

CE election to be held at Forum Macao Complex

Tony Wong

Chief Executive Electoral Affairs Commission (CAECE) President Song Man Lei has announced that the chief executive election on October 13 will be held at the Services Platform Complex for Commercial and Trade Cooperation between China and Portuguese-speaking Countries (aka Forum Macao Complex).

Song made the remarks while speaking to reporters on Friday after chairing a regular closed-door meeting of the commission at the Public Administration Building on Rua do Campo.

The chief executive elections in 2019, 2014 and 2009 were all held at the Macau East Asian Games Dome in Cotai, while the one in 2004 was held at the Macau Tower Convention & Entertainment Centre.

The East Asian Games Dome was built for the 4th East Asian Games, which took place from October 29 to November 6, 2005.

Since its completion in 2019, the government-owned Forum Macao complex, located near Macau Tower, has been increasingly used for various government activities and events.

Meanwhile, Song pointed out that a total of 11 residents collected nomination forms during the chief executive candidacy nomination period between August 29 and Thursday last week, during which only one of them submitted his candidacy nomination form to



Flanked by her fellow members, Chief Executive Electoral Affairs Commission (CAECE) President Song Man Lei (centre) briefs reporters on Friday after a closed-door meeting of the commission at the Public Administration Building on Rua do Campo. – Photo: GCS

her commission, ex-top judge Sam Hou Fai, endorsed by 386 electors of the 400-member Chief Executive Election Committee, representing 96.5 percent of the total.

Song also noted that Sam submitted a signed statement confirming that he is loyal to the People's Republic of China (PRC) and its Macau Special Administrative Region (MSAR) and upholds the MSAR Basic Law. Song said that her commission will now vet Sam's candidacy nomination form and pass

his statement to the MSAR's Committee for Safeguarding National Security (CDSE) for its binding appraisal of his candidacy application, which will assess whether Sam upholds the MSAR Basic Law and is loyal to the PRC and its MSAR. The CDSE appraisal cannot be appealed.

Song noted that her commission is required to announce its decision by Wednesday this week whether to accept Sam as a candidate for the chief executive election. If no one

lodges an objection to the commission's decision, Song said, the commission is required to announce Sam's finally confirmed candidature by Friday this week.

Moreover, Song also noted that the chief executive election campaign period will run between September 28 and October 11.

According to the Chief Executive Election Law, the Chief Executive Electoral Affairs Commission is required to hold a session for each chief executive election candidate to present his or her political platform and answer questions from members of the 400-strong Chief Executive Election Committee.

Song also announced that her commission will hold its candidacy platform presentation-cum-Q&A session on the first day of the chief executive election campaign period, i.e., September 28, Saturday next week.

Song said that the session will also be held at the Forum Macao Complex, adding that it will be open to the media.

Sam's meetings with reps from various segments, including business community leaders

Meanwhile, Sam paid a visit to an office in an industrial building on Saturday where he met with representatives from several science and technology associations, his election campaign office said in a statement yesterday.

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'I HATE TAYLOR SWIFT' Trump tweets

WASHINGTON – The tweet came as a surprise, even from the provocative Donald Trump: "I HATE TAYLOR SWIFT!" the former president said yesterday.

Though the all-caps post came without accompanying commentary or explanation, the context was clear.

On Tuesday, just minutes after a debate with Vice President Kamala Harris that Republican Trump was widely seen as losing, the superstar singer/songwriter posted a message on Instagram saying she would be voting for his Democratic rival, calling Harris a "steady-handed, gifted leader."

Celebrity endorsements rarely carry enormous weight, but the hugely popular Swift is seen as being in a class of her own, with more than 400 million followers on Instagram,

TikTok and other social media platforms – 10 million of whom "liked" her Instagram post.

"Going after Taylor Swift is a genuinely bad campaign strategy," said one poster on social media platform X. "Taylor doesn't get mad, she gets even."

It was not clear what Trump hoped to gain by attacking Swift, though he may calculate that any publicity is better than none.

He has been criticised, even by fellow Republicans, for his recent association with conspiracy-minded right-wing influencer Laura Loomer, who has at times joined him on his campaign plane.

