprehensive strategic partners, Wang said that the two sides should not fight a trade war.

China has consistently maintained that China and the EU should work in the same direction and resolve each other's concerns through dialogue and consultation, Wang said.

Wang also expressed the hope that Germany would maintain a rational and practical approach, play a positive role within the EU, and help promote the EU to uphold free trade, reject protectionism, and stay on the right course of openness, cooperation, dialogue and consultation.

For his part, Wadephul said Germany-China relations have maintained a sound momentum of development in recent years.

Germany looks forward to further strengthening high-level exchanges with China, holding a new round of Germany-China intergovernmental consultations, deepening practical cooperation in

areas such as trade and the economy, and continuously advancing bilateral relations, said Wadephul.

The German side firmly adheres to the one-China policy and the position will not change, said Wadephul.

Noting that the current international situation is facing a series of new threats and challenges, Wadephul said that Germany expects China to leverage its influence in international and regional affairs and work with Germany to explore solutions.

Germany supports the EU and China in properly addressing their differences through dialogue and is willing to play an active role in this regard, he added.

Wang said an important consensus reached by China and Germany today is that China-EU economic and trade issues should be resolved through dialogue and consultation.

The two sides also exchanged views on the situation in Iran and the Ukraine crisis. Wang reiterated China's principled position, saying China will only do what is conducive to peace and remains committed to promoting talks for peace. China stands ready to continue strengthening communication and coordination with the EU and make joint efforts toward this end.

— Xinhua

China seeks to foster distinctive strengths among universities

Analysis

BEIJING — Home to one of the world's largest higher education systems, China is promoting greater differentiation among universities to better serve socioeconomic development.

In a newly unveiled guideline on the reform of higher education institutions, authorities called for universities to pursue distinct development paths, whether research-, application- or skills-oriented, and foster new forms of integrated education to explore innovative approaches to nurturing top talent.

"This is not simply about labeling universities, but about creating a rational division of functions among higher education institutions and their respective missions," said Liu Zhentian, a professor of education at Xiamen University.

The guideline builds on a previous plan to develop China into a leading country in education by 2035. The plan classifies China's more than 3,000 higher education institutions into research-oriented, application-oriented and skills-oriented categories.

The guideline urges refining the existing classification framework for higher education institutions, marking a further step in China's reform toward differentiated development in the sector.

According to experts, the move aims to strengthen research-oriented universities' leading role in driving major breakthroughs in science and technology, while enabling application-oriented universities to focus on practice-oriented talent, industry-education integration, technological innovation and research commercialization.

Skills-oriented universities, meanwhile, should serve as a mainstay for cultivating master craftsmen and highly skilled professionals, with a focus on employment-oriented training and support for the development of a modern industrial system.

The move is seen as an effort to address structural challenges arising from a similar pursuit of degree programs among Chinese universities in recent years, amid the continued expansion of higher education.

China has already stepped up adjustments to university disciplines and majors in response to technological advances, emerging industries and changing talent demand.

The rapid development of artificial intelligence (AI) is also reshaping talent demand. An action plan on AI plus education calls for optimizing university disciplines and majors in response to expanding interdisciplinary AI programs.

During the 14th Five-Year Plan period (2021-2025), Chinese universities added 10,200 undergraduate programs while canceling or suspending 12,200, with more than 30 percent of programs adjusted overall, according to the Ministry of Education.

Zhang Nanxing, a professor with the China National Academy of Educational Sciences, anticipated further adjustment in the number of institutions of different categories to better align with social development needs.

Universities would also be encouraged to further adjust and optimize their academic disciplines and programs, while providing students with diverse and flexible pathways for educational and career development, Zhang said.

The new policy introduces differentiated support for universities, with resources tailored to the needs of different types of institutions and evaluation criteria adjusted accordingly.

"We need to move away from a one-track approach to resource allocation and establish a categorized resource support system," said Li Ligu, a professor of education at Tsinghua University.

In addition to the three broad institutional orientations, the new policy allows localities to develop more diversified subcategories based on their regional industries and educational structures.

Shao Yunzhen, deputy director of the Guangdong Provincial Department of Education, said skills-oriented institutions in the province will have greater say in defining their missions, while focusing on training skilled personnel for the frontline of industries.

Experts believe that the reform is not only a structural adjustment within the education system, but also requires a shift in social perceptions.

"We need to break down stereotypes and ensure that graduates from different types of universities receive the respect and rewards they deserve in their careers," said Zhang Zhengwen, former president of the University of Chinese Academy of Social Sciences.

— Xinhua

China rolls out AI ‘classrooms’ to fuel humanoid robot boom

BEIJING – Rows of humanoid robots repeat the same motions over and over – picking up water bottles, sliding trays into microwaves and scanning parcel labels. Nearby, human operators in motion-capture suits fold laundry and smooth out bedsheets, their movements captured by sensors and fed into AI training systems.

Scenes like these are unfolding in many places in China. Industry insiders call these facilities “embodied AI training grounds”.

China is now home to more than 140 humanoid robot manufacturers. In 2025, the country shipped 14,400 humanoid robots, accounting for roughly eight in every 10 units shipped globally.

Yet impressive as these numbers are, the industry still faces a fundamental challenge: turning robots that can run, jump and dance in controlled settings into machines capable of reliably handling the countless, unpredictable tasks of everyday life.

A critical part of enabling them to handle everyday tasks is access to vast amounts of data.

Just as large language models learned from vast amounts of text to reshape the digital world, robots need vast amounts of real-world interaction data to master the physical one. They need to learn, through repeated encounters, how to grasp objects of different shapes, navigate unfamiliar spaces, respond to changes in their surroundings and complete everyday tasks.

But while the internet is overflowing with text, physical-world interaction data for robots has never been collected systematically.



Fairgoers watch a humanoid robot during the All-Space Unmanned Ecosystem Conference & Equipment Achievement Exhibition at Luogang Park in Hefei, Anhui Province, on Sunday. Various unmanned technologies are displayed during the World Manufacturing Conference. As part of the event, the exhibition displays the latest technologies, products and scenarios solutions in the field of all-space unmanned system.

– Xinhua

That is the gap these new training grounds, where robots learn to navigate and perform tasks in real-world environments through repetitive, data-intensive training, are being built to fill.

A recent research report shows that, as of the end of June 2026, China had opened more than 70 embodied AI training grounds. In addition, over 40 embodied AI training grounds are under construction or in the planning stage. Most are located in the Yangtze River Delta, the Beijing-Tianjin-Hebei region and the Pearl River Delta.

In Guangdong Province, the

provincial training ground has taken on a role that goes beyond teaching robots. Dubbed a “robot school” by its operator, it regularly brings robot makers together with potential users, helping manufacturers, healthcare providers and energy companies find suitable embodied AI solutions while giving robot developers access to real-world environments in which their robots can learn and be tested.

A similar model is taking shape in Hangzhou, capital of Zhejiang Province. There, the National Pilot Base for Embodied AI Applications acts as a “super connector,” bringing

together state-owned enterprises, leading technology firms and application companies through an open cooperation mechanism.

“Previously, developing a single application scenario could cost a company tens of millions of yuan just in training data. Now, by moving into the base, you can access everything you need in just one place,” said Zhang Haiwei, founder of a Hangzhou-based robot firm.

As these training grounds evolve from isolated facilities into a broader ecosystem, policy support is also moving in to accelerate their development.

In June 2026, Chinese authorities jointly launched a special action plan for real-scene training of humanoid robots and embodied AI, requiring each provincial region to identify at least 20 priority scenarios and create trainable, testable and verifiable real-scene training spaces.

At the same time, efforts are underway to improve not only the amount of training data, but also its quality. An industry standard on embodied AI dataset quality, drafted by a consortium of more than 40 organizations, is scheduled to take effect on November 1. The standard is expected to help shift dataset development from a focus on scale toward greater quality, while addressing a long-standing gap in the field.

The business model is evolving, too. Wang Maolin, co-founder of an embodied AI ecosystem platform based in Shenzhen, said the next step is to move beyond simply supplying data and develop “training-as-a-service,” creating diversified revenue streams that can help turn training grounds from heavy-asset investments into sustainable operations.

With policy support and growing momentum behind their development, embodied AI training grounds are no longer confined to China’s major economic hubs. According to industry insiders, training grounds are now reaching into China’s third- and fourth-tier cities, creating a multi-tiered network shaped not only by talent and capital, but increasingly by the availability of real-world scenarios and the data they can generate.

– Xinhua

GDI has yielded fruitful outcomes over past 5 years: spokesperson

BEIJING – Five years ago today, the Global Development Initiative (GDI) was put forward, and it has yielded fruitful outcomes in implementation over the past five years, foreign ministry spokesperson Guo Jiakun said yesterday.

Guo said at a regular news briefing the GDI has turned from a Chinese proposal into a global consensus, with the people-centered development philosophy enjoying increasing popularity.

Guo stated that through concrete actions, the GDI has played an enhanced role in advancing global development, mobilizing over US\$23 billion and delivering more than 2,000 cooperation projects under the initiative’s framework. In particular, practical cooperation under the framework of the Global Development and South-South Cooperation Fund has yielded fruitful outcomes in more than 70 countries, benefiting more than 40 million people, he added.

Guo added that the GDI has developed better cooperation architecture across various sectors, laying the groundwork for advancing international development cooperation as well as realizing the United Nations (UN) Sustainable Development Goals.