The 31-year-old Loomer recently suggested that Swift had entered an "arranged relationship" with football star Travis Kelce "to influence the 2024 election." – AFP



Cultural creative products themed on traditional Chinese opera are displayed at the exhibition stand of Beijing's Tongzhou District during the 2024 China International Fair for Trade in Services (CIFTIS) at Shougang Park in Beijing yesterday. The five-day fair ends today. – Xinhua

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Pastor sought by US pleads not guilty in Philippine sex trafficking case

A Philippine pastor wanted in the United States for sex trafficking children pleaded not guilty to similar charges in Manila Friday, his lawyer said.

– Story on p. 8

Israeli leaflets tell south Lebanon residents to evacuate

Israel dropped leaflets over a Lebanon border village yesterday urging residents to leave, state-run media said, but Israel's military told AFP a brigade had taken the initiative without approval.

– Story on p. 10

Pope says Trump, Harris 'against life' as Asia tour ends

Pope Francis on Friday accused both Donald Trump and Kamala Harris of being "against life" as he returned to Rome from an epic 12-day tour of the Asia-Pacific.

– Story on p. 12

Q4 set to see more cyber fraud cases again: Wong's office

Yuki Lei

With the start of the new school year and soon entering the fourth quarter of the year, the Office of Secretary for Security Wong Sio Chak issued a statement on its website yesterday to warn members of the public that since 2020 the number of cyber fraud reports received by law enforcement in the fourth quarter of each year have always been higher than the previous quarters, mainly involving phishing SMSs and websites, online ticketing fraud and part-time job scams.

In the first eight months of this year, according to the statement, the Judiciary Police (PJ) investigated 372 new cases of unauthorised use of credit cards, 25 cases of computer fraud, 201 cases of online shopping scams and 93 cases of brushing scams* involving "fake clicks", with the number of cases of unauthorised use of credit cards, online shopping and brushing scams having risen by 72 percent, 19 percent and 48 percent respectively year on year.

Due to the fact that young people are becoming more active on social networking and, at the same time, a large number of events have been scheduled to take place one

after another in the fourth quarter, coupled with the upcoming travel season, members of the public are once again urged to stay vigilant and raise their awareness of cyber fraud, the statement said.

The statement underlined that cybercrime involving uninvited messages, investment groups, "experts" giving advice on stock market movements, messages from strangers of the opposite sex requesting friendship and internet friends offering to engage in compensated dating and nude chats are still common in Macau, with the number of reports of various phone fraud cases, including those impersonating purported government employees, also remaining high.

The statement added that between 2020 and 2023, with the exception of 2022, the number of online fraud cases received in the fourth quarter of each year stood higher than all the other quarters.

According to the statement, since the launch in early April, the time-of-use rate of the PJ Anti-fraud Programme on its official WeChat account "PJ_Macao" had reached over 36,000 by the end of August.

The statement underlined that the Judiciary Police have been

actively deepening their three-pronged preventive strategy, namely, "prevent from being scammed", "recover financial losses" and "anti-crime", promising that in addition to the continuous enhancement of various anti-fraud measures, the Judiciary Police will continue to implement a raft of key anti-fraud initiatives, including the recently-held "Anti-Fraud Vaccination Programme on Campus", with a number of tertiary-education institutions planning to launch curricula involving anti-fraud awareness-raising education, as well as last month's "Anti-Fraud Exchange Meeting" with the financial sector to further improve online and offline measures to dissuade and stop suspicious remittances.

Meanwhile, details about Macau's first half-year crime statistics will be announced by Wong in a press conference this afternoon. ■

**A dishonest or illegal activity in which a seller sends something, often a product of low value, to a customer who has not asked or paid for it, then uses that customer's name to write good reviews of the seller's products on the internet.*
Source: Cambridge Dictionary

Japanese nabbed for taking 30 upskirts

Yuki Lei

A Japanese man was arrested on Tuesday for having taken 30 upskirts of females since his arrival in Macau on September 7, among them a high school student, Public Security Police (PSP) spokesman Cheong Heon Fai said at a regular press conference on Friday.

Cheong identified the suspect in his fifties as a businessman surnamed Yamashita.

According to the underage victim's report to the Public Security Police last Monday evening, wearing a school summer uniform she was waiting for a bus earlier that day, during which a man carrying a bag approached her and touched her calf with the

bag, adding that when she looked down to see what was happening, she found that there was a mobile phone with the lens facing upwards in the bag.

Cheong noted that the Public Security Police intercepted the upskirter at the local airport in the wee hours of Tuesday, on whose mobile phone PSP officers found 30 upskirts, including the one of the underage victim.

Under questioning, the suspect told the police that he had a habit of taking sneak photos and videos.

The suspect has been transferred to the Public Prosecutions Office (MP), facing an invasion of privacy charge. ■



This undated handout photo provided by the Public Security Police (PSP) on Friday shows police officers escorting the suspected upskirter to a police station in Zape.

Hengqin MNN health station to open in Nov: health chief

Tony Wong

Macau Health Bureau (SSM) Director Alvis Lo Iek Long says that his bureau is aiming to open its health station in the Macau New Neighbourhood (MNN) residential estate on Zhuhai's Hengqin island in November.

Dr Lo made the announcement during a press conference at Government Headquarters on Friday, chaired by Secretary for Administration and Justice André Cheong Weng Chon, who is also the spokesman for the local government's top advisory Executive Council, where Cheong and the health chief said that the local government has drawn up a new administrative regulation amending the Health Bureau's existing organisational structure, statutorily enabling the bureau to set up, manage and operate health stations in the Guangdong-Macau In-depth Cooperation Zone in Hengqin.

The bureau's amended organisational structure will take effect on the day after its promulgation in the Official Gazette (BO).

Government-drafted administrative regulations, informally known as by-laws, do not require the legislature's approval.

In addition to shops, the MNN neighbourhood also includes community facilities comprising a school, a health station, a family and community service centre, and a service centre for senior citizens.

The MNN estate's school, run by Macau's Hou Kong Middle School, started operating early this month. The school is officially known as Hengqin School Affiliated to Hou Kong Middle School.

Both the family and community service centre and the senior citizens' service centre in the MNN neighbourhood started operating in June this year, run by the Macau Women's General Association (known as Fu Luen in Cantonese) and the Macau General Union of Neighbourhood Associations (known as Kai Fong in Cantonese) respectively.

3 major tasks

During Friday's press conference, Dr Lo noted that the upcoming operational start of the MNN health station requires the completion of three major tasks. Firstly, he said, the health station has already been granted a licence to operate as a medical institution in the mainland, and its decoration has

also been completed.

Secondly, Dr Lo said, his bureau has chosen 10 of its health workers to operate the MNN health station.

Dr Lo said that the third task is a still outstanding one where his bureau is waiting for the Guangdong Provincial Medical Products Administration (GDMPA) to grant permission for 296 pharmaceutical products currently used in Macau to be delivered to the MNN health station. The health chief said that he expected the formalities to be completed in one and a half months, because of which the health station can open in November, he said.

The MNN project was developed by the Macau government-owned Macau Urban Renewal Limited (MUR). MNN home sales started on November 28 last year after the project had been fully completed.

As of early this month, about 1,300 MNN flats had been sold, according to local media reports at that time.

Macau residents aged 18 or over are eligible to buy an MNN flat, regardless of whether they own any residential properties in Zhuhai or Macau.

Model of Macau's health centres

During Friday's press conference, Dr Lo underlined that the MNN health station will provide MNN residents with health services in compliance with the operation model of Macau's public health centres.

The health chief said that the MNN health station will operate with the same opening hours as Macau's public health centres, namely between 8:30 a.m. and 6 p.m. Mondays to Fridays, pointing out that Macau residents will enjoy free services at the MNN health station.

According to Dr Lo, the MNN health station will provide walk-in outpatient diagnosis and treatment for the most common acute diseases such as the common cold and gastroenteritis.

The same as Macau's public health centres, Dr Lo said, doctors at the MNN health station will refer patients needing specialty medical services to Macau's public Conde de São Januário Hospital Centre or the new Macao Union Hospital.