Guo noted that the general debate of the 81st session of the UN General Assembly starts today. On the sidelines of the general debate, China will host a high-level dialogue on the fifth anniversary of the GDI at the UN headquarters in New York on September 25. “We look forward to working with the broader UN membership to take stock of the achievements and useful experiences over the past five years, share development opportunities, explore cooperation on development, facilitate the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and build a community with a shared future for humanity,” he said.

– Xinhua

Zhang Youxia, Liu Zhenli expelled from CPC, military for serious discipline, law violations

BEIJING – Zhang Youxia and Liu Zhenli have been expelled from the Communist Party of China (CPC) and military service for serious discipline and law violations, according to a decision made at a CPC leadership meeting held yesterday.

Zhang served as a member of the Political Bureau of the CPC Central Committee and vice chairman of the Central Military Commission (CMC), while Liu served as a CMC member and chief of staff of the CMC Joint Staff Department.

A meeting of the Political Bureau of the CPC Central Committee approved the CMC’s reports on the handling of Zhang and Liu’s cases after deliberation.

With approval from the CPC Central Committee and the CMC, the CMC’s disciplinary and supervisory authority launched investigations into their cases.

The investigations found that Zhang and Liu formed self-serving cliques, were disloyal and dishonest to the Party, took advantage of their positions to assist others in promotions and accepted a huge sum of bribes in return.

They also failed to fulfill the responsibility of exercising full and rigorous Party self-governance, said a statement released after the meeting.

They seriously violated Party discipline, were suspected of serious duty-related violations, and engaged in both corruption and dereliction of duties, it said, adding that their violations involved exceptionally large amounts of money, and were of extremely serious nature and with significantly negative impacts.

The cases related to their suspected crimes will be transferred to military prosecution

authorities for legal review and prosecution in accordance with the law, according to the statement.

The decision to expel Zhang and Liu from the CPC awaits confirmation by the CPC Central Committee when it convenes a plenary session. Previously, the CMC had made a decision to expel Zhang and Liu from military service.

The statement noted the investigation and punishment of Zhang and Liu once again made it clear that no tolerance is shown for corruption, and that it represented a major achievement in the anti-corruption campaign waged by the Party and the military.

The people’s military has become purer, more consolidated, with greater cohesion and combat effectiveness in the fight against corruption, the statement said.

– Xinhua

S Korea's ex-commanders jailed up to 18 years over martial law

SEOUL – Five former senior South Korean military officers were jailed for up to 18 years yesterday for their roles in the country's short-lived martial law declaration of 2024.

Ex-President Yoon Suk Yeol declared martial law in December that year, ordering special forces and helicopters to parliament in an unsuccessful bid to prevent MPs from voting down the move.

He also sent armed soldiers to the country's election commission to hunt for purported evidence of voter fraud.

According to a court statement yesterday, former Defence Counterintelligence Command chief Yeo In-hyung was sentenced to 18 years in prison, while Lee Jin-woo - former head of the Capital Defence

Command – was given 15 years.

Prosecutors had sought 30-year prison terms for both.

Park An-su, former Army chief of staff who was designated as the martial law commander, was sentenced to 10 years.

Moon Sang-ho, former head of the Defence Intelligence Command who attempted to seize control of the National Election Commission, was sentenced to 12 years in prison.

Kwak Jong-keun, former chief of the Army Special Warfare Command, was given nine years.

Apart from Kwak, the accused officers denied all charges and said they were wrongly accused.

In July Kwak said he “deeply regretted” sending his “beloved subordinates” to the National Assembly

and the National Election Commission when martial law was declared.

“It pains me deeply to see my subordinates suffering after being deployed because of my foolish orders at the time,” said Kwak at his final hearing.

According to a prosecution indictment report, Yoon told Lee that military forces could shoot if necessary to enter the National Assembly.

He also told Lee on the night of martial law to “drag out” politicians if necessary and for Kwak to “quickly get inside” the National Assembly since the quorum for the martial law declaration to be lifted had not been met.

Yoon was sentenced to life in prison for insurrection in February and is currently appealing. – AFP

Cambodia showcases dismantled cyber scam compounds to press ahead of int'l conference

SVAY RIENG, Cambodia – Cambodia yesterday granted dozens of national and foreign journalists access to shuttered online scam compounds, allowing them to take photographs and record video footage of the defunct facilities.

The press tour took place just days before Phnom Penh hosts the International Conference on Combating Online Scams, scheduled for September 23-24.

During the visit, media members were shown a shuttered scam casino in Svay Rieng province and a separate scam compound in Prey Veng province. Seized evidence on display at both sites included laptops, desktop computers, servers, CCTV cameras, mobile phones, SIM cards, work permits, passports, and documents.

Hay Makara, a member of the Ad-Hoc Commission for Combating Online Scams (CCOS), said Cambodia has completely eliminated large-scale scam compounds following a rigorous, year-long nationwide crackdown. However, he warned that syndicates have shifted to decentralized, small-scale operations.

“Since launching the nationwide crackdown on online scam operations, we have investigated 832 suspected locations, and more than 600 of them



Abandoned equipment is seen in a room at a closed cyber scam centre in Bavet town, Svay Reang province yesterday.

Cambodia this week hosts officials from more than 20 countries for a conference on combating online scammers, seeking to showcase its own crackdown under increasing international pressure.

– AFP

were found to be involved in online scam operations,” he told reporters during the tour, noting that 86 of those sites were classified as large-scale scam compounds.

“To date, all large-scale scam compounds have been dismantled; however, criminals have shifted their tactics to decentralized, small-scale activities, hiding in rental homes, hotel rooms, and even vehicles,” Makara added.

Cambodia launched the unprecedented crackdown to dismantle cybercrime networks, ensure public safety, and restore its international reputation.

According to CCOS data, the Southeast Asian nation deported more than 22,000 individuals of 38 different nationalities between July 2025 and August 2026 for direct involvement in online scam operations. – Xinhua

Propping feet on bus seats carries US\$400 penalty in ‘Fine City’

SINGAPORE – Riders who eat on public buses or put their feet on the seats could face a nearly US\$400 penalty in Singapore, officials said yesterday, a new example of no-nonsense regulations in “Fine City”.

The rules are even stricter for “soiling” a bus or causing a danger to other passengers, with a maximum fine of Sg\$5,000 (US\$3,900), said the Land Transport Authority (LTA). The penalty for propping feet on seats is up to Sg\$500.

The regulations do not explicitly list individual offences, but official

enforcement guidelines indicate that soiling refers to severe cleanliness breaches, which in practice cover actions like vomiting, urinating, spitting, or spilling bodily fluids on seats, floors, or handrails, as well as smearing them with food, mud, or grease.

Singapore tightly regulates public spaces with an already extensive list of penalties for littering or smoking in prohibited areas, inspiring its “Fine City” nickname.

The moniker, which can also be a compliment to Singapore's tidiness, is often seen printed on tourist souvenirs.

Singapore famously banned chewing gum in 1992 after discarded gum caused metro train delays due to some commuters sticking it on the doors, interfering with the sensors.

The new regulations bring buses into line with the Mass Rapid Transit network and aim to create a “safer, more considerate and pleasant public transport environment”, the LTA said.

The authority said officials would exercise “discretion and fairness”, particularly in cases involving commuters with physical or mental health conditions. – AFP

Flights scrapped, evacuations urged as Typhoon Dujuan nears Japan

TOKYO – Hundreds of flights were cancelled and more than one million people were under evacuation advisories in Japan yesterday as Typhoon Dujuan approached Tokyo, potentially bringing record rainfall.

Japan often sees strong typhoons in the late summer and early autumn, and other storms have already disrupted some events at the Asian Games being hosted in the country.

Dujuan was bringing winds of around 144 kilometres per hour yesterday as it moved to around 130 kilometres south of Katsura City near Tokyo.

Japan Airlines cancelled 135 flights and All Nippon Airways scrapped 140, while more than 9,000 households near Tokyo were without power.

More than 1.6 million residents in and around the capital were urged to evacuate, according to the Fire and Disaster Management Agency. The evacuations are not mandatory.

Landslide warnings were issued for Tokyo as well as for Chiba, Kanagawa and Shizuoka prefectures. Railway operators in Tokyo and neighbouring regions suspended services on some lines.

In areas where warnings have been issued, “there’s a risk the rain will continue as the typhoon moves north”, Takuya Hosomi of the Japan Meteorological Agency (JMA) told reporters.

The JMA warned on Sunday that rain and winds were expected to intensify even before the typhoon's arrival.

“The total rainfall through Tuesday [today] could exceed the average monthly rainfall for September, resulting in record-breaking heavy rain,” the agency said.

One person has already been mildly injured and nine houses have been damaged due to the typhoon.

Dujuan also forced the early closure of the Tokyo Game Show, one of the world's biggest video-game trade fairs, yesterday, its final day.

A major outdoor music festival and a baseball match both scheduled to be held in Chiba were also cancelled.

Social media posts showed images of roads in front of Kamakura station, a popular sightseeing spot, were flooded.

“There is flooding in various parts of the city, so travelling by car is dangerous,” Kamakura City Mayor Takashi Matsuo said on X. – AFP

Laos launches digital tourism platform to modernize travel services

VIENTIANE – Laos' Ministry of Culture and Tourism, in collaboration with the private sector, has launched the Lao Travel Platform, a new digital tourism hub designed to make travel planning and tourism services in Laos more convenient and accessible.

Described as a “Digital Gateway to Laos,” the platform brings tourism information and services together in one place. With the platform, users can search for destinations, attractions, activities, accommodation, restaurants, transportation and other travel services. It also allows travelers to book accommodation, flights, train and bus tickets, rent cars or

vans, purchase tourist SIM/eSIM cards, and access other tourism-related services.

Laos aims to attract more than 43 million visitors between 2026 and 2030, including 21 million domestic and 22 million international tourists. To reach this target, the government plans to upgrade infrastructure at major tourist destinations, improve service standards and enhance the skills of tourism workers.

More than 2.5 million foreign tourists visited Laos in the first half of 2026, an increase of 9.87 percent compared to the figures for the same period in 2025.

– Xinhua



Demonstrators join a rally commemorating the 54th anniversary of the imposition of Martial Law in Manila yesterday.

– AFP

'I live in fear': 1.5 million Pakistani children sexually exploited online

Shrouq Tariq

ISLAMABAD — Pakistani teenager Zara Shah was targeted by a stranger while playing a computer game, drawn into a conversation that would expose her to terrifying online sexual exploitation.

Zara, whose name has been changed by AFP for safety reasons, is one of an estimated 1.5 million children in Pakistan who experienced online sexual abuse in one year, according to a report published by the UN children's agency this month.

"We started chatting while playing an online game, and he began acting like a friend. Later, he wanted to meet and, after, started asking me for nudes," 17-year-old Shah said.

"When I refused, he threatened to find my family online and tell them that we had been talking," she added.

According to the UNICEF report, around 85 percent of perpetrators were known to the victims, aged between 12 and 17.

"The abuse may start with a friendly conversation, a gaming interaction, a promise of gifts, money or romance," Daniel Kardefelt, lead author of the global UNICEF report, told AFP.

"Perpetrators may spend months building trust using information that they find on social media," Kardefelt said.

In Muslim-majority Pakistan, 71 percent of victims did not tell anyone, according to the UNICEF report, while no child surveyed reported the abuse through formal channels — including police, helplines or social workers.

Their silence was mostly because of stigma, shame and fears over how their families or society may react.

"Around 44 percent of reported abuse was entirely online, with Snapchat and WhatsApp among the most common settings," said Mehek Naeem, director of PAHCHAAN, a children's rights organisation based in the eastern city of Lahore.

Girls can face heightened risks of sexual extortion in the conservative society, which can lead to restrictions on their mobility or withdrawal from school.

For Zara, the threat of being exposed to her family was enough to keep her silent.

"I could have been stopped from going to school or leaving the house altogether," she said.

"Staying quiet felt like the better option than speaking up. But anxiety kills me every day."

Loopholes, 'no implementation'

With around 74 percent of children aged 12 to 17 in Pakistan estimated by UNICEF to be internet users, concerns over online safety are growing as their access to digital platforms expands.

Echoing other policies around the world, the provincial government in Punjab this month passed a resolution to bar children under 16 from using social media.

However, it has faced opposition.

"I disagree with the ban," said Usama Khilji, a digital rights activist.

"It will be a challenge to implement, and children can circumvent the ban through VPNs. Children have the right of freedom of expression, and a ban takes that away," he said.

Pakistan has a legal framework addressing tech-facilitated offences against children, but "there is no implementation", said Tahira Afrasiyab, a spokesperson for non-profit organisation Muslim Hands.

And, according to experts, there are loopholes in existing laws.

Human rights lawyer Salman Afridi said this issue shows how "economic vulnerability can be weaponised" for amounts as small as 10,000 Pakistani rupees (US\$36) in exchange for the production of sexual content.

"What we are seeing is the use of technology to facilitate an entire chain of grooming, inducement, coercion, blackmail, production, distribution and commercialisation," he said.

"There is a strong basis for describing this as a commercial ecosystem of exploitation," Afridi added.

For Zara and many others like her, the consequences of an encounter that began with an online game remain difficult to escape.

"I was, and am, scared," she said. "I live in fear." — AFP

Pakistan launches deadly strikes on Afghanistan

PATAN, KUNAR, Afghanistan — A Pakistani bombardment killed three civilians in eastern Afghanistan, Taliban authorities in Kabul said yesterday, with Islamabad saying its forces had targeted "terrorist hubs" along the border.

AFP journalists saw a house reduced to rubble in the village of Patan, where dozens of men gathered for the funerals of the victims of Pakistan's first deadly cross-border strikes since June.

Mubin Khan, a farmer who was wounded in the latest bombardment, told AFP: "During the night we were targeted... the house got destroyed."

Khan said three members of his family were killed.

The Taliban government's deputy spokesman Hamdullah Fitrat said in a post on X that Nurgal district, where Patan is located, came under attack at around 3:00 a.m. [local time].

The strike "completely destroyed" a house, killing three and wounding four members of the same family, Fitrat said.

Two locations in Paktika province were also bombed, he said, reporting no casualties.

The UN mission in Afghanistan, UNAMA, said it had "confirmed at least three civilians, including a man, a woman and a girl, were killed and four injured in apparent airstrikes" in Kunar, the province where Patan is located.

"So far in 2026, UNAMA has documented over 1,100 civilian deaths and injuries in Afghanistan from cross-border armed violence," it said, calling for "respect for



Afghan men rescue an injured man in the aftermath of a Pakistani airstrike in the Nurgal district of Afghanistan's Kunar province yesterday.

— AFP

international humanitarian law to prevent civilian casualties".

Islamabad's Information and Broadcasting Ministry confirmed that Pakistani forces had struck three locations, saying "terrorist hubs" along the border were targeted "based on credible intelligence".

The ministry said "28 terrorists alongside multiple suicide bombers" were killed. That figure was rejected by the Taliban government, which said it was "not true".

Taliban government spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid condemned the "aggression" and said that "Afghans will give it an appropriate response".

The strikes follow an attack on a police headquarters in northern Pakistan on Friday that killed at least 31 people, including 16 officers.

A local faction, Ittehad-ul-Mujahideen Pakistan, which is linked to the jihadist group Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), claimed responsibility for Friday's attack

in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, which borders Afghanistan.

Pakistan accuses Afghanistan of supporting jihadist groups responsible for deadly attacks on its territory, an allegation the Taliban government in Afghanistan denies.

Pakistan's previous deadly airstrikes in Afghanistan occurred in June and killed around 30 people.

Islamabad said at the time it had targeted a TTP faction and killed fighters, while the Taliban government reported civilian casualties.

The two neighbours have had particularly tense relations since the Taliban authorities returned to power in Kabul in 2021.

Pakistan stepped up its bombings at the beginning of the year, including on the Afghan capital.

The deadliest strike, which occurred on March 16, hit a drug treatment hospital in Kabul and killed at least 269 civilians, according to the United Nations. — AFP

Sisters of jailed Pakistan ex-PM Imran Khan arrested

ISLAMABAD — Former Pakistan prime minister Imran Khan's party said yesterday that his three sisters had been arrested.

"Punjab police have raided Aleema Khan's home and have abducted Imran Khan's other two sisters, his nephews and their children," Zulfi Bukhari, a spokesman for Khan's Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party, said on the social media platform X.

"Khan's sisters and their children were taken into custody, but the children were released," PTI's information secretary Sheikh Waqas Akram told AFP.

"All three sisters have been sent to Kot Lakhpat Jail, Lahore," he added.

The purported arrests involved Khan's sisters Aleema Khan, Dr Uzma Khan and Noreen Khan.

The deputy commissioner of Lahore on Sunday passed two separate orders, the copies of which were seen by AFP, for the three sisters' 30-day detention under the Maintenance of Public Order law of Punjab province.

Punjab police did not respond to AFP's request for comment.

Khan's party has announced a protest call for 27 September.

Information Minister Attaullah

Tarar said on Sunday the protest call was illegal.

"We will not allow them to block roads and disrupt people's lives," Tarar said.

Khan has been in jail since 2023 and was sentenced late last year, along with his wife, to 17 years in jail on corruption charges they both deny.

The 73-year-old Khan, who was also a former Pakistan cricket captain, was prime minister from 2018 to 2022 before being removed in a no-confidence vote during a political crisis over tensions between his government and Pakistan's powerful military establishment. — AFP

Dementia survey highlights diagnosis delays, carer burden in Australia

CANBERRA — A national survey has found that many Australians living with dementia report positive wellbeing and support from family and friends, but face complex pathways to diagnosis and difficulties accessing support services.

The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) survey, conducted between May 2025 and January 2026, collected

responses from 266 people living with dementia and 1,648 carers, an AIHW statement said yesterday.

Three in five people living with dementia reported receiving a diagnosis within three years of first noticing symptoms, while fewer than half said they were diagnosed within the first year, the survey found, adding that barriers included delays in seeking advice, delays in

tests and specialist appointments, symptoms being attributed to other causes, and appointment costs.

The survey also highlighted the burden on carers. Nearly one-third spent 70 hours or more each week caring for someone living with dementia, while more than seven in 10 women and six in 10 men reported feeling overwhelmed by their responsibilities.

Around two-thirds of carers recorded low wellbeing, with those providing 70 hours or more of care a week reporting lower wellbeing than those providing fewer hours, it said.

Nearly 459,000 Australians are estimated to be living with dementia in 2026, with the number expected to exceed 1 million over the next 35 years, said AIHW spokesperson Bronte O'Donnell, noting that the

findings would help Australia better understand how dementia affects people's everyday lives.

Yesterday marked World Alzheimer's Day, observed as part of World Alzheimer's Month. Alzheimer's disease is the most common form of dementia, accounting for an estimated 60-70 percent of cases worldwide, according to the World Health Organization. — Xinhua

US media outlets to sue Trump administration after White House ban

WASHINGTON, DC – Major US television networks yesterday suspended their involvement in a rotation of broadcasters covering President Donald Trump, as three leading news outlets went to court over being banned from the White House.