Meanwhile, Friday's press conference also announced that the government will merge its Committee on Chronic Disease Prevention and Control and its Health Committee for Border Checkpoints with its Healthy City Committee, with the aim of promoting the development of Macau's big health sector and enabling the government to achieve the goals listed in its newly drawn-up Healthy Macau Blueprint and its current policy of streamlining its public administration.

The merged Healthy City Committee will take effect on November 1. ■ (More about Macau New Neighbourhood on p.4)



Health Bureau (SSM) Director Alvis Lo Iek Long addresses Friday's Executive Council press conference at Government Headquarters.
— Photo courtesy of TDM

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Source: SMG

Islands Healthcare Complex hosts forum on rare diseases

Yuki Lei

The World Health Organisation (WHO) defines rare diseases as diseases that affect less than 0.65% to 1% of the total population, with 400 million people worldwide in total, according to its rough estimation, being affected by 6,000 to 8,000 different types of rare diseases, and in recent years social awareness of such diseases has gradually been on the rise, so that it is no surprise that a forum on the subject was held yesterday at the Islands Healthcare Complex in Cotai.

There is no uniform definition of rare diseases globally, but there is a wide variety of them, with more than 7,000 of them, according to the US National Organisation for Rare Disorders, affecting between 25 and 30 million US citizens, while in mainland China, as quoted by the 2023 China Rare Disease Trend Report, the number of rare disease patients amounted to about 20 million, with Fabry disease, Pompe disease, Mucopolysaccharidosis, Phenylketonuria, Thalassaemia, Osteogenesis Imperfecta, Hyperglycosaminosis, Organic Acidemia and Wilson's Disease, among others, frequently occurring in rare disease patients.

Delivering a speech at a sub-forum yesterday of the first ever "Academic Week" hosted by the Islands Healthcare Complex –

Macao Medical Centre of Peking Union Medical College Hospital, Peking Union Medical College Hospital (PUMCH) President Zhang Shuyang pointed out that the population of Macau is small and the resources for clinical cases of rare diseases are relatively limited and that Macau's experience in treating rare diseases is relatively insufficient, so she hoped that the participants in the forum would bring the latest results of their clinical experience and research on rare diseases to Macau to accelerate the enhancement of Macau's capacity of the provision of healthcare services through mutual learning, so that "Macau compatriots can undergo treatment in Macau without having to leave the city".

According to the WHO, rare diseases are mainly caused by genetic mutations or genetic defects, and some of them can cause disabilities and fatalities. Rare diseases are actually not rare, WHO statements have pointed out. However, Macau has not legislated on rare diseases, nor have there been any organisations to provide relevant assistance, participants in the forum told the media yesterday.

Speaking to the media on the sidelines of yesterday's sub-forum on rare diseases, Tsang Kin Ping, widely known as K.P. Tsang, chairman of the Hong



Peking Union Medical College Hospital (PUMCH) President Zhang Shuyang delivers opening remarks during yesterday's rare diseases forum at the Macao Medical Centre of Peking Union Medical College Hospital in Cotai. - Photo: Yuki Lei

Kong Alliance for Rare Diseases (HKARD), said that the forum was a step towards raising awareness of rare diseases in Macau: "Same as Hong Kong and mainland China, the rare disease patients in Macau also face challenges, which is diagnosis, treatment, and the access to drugs..... We would like to support and assist the patients in Macau, while also making more exchanges and communications between Hong Kong and Macau among the patient communities".

The three-day "Academic Week" kicked off yesterday, with more than

200 medical experts and industry representatives from all over the world, including academicians from various key institutions in mainland China and medical leaders from the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macau Greater Bay Area (GBA), speaking of their experiences and exchanging their insights into a number of important medical topics, with a view to deepening the synergy of medical technologies among the mainland, Hong Kong and Macau as well as the rest of the world, further upgrading the level of specialisation in various

medical fields, and promoting the development of healthcare in Macau together, according to a statement by the Islands Healthcare Complex – Macao Medical Centre of Peking Union Medical College Hospital yesterday.

The statement quoted Secretary for Social Affairs and Culture Elsie Ao Ieong U as saying during the opening ceremony that the Academic Week would develop into a high-level professional exchange platform for the medical sector and help promote new breakthroughs in technological innovation, talent cultivation and service optimisation in Macau's healthcare sector, while promoting in-depth cooperation between the medical sector of Macau, Hong Kong and the mainland, and even the international medical sector, so as to jointly meet global healthcare challenges and enhance the standard of healthcare services.