Broadcasters CNN and MS NOW, along with news outlet *Politico*, filed suit after Trump last week ordered them to be barred from the presidential complex.

“This ban could not be a more direct assault on the First Amendment nor a more blatant violation of our most fundamental constitutional principles,” the organisations said in a court filing.

Shortly afterward, the five major US broadcasters said they were halting “pool” coverage of the White House in solidarity with CNN.

CNN had been scheduled to serve yesterday as the White House TV pool, a rotating assignment in which a broadcaster films on behalf of all television outlets for the day.

“The public has a vital interest in receiving accurate, independent information about its government. No administration should restrict a news organization because it objects to its reporting,” ABC, CBS, CNN, Fox and NBC said in a statement.

The boycott means there was no pooled coverage of Trump’s travel to the United Nations General Assembly in New York yesterday, where he was due to meet a series of world leaders.

Trump was unrepentant, with the 80-year-old Republican branding the media a “cancer” and a threat to national security.

“The White House is not instituting an assault on the Free Press, something which I cherish,” Trump said on his Truth Social network.



MS NOW White House Correspondent Vaughn Hillyard (second from left) and MS NOW production crew members set up for a live shot on a street corner near the White House in Washington, DC, yesterday.

– AFP

“It is instituting an assault on the FAKE NEWS, something that has grown like Cancer in our beloved United States of America.”

‘Threatens press freedom’

Trump announced the ban on Friday in a major escalation of his years-long assault on the US media, especially on outlets that report critically on him and his administration.

Journalists from CNN, MS NOW and *Politico* were denied access to the White House grounds on Saturday and had their passes confiscated.

The outlets said the White House revoked their journalists’ credentials “without notice or process” because it “objected to our reporting.”

“Left unchallenged, this threatens press freedom and the public’s right to independent journalism free from government interference,” they said in their joint statement.

Their lawsuit calls for the immediate overturning of the ban and a ruling that it violates the First

Amendment of the US Constitution, which upholds the right to free speech.

Trump has not detailed what prompted the ban, but said in response to a question from an AFP reporter in the Oval Office on Friday that it was “really just cumulative stories over the last two years.”

“They want to try and diminish the Republicans and a Republican administration,” Trump added.

Trump warned on Friday that other outlets could face a similar fate, without saying which.

The billionaire former reality TV star has long attacked media outlets that have aired critical coverage of his campaigns and administrations, repeatedly blasting the press as the “enemy of the people.”

Through both terms in office he has claimed journalists have failed to show sufficient appreciation for his accomplishments. Trump has also stood out in presidential history for routinely insulting journalists he doesn’t like both in person and on social media.

– AFP

S Africa makes arrests over one of 9 women found murdered

JOHANNESBURG – South African police said yesterday they had arrested three people over the killing of one of nine women found dead in a neighbourhood east of Johannesburg in a series of murders that have alarmed the nation.

The discovery of the nine bodies in Kempton Park over two months has fuelled fear and anger, as authorities investigate whether a serial killer or killers were responsible.

A man and two women were arrested at the weekend over the killing of Jabulile Ntimba, whose body was found on September 17 and was the ninth victim, police said.

As in most of the cases, her body was found on the side of the road, partly clothed.

“There does appear to be an indication that her murder may have stemmed from a relationship-related matter, including what has been described as a possible love triangle,” deputy police chief Tebello Mosikili said.

Gender-based violence is endemic in South Africa, despite years of government pledges to tackle the problem and the declaration of gender-based violence as a national disaster.

President Cyril Ramaphosa yesterday echoed the police pledge that those responsible for the killings would be brought to book.

“We will be pulling out all stops to find these perpetrators,”

he told journalists, vowing additional measures to tackle violence against women.

“We are going to be deploying more money, more resources, more technology, to ensure that we deal with the fear that women are now subjected to,” he said.

The latest arrests bring to four the number of people held by police in connection with the Kempton Park killings.

A man arrested over the murder of a woman whose body was found in July remains in custody and is due back in court on October 28, police said.

“We are not going to rush these investigations simply to make arrests. We owe it to the victims, we owe it to their families, and we owe it to justice to get this right,” Mosikili said.

Separately, police said another woman was found dead on Sunday in Soweto, south of Johannesburg, her body wrapped in a duvet and dumped near a dam.

Police also said two alleged serial rapists were due in court in KwaZulu-Natal province. A 46-year-old man has been linked by DNA to 16 rape cases in Durban, while a 36-year-old man has been linked to at least 14 cases across two provinces.

South Africa suffers from a murder rate of more than 60 a day on average, one of the highest globally.

– AFP

Slovak leader’s NATO-Russia war comments anger Czech Republic

BRATISLAVA – Kremlin-friendly Slovak Prime Minister Robert Fico has angered the neighbouring Czech Republic by accusing Western politicians of doing “everything” to spark a NATO war with Russia.

European leaders have been increasingly concerned about shadow operations across the continent, which they attribute to Russia following its invasion of Ukraine in February 2022.

Fico – now the only EU leader fostering close ties with Russian President Vladimir Putin – suggested in a Facebook video on Saturday the West was pressing for a NATO-Russia “conflict”.

“The failure of the strategy to destroy Russia through the war in Ukraine is leading many politicians in the West to believe that, if this cannot be achieved through the Ukrainian army and its full support, everything must be done to bring about a conflict between NATO and Russia,” he said.

Last Thursday he also said he did not want “Slovakia to be involved in an armed conflict because of Article 5” of the NATO Treaty.

Article 5 triggers assistance by NATO countries when a member is attacked. NATO says that this assistance may or may not involve the use of armed force.

Fico’s comment angered the Czech Republic’s President Petr Pavel, a former NATO general who led the alliance’s Military Committee in 2015-2018.

“This is an absolutely significant statement that we should take seriously and which we definitely should not follow as an example,” Pavel said on Sunday.

“If someone says [this]... they don’t understand the word solidarity. And I firmly hope the Czech Republic will not follow this path,” added Pavel.

The Czech Republic’s Slovak-born Prime Minister Andrej Babis, an ally of Fico, said yesterday that Prague would “naturally respect Article 5”.

“I will not comment on Prime Minister Fico,” added the billionaire leader.

The Babis and Fico governments have refused to provide direct military aid to Ukraine, insisting they promote peace.

– AFP

AI safety measures failing to keep pace with technology: UN experts

NEW YORK – The model for managing artificial intelligence (AI) risks “is unravelling,” United Nations experts warned in a report published yesterday on an incident at OpenAI in July.

During the incident, two OpenAI systems escaped their confined testing environment, accessed the internet and broke into several websites, including AI platform Hugging Face.

After examining the sequence of events, the Independent International Scientific Panel on Artificial Intelligence, established in 2025, concluded that, “basic cybersecurity practices were overlooked, and safeguards are not advancing at the pace of capabilities.”

But the incident also showed, according to the panel, that under the current framework for AI development, AI agents could,

“adopt goals of their own, knowingly violate safety instructions, and conceal their actions.”

Agents are AI-powered programs capable of autonomously carrying out tasks at a user’s request.

The panel expressed concern that agents could become sophisticated enough to understand the safety constraints imposed on them by developers “and plan around them.”

“In simple terms, the traditional model of safeguarding is unravelling,” the group said.

Beyond the OpenAI incident, the most widely publicised of its kind, the firm and its main rival Anthropic have reported other instances of their AI systems going off track during tests since the beginning of the year, so far without serious consequences.

The panel’s report said that it “does not predict severe loss of control, nor does it treat that

uncertainty as evidence that these systems will stay controllable.”

To reduce the risk, the panel recommended introducing multiple layers of safety measures, following the example of high-risk sectors such as aviation and nuclear power.

The aim is to avoid relying on a single safeguard: restricting AI agents’ access to tools they do not need, logging their activity, monitoring their behaviour and establishing mechanisms capable of interrupting their operations in the event of dangerous behaviour.

The report also highlighted the need to retain the ability for humans to intervene.

The panel, whose members were announced in February, produces “policy-relevant but non-prescriptive” reports on non-military AI.

The UN General Assembly’s annual leaders’ meeting starts this week in New York.

– AFP

COP31 host says AI climate footprint to be a summit priority

NEW YORK – COP31* host Turkey said yesterday that pursuing “climate-responsible AI” and pushing tech companies to power data centres with clean energy would be priorities when it stages the summit in November.

The annual UN climate conference is taking place in Antalya, where the hosts are asking countries to support initiatives to tackle emissions from waste, climate-proofing cities and boosting electrification.

COP31 President and Turkish Climate Minister Murat Kurum announced yesterday that the summit would also address “growing fears over the rise of AI” and its carbon footprint.

“COP31 will meet this moment,” Kurum said in a statement in New York, where he is attending the annual Climate Week event.

“We must openly discuss AI’s growing energy consumption and it is time for

governments to start setting the terms. We expect companies to be transparent about their energy use and to power their operations with clean energy.”

A “political pledge” on how AI can support climate goals was being developed with a United Nations agency, and a draft would be unveiled before the summit, the COP31 presidency said.

A second initiative would showcase pilot projects to “demonstrate the responsible use of AI in practice.”

The pledge would be voluntary and not require the approval of the nearly 200 nations that take decisions by consensus during the hard-fought UN-sponsored climate summits.

Every year, countries are encouraged by COP hosts to support non-binding pledges on a parallel “action agenda” that is separate from the formal negotiations.

In an unusual arrangement this year, Australia is presiding over the marathon political negotiations but Turkey is hosting the event and designing the sideline agenda.

The centrepiece for Turkey is a new electrification target – raising the global share of energy demand met by electricity to 35 percent by 2035.

In simple terms, electrification means replacing technologies that burn fossil fuels directly – such as gas heating systems and diesel vehicles – with electric alternatives.

Turkey announced yesterday a global mechanism to track progress on electrification and other initiatives aimed at reaching the goal.

But to tackle climate change, the extra electricity must come primarily from clean sources like solar and wind.

Around one-third of the world’s electricity

is still produced using coal.

Turkey’s “35x35” target does not explicitly state how that extra power should be produced.

“As it stands, the COP31 Presidency’s pledge leaves the backdoor open for governments to conceal or justify expanded fossil fuel use under the guise of electrification,” said Claire Smith from campaign network Beyond Fossil Fuels.

Nations are divided on the pathway to phasing out planet-warming fossil fuels and a major breakthrough on this sticking point is not expected at the formal climate negotiations starting November 9.

– AFP

*COP31 stands for the 31st Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)

– MPD

Berlin’s far-left vote winners reject anti-semitism charges

BERLIN – Germany’s far-left Die Linke party, winners of Berlin city-state elections, yesterday rejected charges that pro-Palestinian activists among its base have veered into antisemitism or hate for Israel.

The party faced criticism about the presence of two controversial figures at a victory party Sunday night, including an allegedly militant activist and the head of an extended family with Middle Eastern roots that is often linked to organised crime.

“Celebrating violence and terrorism is absolutely unacceptable,” said Die Linke (“The Left”) lead candidate Elif Eralp, who hopes to become Berlin mayor in a coalition with the Social Democrats (SPD) and Greens.

“I will do everything to ensure that Jewish people – just like Muslims, queer people and everyone in our city – can feel safe.”

Die Linke scored 25.7 percent in Sunday’s vote, heavily defeating Chancellor Friedrich Merz’s conservative CDU, which currently governs the city with the SPD and which on Sunday slumped to 18.8 percent.

At the victory party in the capital’s Neukölln district, one of the party’s MPs, Ferat Kocak, was pictured with Ibrahim Ibrahim, described by German media as a supporter of armed Palestinian militants.

Also spotted at the event was Issa Remmo, the head of the “Remmo clan”, an extended family often accused of a web of ties to organised crime and linked to a spectacular jewellery heist.

The SPD sharply criticised the party yesterday, with national co-leader Bärbel Bas saying it would be “very difficult” to work with a party “large parts of which act in an antisemitic way”.

“You have to know who you’re celebrating with,” SPD lead candidate Steffen Krach said in comments to the *Rheinische Post* newspaper.

Merz, without naming Die Linke, also expressed concern over “rising, radical and openly displayed antisemitism”.

He pointedly called on the SPD and Greens to provide a “very clear response – especially here in Berlin – to the fact that Jewish life in Germany is no longer safe”.

Kocak, in a social media statement, said he took “hundreds” of photos with supporters and stressed that the victory party was “open to the public”.

“When people come up to me at our celebrations and want to take a photo with me, I assume that this is okay,” he said, adding that “I expressly distance myself from statements praising violence and terrorism”.

Die Linke co-chair Ines Schwerdtner said about Ibrahim and Remmo’s visits: “We don’t have any guest lists, but as soon as these people were seen, they were told to leave.”

– AFP

Putin’s United Russia wins record 355 parliament seats: election chief



Russia’s Central Electoral Commission (CEC) head Ella Pamfilova speaks at the commission’s headquarters after the polls closed in Russia’s parliamentary election, in Moscow on Sunday.

– AFP

MOSCOW – President Vladimir Putin’s United Russia party won a record 355 seats in Russia’s 450-seat Duma lower house of parliament, according to preliminary results from the three day election released by electoral chief Ella Pamfilova yesterday.

With almost all votes counted from the poll, results showed the presidential party will have a supermajority – 78.8 percent – larger than its previous 2016 record of 343 seats.

It was Russia’s first parliamentary election since Moscow launched its Ukraine offensive in 2022.

Pamfilova said turnout was more than 59 percent, thanking Russians for voting despite what she called “psychological pressure” on the country.

The Communist Party of the Russian Federation (CPRF) came second, winning 40 seats.

The nationalist Liberal Democratic Party of Russia (LDPR) took 25 seats and the reformist New People Party winning 20 seats.

United Russia has dominated politics since the early 2000s and Putin has been in power since New Year’s Eve 1999.

Pamfilova said that more than 95 percent of votes have been counted and that final results will be announced later this week.

– AFP, MPD

EU to pursue ban on Arctic drilling, to Norway’s dismay

OSLO – The EU will maintain its call for a ban on oil and gas drilling in the Arctic, a European Commission spokesman said yesterday, despite opposition from Norway, one of the continent’s main energy suppliers.

The European Commission is due to present this autumn a revised version of its Arctic strategy, last reviewed in 2021.

Ahead of that, Norway, which is not a member of the European Union, has urged Brussels to drop its support for a moratorium on new hydrocarbon extraction in the region.

“Our approach on the moratorium will remain unchanged: our policies have four objectives to address climate change and environmental degradation and support sustainable economic development,” a Com-

mission spokesman told AFP in an email.

A European moratorium would not be binding for Norway but it would send a signal about the bloc’s intention to ultimately move away from Arctic oil and gas, and could discourage EU energy groups from investing in any projects there.

To persuade Brussels of the merits of drilling in the Arctic, Norway, the EU’s leading supplier of natural gas, has pointed to the vulnerability of supplies from the Middle East.

Oil and gas traffic in the Strait of Hormuz, a key transit route for global energy supplies, has been heavily disrupted in recent months because of the US war against Iran.

“Norway decides on its resources, not the EU,” Norwegian Energy Minister Terje

Aasland said in an email to AFP yesterday.

“Without Norwegian deliveries, the energy situation in Europe would be far more difficult. Norway is a stable and reliable supplier of oil and gas, and this also applies to our production in the Barents Sea,” he added.

Several environmental protection organisations and sustainable finance advocates welcomed Brussels’ announcement.

“Even amid a severe energy crunch and intense lobbying from the Norwegian government, the EU is prioritising the climate and Arctic nature. That deserves great respect,” said Frederic Hauge of the Norwegian NGO Bellona.

Norway continues to open new Arctic areas to oil and gas exploration, including in the Barents Sea.

– AFP

Historically high suicide rates cause alarm in Argentina

BUENOS AIRES – Bereaved relatives and mental health specialists are trying to start a conversation about suicide in Argentina as more people than ever are choosing to end their own lives.

Suicide is currently the leading cause of death among young people aged 15 to 34 in the South American country, according to data from the Criminal Policy Observatory (OPC) and the security ministry.

Suicide rates in Argentina – 11.8 cases per 100,000 inhabitants – are lower than in neighbouring Uruguay, which has recorded 19.16 per 100,000 inhabitants.

But recently surging numbers have caused alarm.

Last year, the OPC recorded a 57.6 percent increase in suicide since 2017, and a 22.6 percent increase since the year before.

The publication of the latest data prompted dozens of bereaved relatives to protest in Buenos Aires

over the weekend.

The demonstration aimed to “raise awareness about suicide, because talking is prevention,” Graciela Salazar, whose daughter took her own life in 2023, told AFP.

“Suicide has multiple causes,” said demonstrator Ariana Villarreal, whose brother died by suicide 11 years ago.

“There is a historical debt when it comes to mental health in Argentina,” she added, referring to the meagre state budget allocated to mental wellbeing.

The Argentine Association of Mental Health (AASM) also voiced concern over “a serious public health and social situation.”

Suicide is “a complex phenomenon” that should not be reduced “to a single explanation or to establishing linear causal relationships,” it stated.

“But it would be just as irresponsible to ignore the social,

economic and professional conditions...in which suffering occurs,” it added, citing job losses, growing insecurity and debt.

The organisation called for “urgent responses to the underlying problems and immediate public policies for suicide prevention.”

Argentina’s northeastern Corrientes province recently approved a resolution urging the government to take measures to prevent suicide on a bridge where numerous incidents have been recorded.

The resolution called for authorities to install barriers, reinforce lighting and video surveillance, and place emergency phones on the bridge over the Paraná River.

Since 2023, the Angels of the Bridge organisation has ensured that volunteers are present at the site 24 hours a day.

“That’s already 341 lives rescued,” the organisation recently wrote on Instagram. – AFP

UK says Falklands have ‘right’ to oil exploration after Argentine sanctions

LONDON – The British government on Friday said the Falkland Islands had the “right to develop their natural resources as they see fit” after Argentina sought tougher sanctions for oil projects in the British-administered territory.

Britain and Argentina fought a brief but bitter 10-week war in 1982 over the South Atlantic islands, known to Argentines as Las Malvinas.

Argentine President Javier Milei has renewed claims over the islands, targeting in particular a UK-Israeli oil project near the archipelago.

Milei has backed a bill that would ban the development of any natural resources in the area without authorisation from Buenos Aires, raising the penalty set out in an older law to a maximum 20 years in prison.

His government also filed a criminal complaint against Israeli firm Navitas for drilling in a major oil field off the Falklands.

“The UK Government and our diplomatic network stands fully behind those businesses and individuals. They have our full support,” the UK foreign office said in a statement.

“These charges against companies and individuals are unacceptable, with no legal justification,” it added.

Navitas has a majority share of the Sea Lion offshore oil project, with Britain’s Rockhopper holding the rest.