Meanwhile, after 270 days of preparations for the start of its trial operation on December 20, 2023, the Macao Medical Centre of Peking Union Medical College Hospital will hold its grand opening ceremony at 11 a.m. today, providing 25 specialist outpatient services and opening a series of ultrasound, imaging and outpatient services to patients referred by the Health Bureau (SSM) to enjoy free medical treatment. ■

Sun Yingsha, Lin Shidong crowned at WTT Champions Macao

China's Sun Yingsha and Lin Shidong got their championship trophies yesterday at the World Table Tennis (WTT) Champions Macao 2024.

Sun, also known as "ShaSha" among table tennis fans, won against her compatriot Wang Yidi 4-2, bagging her third WTT Champions trophy of 2024 after having emerged victorious in Incheon and Chongqing. It was also Sun's fifth WTT Champions title.

Sun said this was an excellent start for the next Olympic cycle during a press briefing, adding that her form had improved a lot through each match. "There will be many changes and competition over the next four years, but I'm very happy to win the first championship, which has given me a lot of confidence," Sun said.

Lin smashed Qiu Dang of Germany 4-0, lifting his first WTT Championship title. After the match, the 19-year-old told the press that his performance had exceeded his expectations.

Sun fought her way into the finals with a 4-2 victory over Japan's Miwa Harimoto on Saturday, while Lin had upset world No. 1 Wang Chuqin 4-1 in the semifinals.

Sun and Lin mentioned they were looking forward to the upcoming China Smash 2024, scheduled for September 26 to October 6 in Beijing.

The championship was held at the Macau East Asian Games Dome in Cotai. - Xinhua, MPD



China's Lin Shidong (right) and Germany's Qiu Dang pose for photo during the awarding ceremony of the men's singles final match at the Macau East Asian Games Dome in Cotai yesterday. Lin won the match. - Xinhua



China's Sun Yingsha (right) and fellow Chinese Wang Yidi pose during the awarding ceremony after the women's singles final match at the Macau East Asian Games Dome in Cotai. Sun won the match. - Xinhua

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Macau New Neighbourhood hosts Mid-Autumn Festival bash

Staff Reporters

The Macau New Neighbourhood (MNN) in Hengqin hosted an outdoor Mid-Autumn Festival party yesterday which was attended by hundreds of revellers from Macau, Zhuhai and elsewhere in the mainland – and even some visitors from overseas.

The purpose-built neighbourhood for Macau residents covering a land area of about 190,000 sqm and a total gross floor area of around 620,000 sqm is located in the Guangdong-Macau In-depth Cooperation Zone in Hengqin, which will celebrate its third anniversary tomorrow. The MNN construction started in 2021 and was completed in November last year.

In less than four years the mega-project comprising 27 residential towers,

with their heights ranging from 19 to 26 floors, and around 4,200 flats, consisting of 4,000 home-ownership units and 200 “talent housing units” (for rent only) for high-calibre human resources has been completed. The development, the first of its kind for both Macau and Hengqin, provides fitted-out two-bedroom (80 percent of the total) and three-bedroom units. All units have two balconies and all bathrooms have windows.

While the two-bedroom units are priced from about 2.4 million yuan (2.7 million patacas), the three-bedroom flats have a price tag starting at about 3.5 million yuan.

Holders of a Macau Resident ID card (BIR), aged at least 18, are eligible to buy an MNN flat.

The neighbourhood’s auxiliary facilities, which have already been completed or are nearing completion, include shops, schools, restaurants, a health-care centre, and a senior citizens’ service centre, as well as a family community centre.

On the sidelines of the party, two staff members of the *Post* had a look at several two- and three-bedroom units yesterday – and both were impressed by their construction quality, layout and design, as well as the project’s convenient location from the Macau-Hengqin joint checkpoint.