Both companies have insisted they have valid exploration licences supported by the UK.

Milei says the project violates a United Nations resolution calling on both sides to desist from unilateral actions in the islands.

The Falkland Islanders themselves voted overwhelmingly in 2013 to remain British.

But Argentina rejects that outcome, arguing that the principle of self-determination does not apply to a population it considers implanted by Britain after 1833. – AFP

Fire threatening Colombian tourist gem partially under control: governor



A volunteer looks on as a forest fire rages on San Marcos Hill in the municipality of Villa de Leyva, Boyacá Department, Colombia, on Sunday. – AFP

VILLA DE LEYVA – Colombian firefighters yesterday partially brought under control a wildfire that was threatening one of the South American nation’s tourist gems, the colonial town of Villa de Leyva, a local official said.

Villa de Leyva, situated about three hours north of Bogotá in the Andes, is famous for its colonial architecture and cobblestone streets.

Helicopters were deployed to combat a line of fire that began on Saturday in a forest and ripped across a hill towards the town, forcing the evacuation of two hotels on the slopes.

One hotel was damaged by the flames.

“Yesterday we were able to contain all the hotspots throughout the night (...) near the houses,” Carlos Amaya, governor of the department of Boyacá, where Villa de Leyva is situated, told Caracol Radio on Monday.

The town, which attracts nearly a million tourists each year, was shrouded in smoke.

According to regional authorities, in just a day and a half, nearly 300 hectares of forest and moorland were ravaged by the fire.

On Sunday, Interior Minister Rodrigo Lara said that the fire was 50 percent contained.

Colombia, which is suffering drier-than-usual conditions due to the EL Niño weather phenomenon, is currently battling nearly twenty active wildfires, according to the latest report from the National Unit for Disaster Risk Management.

El Niño, a weather pattern that raises surface temperatures in the central and eastern Pacific Ocean, brings warmer temperatures, resulting in more droughts and flooding.

A dozen wildfires are also burning in neighbouring Ecuador.

Firefighters in Ecuador’s capital Quito continued to battle a fire that had burning on a hill near the capital for a fifth straight day. – AFP

Spanish PM says unregulated AI could be ‘devastating’

MADRID – Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez yesterday joined a chorus of calls to regulate AI as safety fears around the technology escalate, warning of potentially “devastating” consequences.

The debate over the risks from artificial intelligence has intensified this month, with many of the industry’s leading lights voicing support for more cooperation, regulation and slower development of the technology.

Former employees of major AI companies have resigned warning of the technology’s risks, even pointing to an existential threat to humanity.

“If artificial intelligence is concentrated among a few companies and a handful of countries, its impact on shared prosperity, and therefore on the idea of democracy, will be very negative, if not devastating,” Sánchez told an AI-focused event in Madrid.

“We must act urgently, because unregulated, opaque artificial intelligence running wild... and in very few hands is the perfect recipe for disaster,” added the Socialist leader.

US President Donald Trump – with whom Sánchez has repeatedly clashed – has dismissed fears that AI could wipe out humanity and rejected calls to put greater controls around the fast-moving technology.

Sánchez, an outspoken critic of the power of big tech companies and their bosses, yesterday renewed his criticism of “techno-oligarchs” and urged international coordination on AI.

“Self-regulation does not work”, said Sánchez, calling for an AI “focused on well-being and collective prosperity that enables the building of fairer societies”.

He presented a 12-month plan aiming for “a new social contract for artificial intelligence” in Spain in cooperation with civil society.

This agreement would have to offer “security to people in the face of the changes in work and in life that this technology will entail”, he said.

In February, Sánchez announced a plan to ban social media for under-16s, sparking a spat with X owner Elon Musk and Telegram founder Pavel Durov.

His government has also asked Spain’s public prosecutors to investigate X, Meta and TikTok for possible offences related to AI-generated child pornography. – AFP

Mbappe says having Zidane as France coach 'like a film'

MADRID – Kylian Mbappe said yesterday playing under new France coach Zinedine Zidane, 15 years after the French football icons first met, is like “something from a film”.

Former Real Madrid boss Zidane will take charge of Les Bleus for the first time since replacing Didier Deschamps on Friday in their Nations League match against Turkey in Izmit.

“He was the first person who picked me up to take me to Real Madrid, to the training complex. I was 13 or 14, so it was a long time ago,” Mbappe said in an interview with Spanish daily *AS* of meeting Zidane at a trial for Real Madrid's youth teams.

“Now he's my national team coach. It's like a film, but it's amazing. It's real.”

Deschamps's final tournament of a 14-year stint in charge ended in disappointment as France were well beaten by Spain in the World Cup semi-finals in July.

The two-time world champions start their preparations for Euro 2028 with four Nations League matches in the expanded international break, also facing Belgium twice and Italy at the Stade de France.

“We're starting a new process with France. We have two years to prepare for the European Championship and that's what we're focused on now,” Mbappe said.

“It's a new era with a new coach. We have the Nations League coming up, four games, and we'll see how they go.

“It's going to be new for everyone because all we've known is Deschamps. It's going to be a change for us, but I think everything is going to go very well.”

Mbappe has enjoyed a strong start to the season with Real Madrid, scoring eight goals in as many games in all competitions, but he failed to find the net in Sunday's derby defeat by Atletico Madrid.

Jose Mourinho returned to the Santiago Bernabeu tasked with ending two seasons without a major trophy, but Madrid are already six points behind reigning champions Barcelona in La Liga.

“Other people can talk, but we have to do more and work to bring the excitement back to Real Madrid and bring the trophies back,” he added.

Mourinho hit out at the refereeing in the 2-1 loss to Atletico, but Mbappe was not as forthright in his criticism.

“I have my thoughts, but I keep them to myself. I've never been that kind of player and I'm not going to start now,” he said.

“The referee is human and makes mistakes, and there were mistakes, but I don't want to get into that.” – AFP

Switzerland to play without Xhaka over fake COVID certificate

GENEVA – Switzerland will have to play their next four Nations League matches without captain Granit Xhaka, who admitted yesterday to having used a forged COVID vaccine certificate during the pandemic.

The 33-year-old midfielder admitted on his social media channels yesterday that he had presented a forged certificate to avoid mandatory vaccination during the COVID crisis.

“At the time, I was very worried about the issue of COVID-19 vaccination... I felt deep mistrust regarding the vaccine and was gripped by anxiety and doubt,” he said on Instagram.

“Today I clearly see that I made the wrong choice. It was a mistake. I am sorry,” he wrote, adding that he was “cooperating fully with the relevant authorities”.

The Lucerne public prosecutor's office is currently investigating the matter, according to Swiss media.

The Swiss Football Association meanwhile announced that it had decided, in agreement with the player, that he would not join the Swiss national team in Belek in Turkey for a training camp starting yesterday.

“Following his personal statement regarding his vaccination status, Granit Xhaka will not participate in the men's national team's upcoming gathering,” it said in a statement.

“We welcome the fact that Granit is taking this step and is prepared to fully clarify the situation,” Swiss FA president Peter Knabel said in the statement.

“At the same time, we mutually concluded that it was in the team's best interest to proceed with this gathering without him,” he said.

“Our priority now is to calm the situation and focus entirely on the team and the upcoming

UEFA Nations League fixtures.”

Switzerland begin their campaign away to North Macedonia on Saturday and then travel to face Scotland on September 29.

On October 3 and 6, the Swiss will host Slovenia and North Macedonia in Lucerne.

“At the end of this international window we will reassess the situation with Granit and discuss the next steps,” Knabel said.

Switzerland are subsequently set to face Slovenia on November 13 and Scotland on November 16, also as part of the Nations League.

– AFP



Granit Xhaka of Switzerland during the FIFA World Cup 2026 Quarter Final match against Argentina at Kansas City Stadium on July 11 in Kansas City, Missouri.

Switzerland will have to play their next four Nations League matches without captain Granit Xhaka, who admitted yesterday to having used a forged COVID vaccine certificate during the pandemic. – AFP



Palmer, Rice out of England Nations League squad

LONDON – Declan Rice, Cole Palmer and Marcus Rashford are among five withdrawals from Thomas Tuchel's squad for upcoming Nations League matches, starting on Saturday with a clash against world champions Spain.

Newcastle full-back Tino Livramento and Manchester United's Kobbie Mainoo are also unavailable due to injury, with Everton's James Garner and Nottingham Forest's Morgan Gibbs-White drafted in.

England take on Spain at Wembley before a trip to face the Czech Republic on September 29. They are away to Croatia on October 3 before completing the international break with a home game against the Czechs on October 6.

Garner and Gibbs-White will join the rest of the squad in reporting for duty today, the Football Association said in an update yesterday.

Chelsea forward Palmer, who was controversially left out of Tuchel's squad for the 2026 World Cup, has started the season strongly, scoring four goals for his club.

Tuchel said on Friday after naming a 27-man squad it was his “duty” to play Mainoo after the midfielder failed to feature for a single minute at the World Cup in North America, where England finished third. – AFP

Man Utd's Sesko pulls out of Slovenia squad

LONDON – Manchester United striker Benjamin Sesko has withdrawn from Slovenia's Nations League squad after missing Sunday's 1-1 Premier League draw at Fulham.

The 23-year-old sat out the trip to Craven Cottage with a shin problem sustained in last week's League Cup defeat to Brighton.

He will miss two matches against Scotland and games against North Macedonia and Switzerland.

“Manchester United can confirm that Benjamin Sesko has withdrawn from the Slovenia squad ahead of the upcoming three-week international break,” the club said in a statement yesterday.

“Benjamin will undergo tests this week before defining his individual recovery plan.”

Sesko, who has scored two goals for United this season, became the fourth player from the club to pull out of international duty yesterday.

Marcus Rashford and Kobbie Mainoo are both out of England's squad, while Karl Darlow withdrew from the Wales camp.

Michael Carrick's United are a lowly 12th in the Premier League table after taking just five points from their opening five games.

Their next match is at home to bottom side Tottenham on October 10. – AFP

Mancini eager for 'new adventure' on Italy return

COVERCIANO, Italy – Roberto Mancini said yesterday he was eager for a “new adventure” with Italy ahead of the opening game of his second stint as the national team's coach.

Mancini led the Azzurri to the Euro 2020 title during his previous spell in charge.

But they failed to reach the 2022 World Cup and he resigned the following year to take over the Saudi Arabia national side.

The four-time world champions have missed out on the past three World Cups and have not played a knock-out stage match at the tournament since losing the 2006 final to France.

Mancini starts his latest reign with a home Nations League game against Belgium on Friday.

“We must not dwell on negative things, when you embark on a new adventure,

players in his 34-man squad for four upcoming games, including 18-year-old Bologna goalkeeper Massimo Pessina and Brentford's 22-year-old right-back Michael Kayode.

He added a 10th rookie to his squad yesterday as Aston Villa left-back Matteo Ruggeri replaced the injured Federico Dimarco.

“I expect them to bring a carefree attitude,” Mancini said.

“I think it's right to have some young players we can get to know in order to build a strong team for the future.

“We need to understand who can stay with us for this cycle and, with that goal in mind, I've called up a larger group for the four matches we have coming up in such quick succession.”

After playing Belgium in Rome, Mancini's side face Turkey in Bursa three days later, France at the Stade de France on October 2 and welcome Turkey to Bologna on October 5. – AFP



you're eager to do something special, and over the next four years we'll bring home something special,” former Italy midfielder Mancini told reporters.

“For me it's a challenge and a new chapter in my career.

“I'm here to win and that's the objective we all share.”

Mancini has handed first call-ups to nine

Italy's head coach Roberto Mancini runs with a ball during a training session in Coverciano, near Florence, yesterday, ahead of Italy's UEFA Nations League football match against Belgium. – AFP

Schoolgirl Yu scorches to 2nd gold as doping case rocks Games

Daniel Hicks

NAGOYA – Schoolgirl swimmer Yu Zidi won her second gold of the Asian Games yesterday with the fastest time in the world this year, while a teenage badminton player became the first doping case.

Yu’s winning time of 2min 06.10sec in the 200m individual medley was only 0.40sec slower than the world record of Canadian Summer McIntosh and showed why the Chinese sensation could take the 2028 Los Angeles Olympics by storm.

“I feel even happier winning this second gold medal than I did with the first one,” said the 13-year-old Yu, who won the 200m butterfly on Sunday and has smashed two Asian Games records in as many days.

There was drama in the Tokyo Aquatics Centre pool when Japan star Shin Ohashi dead-heated with China’s Dong Zhihao to give them each a gold in the men’s 100m breaststroke.

“I’m really happy to get a gold but it was a tie so it’s a little frustrating,” said Ohashi. “The feeling is 50-50.”

Hong Kong’s Siobhan Haughey defended her title in the women’s 200m freestyle.

Thailand’s talented young women’s badminton player Pitchamon Opatniputh became the first known doping case of the Nagoya-Aichi Games.

The 19-year-old returned a positive sample for the banned substance furosemide and has been provisionally suspended, the International Testing Agency said.

The teenager, who is ranked 18th in the world and regarded as a rising star back home, had been due to face China today in the team event.

Koreas draw

The women’s football group stage meeting between North and South Korea was hotly anticipated but turned into a niggly affair which ended 1-1 in Shizuoka.

Just over 2,000 fans were at the 50,000-capacity stadium which staged

matches at the 2002 World Cup, with a group of North Korean fans wearing red T-shirts with some having the country’s flag painted on their faces.

North Korea led through Chae Un Yong’s first-half goal.

Yun Su-jeong’s second-half strike ensured the spoils were shared and the players exchanged tepid high-fives at the end, but did not speak to each other.

The neighbours remain technically at war because the 1950-53 Korean war ended with an armistice rather than a peace treaty.

The boxing began yesterday at Aichi’s Nishio Gymnasium with some shock results in the men’s light-middle-weight (70kg) as silver and bronze medallists from three years ago at the Hangzhou Games both lost in the last 32.

Kan Chia-wei of Chinese Taipei, second in Hangzhou, was beaten on a 4-1 split decision by Palestine’s Mohammed Issa.

“I am not satisfied with this result,” said Kan. “I suffered a shoulder injury, so my next goal is to regain my fitness.”

That came moments after Bayramdurdy Nurmuhamedov of Turkmenistan, third in 2023, lost by the same scoreline to Bahrain’s Aly Abdalla.

“He doesn’t have IQ, he just (puts) pressure, pressure, pressure,” said Abdalla after outthinking his marauding opponent.

“That’s why he was a little bit hard today because it’s the toughest, such pressure, so there is no chance just to box.”

Palestine baseball ‘win’

Palestine, who have experienced war in Gaza since October 2023, made their debut in Asian Games baseball.

Though they lost 12-0 to the Philippines their team leader said that just being there “was a win”.

“With everything that’s going on, what we are trying to do is bring hope to people who do not have a lot of it,” said Oney Roberto Guillen Cardenas.

“Just by us being out there on the same stage as countries like Japan ... that’s a win in itself.”

Hasan Ammar, who registered his team’s first hit, said: “This is probably the greatest honour of my life, playing for something so meaningful and on such a big stage.

“You know, two of our teammates were killed in Gaza, and we’re playing for them, and we’re playing for all the people over there.”

– AFP

20th Asian Games Aichi-Nagoya 2026					
Medal table					
				 Total	
1	 China	23	10	5	38
2	 Japan	8	12	12	32
3	 Republic of Korea	5	3	15	23
4	 Kazakhstan	4	1	3	8
5	 Thailand	3	1	0	4
6	 Hong Kong, China	2	3	3	8
7	 Chinese Taipei	1	3	2	6
8	 Macao, China	1	3	0	4
9	 Myanmar	1	1	1	3
10	 Uzbekistan	1	1	1	3



Gold medalist Yu Zidi (centre) of China, Silver medalist Yu Yiting (left) of China and Bronze medalist Narita Mio of Japan pose on the podium after the women’s 200m individual medley final at the 20th Asian Games Aichi-Nagoya 2026 in Tokyo yesterday.
– Xinhua

2 athletes, a world of hope as refugee team makes Asian Games debut

NAGOYA – For Hunaidi Talal Hassan, reaching the Asian Games is a dream years in the making. “For us, this is not just a competition, it is a dream we have worked towards all our lives,” the 18-year-old told a press conference yesterday. “We always had hope. And today we are here living that dream.”

Hassan and fellow taekwondo athlete Muhammed Mahmoud Jasem make up the first refugee team to participate in the Asian Games. Both are from Syria and now live in Jordan. At Aichi-Nagoya 2026, they bring ambitions for the competition ahead, along with stories of how sport helped them see a future when one had seemed out of reach.

Hassan took up taekwondo at nine. The sport, she says, has changed many things in her life for the better. Being at the Games is a source of happiness and pride, made all the more meaningful by the difficulties she has faced.

“We faced many challenges, but we kept going and never gave up on our dreams,” she said.

Jasem began practicing taekwondo at 14. For him, its importance has long extended beyond training and competition.

“This sport means a lot to me. It was my only hope,” he said.

Living in a refugee camp, Jasem had struggled to imagine what lay ahead. Taekwondo gave him reason to believe a better life was possible. He kept training, and years of effort brought him to the Asian Games, where representing refugee athletes is both an honor and a responsibility.

“I’m not just participating in a regular competition. I’m carrying a story with me. I hope it will be a success story,” he said.

Both athletes want to do well. They also want people to understand the journeys that brought them here. Speaking through an interpreter, they thanked their coaches, families and others whose support and belief had helped them reach the Games.

Introducing the pair, Olympic Council of Asia Deputy Director General Vinod Kumar Tiwari emphasized that they had earned their places through training and sacrifice, just

like every other competitor.

Their presence also carries a wider meaning, he said. For people forced to leave their homes, sport can offer purpose, belonging and hope.

Beyond competition, both athletes also spoke about their experience at the opening ceremony. Through an interpreter, they expressed pride in attending as members of the first refugee team at an Asian Games.

Shiva Keshavan, vice chair of the OCA Athletes Committee, had met them at the athletes’ accommodation and spoken with them again before the press conference. They had told him about the people they encountered and the athletes they met while entering the opening ceremony.

For Keshavan, those encounters are part of what sport makes possible.

“They are part of a family. We welcome them with open arms,” he said. “The human connections, the bonds that they will make here will last a lifetime.”

The questions yesterday also looked beyond the Games: how could the

opportunities opened up in Nagoya be sustained once the competition was over?

OCA officials said they would discuss the athletes’ needs with them and build on the training support already in place in Jordan. Tiwari expressed hope that the refugee team would continue to take part in future Asian Games, drawing on the IOC’s experience.

Speaking after the press conference, Mohammad Tayyab Ikram, president of the International Hockey Federation and chair of the OCA Coordination Committee for the 2026 Asian Games, said plans included reaching athletes in more locations and providing access to suitable training facilities.