The Mid-Autumn Festival party took place between 3 p.m. and 8 p.m. According to an MNN statement by the project developer, Macau Urban Renewal Limited, a company fully owned by the Macau government,

the party was a double celebration, as it marked both the upcoming 75th Anniversary of the founding of the People’s Republic of China (PRC) on October 1 and the 25th Anniversary of the establishment of the Macau Special Administrative Region (MSAR) on December 20.

The party involved game booths, a lucky wheel and performances by various singers and bands including Macau’s rising star, singer-actress Vivian Chan Wai Man, praised as a “very nice” person by several of the celebrants.

Peter Lam Kam Seng, who heads Macau Urban Renewal Limited, also attended the double celebration. Lam is a veteran business community and civil society leader.



CE election to be held at Forum Macao Complex

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The meeting was held at Man Kei Industrial Building on Avenida do Coronel Mesquita.

According to the statement, the representatives raised opinions on topics such as the transformation of scientific and technological achievements, the training of science and technology professionals, and the modernisation of Macau's traditional Chinese medicine (TCM) industry.

On Saturday, Sam also paid a visit to a commercial building where he met with representatives from four major education associations, a statement later that day said.

The meeting was held at China Construction Commercial Building on Rua do Campo.

According to the statement, the



This handout photo provided by the Sam Hou Fai Election Campaign Office on Friday shows potential chief executive candidate Sam Hou Fai addressing Friday's meeting with the Macau Chamber of Commerce (ACM).

representatives raised opinions on topics such as artificial intelligence (AI) education, strengthening emotional support for students, and curricular reform aiming to enable Macau to better meet the industrial development in its appropriate economic diversification campaign.

On Friday, Sam paid a visit to the headquarters of the Macau Chamber of Commerce (ACM), colloquially known in Cantonese as Chung Chung, in Zape, a statement later that day said.

During the meeting, ACM Chairman Chui Sai Cheong, who is also the vice-president of the Legislative Assembly (AL), said that he acknowledged Sam's philosophy of administration.

According to the statement, 16 ACM members raised opinions during the meeting, on topics such as business environment, finance, human resources, real estate, transport, tourism, public administration, urban renewal and Hengqin's development.

A separate statement on Friday said that Sam met with representatives from the Social Investigation and Research Association on the previous day.

The meeting was held at Sam's election campaign office in Nam Tung Commercial Building in Nam Van.

The association's members include social sciences scholars teaching or engaged in other types of work in Macau.

Meanwhile, Sam's campaign office representatives met with members of eight associations from various segments of Macau's civil society in separate meetings on Friday.

After submitting his candidacy nomination form, Sam is continuing to meet various associations in civil society in order to gather opinions and suggestions with the aim of formulating his candidacy platform. ■

China builds laser communication ground station for massive satellite data transmission

URUMQI—A laser communication ground system with a 500mm-caliber antenna was successfully deployed yesterday on the Pamir Plateau in the northwestern Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region, which is expected to significantly enhance the country's capacity for massive satellite data transmission.

The system, developed by the Aerospace Information Research Institute (AIR) of the Chinese Academy of Sciences, marks the end of relying solely on microwave ground stations for satellite data reception.

With the rapid advancements in China's aerospace technology, the volume of data generated by satellite detection is growing exponentially. The current inability to transmit this massive amount of data promptly has become a significant problem, limiting the efficient utilization of China's space resources, said Li Yalin, a senior engineer of AIR.

Satellite-to-ground laser communications have abundant spectrum resources and a wider bandwidth, about ten times to nearly a thousand times wider than that of microwave communications. Additionally, this equipment is lighter, the system size is smaller, and it has lower power consumption. Li said it can address the growing demand for efficient and reliable transmission of information gathered by satellites.

However, weather conditions and atmospheric turbulence significantly affect the performance and availability of space-to-ground laser communications. Therefore,

selecting an appropriate site can greatly mitigate the impact of complex and unstable atmospheric conditions.

The atmospheric conditions in the Mount Muztagata region on the Pamir Plateau are excellent, with high visibility and a dry and low rainfall climate, allowing for year-round space-to-ground laser communication operations, said Wang Jianping, another senior engineer of AIR and chief of the remote-sensing satellite ground station in Kashgar.

Facilities were constructed at 4,800 meters and 3,300 meters above the sea level, and the system will be operated remotely.