National Olympic committees and international federations would work together to assess athletes’ backgrounds, sporting ability and eligibility, he said. Helping them establish stable lives and continue their sporting careers was particularly important.

Ikram also said he expected the number of refugee athletes participating in the Games to increase.
– Xinhua

Backpackers fret over Australian visa crackdown

Oliver Hotham

BONDI BEACH – Briton Johnny Gibbs has been in Australia for six months, surfing and working part-time – like countless other young people drawn to the country’s pristine beaches and laid-back way of life.

He’s one of thousands that venture Down Under on so-called “working holiday visas” – a chance to work, and play, in Australia for as long as three years.

But the future for some backpackers is now in doubt, following the government’s announcement of plans to cut the number of visas issued – and detain tourists who overstay.

“A lot of places you can’t surf and work at the same time, so it’s kind of perfect,” Gibbs, 22, from near Croydon in London, told AFP.

“They’re not really losing much by getting people to work in their country,” he said, his surfboard still wet from an afternoon dip at Sydney’s famed Bondi beach.

“I’ve done a lot of different types of work on the working holiday visa, and that helps out the

Australians as well,” he said.

“I’m not a harmful person. I’m only doing good.”

As a Briton, Johnny is lucky; he’s not affected by the changes thanks to an agreement between London and Canberra.

But many of his compatriots will be left waiting.

Interior minister Tony Burke said last week that a backlog of applications from the UK for working holiday visas would continue to be processed slowly after a record 80,000 applications last year.

For other nationalities, Burke said visas for a second-year stay will be cut to 45,000 places from 57,000 last year – and applicants will be required to carry out 88 days of regional work.

Those that want to stay a third year will need to enter a ballot to stay – with only 5,000 places available.

‘It’s good for Australia’

Australia’s ruling Labor party denies it is tightening visa rules in response to the rise of the far-

right One Nation, now one of the country’s most popular parties with pledges to drastically slash migration.

Graham Carson, 55, an Australian lawyer who was sunbathing with his family, told AFP the crackdown was “ironic”.

“We send criminals back to England – which you know in a way is quite funny, given that they were sending their convicts here,” he said.

For some on Bondi – long known as a backpacker’s paradise for its chill vibes and carefree lifestyle – the crackdown is a surprise.

“Maybe this was the wrong impression I had of Australia, but I thought they were very open,” Stina Svensson, 27, from Gothenburg in Sweden, told AFP.

She and her friend Alva Johanssen are both in Australia on working holiday visas – not working yet, but hoping to soon.

“People speak so highly of the working holiday visa programme. And I feel like it’s also good for Australia,” she said.

“Like we – okay, not yet because



Beachgoers enjoy a sunny afternoon at Bondi Beach in Sydney last Friday. Australia announced plans earlier that day to detain tourists who overstay their visas to deter illegal migration under new rules. – AFP

we’re unemployed – but we would do the work that Australians don’t want to do,” she explained.

“We wanted to have, like, just a regular fun job at the beginning, but then do the remote work or, like, farm work, but, like, now we don’t want to do that,” she said.

“Because we don’t know if we’re even going to get a second year.”

Her friend Alva said the new rules would likely mean she’ll cut her stay short.

“We wanted to stay before this came up,” Alva said. “But now I think I’ll go home.”

“I think we would rather just go to Southern Europe then, because that’s just easier,” Stina said.

– AFP

Spanish civil war drama ‘The Black Ball’ wins at Toronto festival

TORONTO – Spain’s “The Black Ball,” a gay rights drama set during the country’s civil war, won top prize on Sunday at the Toronto International Film Festival (TIFF).

The ambitious epic, known as “La Bola Negra” in Spanish, stars Miguel Bernardeau, along with Penélope Cruz and Glenn Close, weaving the stories of three gay men across different eras in Spain.

The Toronto win gives the film, directed by Javier Ambrossi and Javier Calvo, a creative duo affectionately known as “Los Javis,” an early boost in the race for recognition at the Oscars, where the festival’s People’s Choice Award has proved a useful bellwether.

Speaking to reporters earlier this month, Ambrossi, who used to be in a relationship with Calvo, called “The Black Ball” “a tribute to the LGBTQ+ community” of the past that fought for human rights and an “epic gay drama for everyone.”

Unlike festival prizes bestowed by Cannes and Venice, the Toronto People’s Choice Award is selected by public audiences. Any movie in the festival’s official lineup is eligible, unlike the curated “in competition” shortlists used elsewhere.

Ambrossi and Calvo are famous in Spain particularly for their television work, but their star has been rising globally after a smash debut of the film at Cannes, where it shared the best director award with Pawel Pawlikowski (“Fatherland”).

Early inspiration for the movie came from the unpublished play written by Federico García Lorca, a poet who was executed by fascist forces at the beginning of the Spanish Civil War in 1936.

The directors said the four pages of unfinished writing sparked their

curiosity and drew them in.

“We got obsessed with his work,” Calvo told journalists, adding he and Ambrossi immersed themselves in Lorca’s writings, correspondence and biographies.

The filmmakers said that many countries still have anti-LGBTQ laws and people within the community can be persecuted or even killed for their sexuality.

Calvo emphasised that the film is “about empathy and humanity and seeing the other as a person.”

The festival ended on Sunday.

– AFP



Spanish writer and actor Milo Quifes poses on the red carpet upon arrival for Netflix’s “La Bola Negra” Canadian Premiere last Tuesday in Toronto, Ontario.

– AFP

Cindy Crawford’s son Presley Gerber dies aged 27

WASHINGTON, DC – US model Presley Gerber, the son of supermodel Cindy Crawford and businessman Rande Gerber, died on Sunday aged 27, US media reported.

He died at a rehab facility, according to online records from the Los Angeles County Medical

Examiner. The cause of death was not listed.

Crawford’s agent confirmed the death and told TMZ and CNN: “The family is asking for privacy during this very difficult and painful time.”

Born in California in 1999,

Presley Gerber modelled like his mother and sister Kaia Gerber, making his runway debut for Italian label Moschino aged 16.

In recent years, he had spoken openly on social media about his mental health struggles and drug use.

– AFP

Horror movie ‘Resident Evil’ tops N American box office

LOS ANGELES – “Resident Evil,” a horror movie based on a video game franchise, swept the North American box office with a US\$60 million opening weekend, industry estimates showed yesterday.

The Sony-distributed movie is directed by Zach Cregger and stars Austin Abrams, who plays a medical courier battling mutant creatures to deliver a package to a remote hospital.

“Resident Evil” displaced last week’s top performer, Warner Bros’ “Practical Magic 2,” a long-awaited sequel starring Sandra Bullock and Nicole Kidman, into a distant second place.

The story of the modern-day witches, who face a curse that

sees any man they fall in love with doomed to an early death, took US\$12.2 million after the previous weekend knocking Sony’s “Spider-Man” from its weeks-long perch at the top.

Spidey took another US\$6.5 million this past weekend, bringing its total take in the United States and Canada to US\$944.5 million. It was followed by another of 2026’s strongest performers, “The Odyssey,” which took US\$4.9 million.

For the second consecutive weekend, “Coyote vs Acme” took fifth place, with Will Forte and an animated Wile E. Coyote snaring another US\$4.5 million for Falling Forward Films.

– AFP

World Weather

CHINA	ASIA-PACIFIC	WORLD	LUSOPHONE
Beijing 17°C~31°C	Manila 24°C~32°C	New York 14°C~19°C	Lisbon 19°C~31°C
Shanghai 21°C~30°C	Bangkok 25°C~33°C	London 15°C~24°C	Rio de Janeiro 20°C~29°C
Hong Kong 24°C~30°C	Tokyo 20°C~29°C	Frankfurt 7°C~20°C	Luanda 19°C~23°C
Taipei 20°C~31°C	Singapore 26°C~33°C	Vancouver 11°C~18°C	Maputo 17°C~27°C
Guangzhou 23°C~32°C	Kuala Lumpur 25°C~31°C	Paris 11°C~24°C	Dili 21°C~31°C
Nanjing 20°C~27°C	Jakarta 23°C~34°C	Moscow 12°C~19°C	São Tomé 24°C~32°C
Guilin 22°C~33°C	Seoul 17°C~30°C	Las Vegas 21°C~33°C	Praia 24°C~32°C
Xi'an 17°C~26°C	Sydney 15°C~19°C	Monte Carlo 21°C~28°C	Bissau 24°C~30°C



Mystical immersion

People look around at the 63 SkyPicnic rooftop observatory and art attraction in the 63 Building in Seoul yesterday.

— AFP



Bright & beautiful

This photo taken on August 26, shows a Blue-eared Kingfisher perched on a tree in Sukau, a small village near Sandakan in Sabah state on the island of Borneo.

— AFP



Classic morgans

People visit the 2026 British Car Day event in Oakville, Ontario, Canada, on Sunday. The event featured over 1,000 British-made vehicles and attracted thousands of spectators.

— Xinhua

Look no hands!

French highliner Tatiana Mosio-Bongonga walks along a 400-metre-long rope suspended between the twin slag heaps of Loos-en-Gohelle, at a height ranging from 80 to 186 metres above the ground and without a safety line, as part of the European Heritage Days in Loos-en-Gohelle, northern France, on Sunday.

— AFP



Park filled with light

Lanterns are seen on display in Victoria Park as part of festivities ahead of the Mid-Autumn Festival in Hong Kong yesterday.

— AFP

Too good to eat

A woman poses with a traditional Vietnamese “to he”, made out of rice flour, at a stall selling items ahead of the Mid-Autumn Festival in Hanoi’s old quarter yesterday.

— AFP