"Our team traveled about 300,000 kilometers on the Pamir Plateau to select the site of the station, and we faced tremendous difficulties," said Wang.

Recently, the project team successfully completed the first operational trial of daytime space-ground laser communications.

Huang Peng, a researcher with AIR and director of China Remote Sensing Satellite Ground Station, said the normalized operation of the newly built station will provide valuable engineering experience in satellite-ground laser communications, laying a solid foundation for planning China's next-generation massive satellite data transmission system.

AIR is planning and evaluating the feasibility of a laser communication ground station network to overcome the adverse weather conditions and improve the reliability of laser communications, according to Huang. —Xinhua

2 shophouses gutted in blaze to be demolished



Two shoppers leave a convenience store at the junction of Rua dos Mercadores and Travessa dos Algebibes late last night next to the two shophouses gutted by a smoky fire on Tuesday last week that have meanwhile been boarded off. —Photo: Tony Wong

Tony Wong

The Lands and Urban Construction Bureau (DSSCU) has announced that the two old shophouses at the junction of Rua dos Mercadores and Travessa dos Algebibes gutted by a fire last week will be demolished.

The ground floors of the shophouses were used as a takeaway and a clothes-bag shop respectively.

The blaze erupted in the takeaway in the early hours of Tuesday last week and spread to the adjacent shop.

A DSSCU statement on Friday said that

the two buildings are old shophouses and are wooden structures, so DSSCU engineers have concluded that neither are suitable for habitation any longer after the blaze.

After the huge blaze, the bureau has reclassified the two buildings as posing a safety risk because of which both need to be demolished, the statement said.

The statement said that the external structures of both buildings have now been temporarily stabilised, adding that the bureau has ordered their respective owners to submit demolition plans in due course. ■

US targeting of HK offices benefits no one

Commentary

BEIJING — The US Congress' latest bill on Hong Kong, which targets the region's representative offices in the United States, is pure political manipulation that will benefit no one.

The so-called Hong Kong Economic and Trade Office Certification Act, recently passed by the US House of Representatives, requires the US President to remove the extension of certain privileges, exemptions and immunities to the Hong Kong Economic and Trade Offices (HKETO) "if Hong Kong no longer enjoys a high degree of autonomy from the People's Republic of China."

The bill is just another case of the United States politicizing normal economic and trade cooperation to badmouth and suppress China's Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR). It is also another move of the United States to play the Hong Kong card to contain China.

The HKSAR government strongly condemned the act. The Chinese foreign ministry warned of resolute countermeasures if the US side advances the egregious act.

The United States has deliberately chosen to ignore the fact that the HKETOs in Washington, New York and San Francisco were established in the 1980s in accordance with laws.

Since then, the offices have been dedicated to strengthening and broadening economic and trade ties between the two sides, and expanding cooperation in the cultural sector. Last year alone, officials in the Washington office attended around 300 events, engaging with people from all walks of life in the American society.

The successful and lawful operations of the HKETOs have proved to be mutually beneficial for Hong Kong and the United States.

Shutting down the offices will only undermine communication and exchange between the two sides, costing the US society an important channel to learn about

the Asian financial hub.

Or, is the United States doing so intentionally to keep the American public in the dark about Hong Kong's liveliness?

If the offices are to be closed, it is bound to damage the relationship between the two sides, and in particular, harm America's own interests. Over the years, the offices have played a vital role in helping US companies benefit from their economic and trade exchanges with Hong Kong.

Statistics show that the United States enjoyed a cumulative trade surplus of up to US\$271.5 billion with Hong Kong in the past decade. As of 2023, over US\$1,200 had set up businesses in Hong Kong.

The United States is wrong to think that it can contain Hong Kong by targeting the representative offices. With Hong Kong's security guaranteed and its business environment improved, the region has grown more and more attractive to international investors.

The World Competitiveness Yearbook 2024, published by the International Institute for Management Development, a business school headquartered in Switzerland, shows that Hong Kong's competitiveness has climbed two places to rank fifth worldwide.

Earlier this year, a report from the American Chamber of Commerce in Hong Kong indicated that nearly 80 percent of surveyed enterprises voiced trust in the rule of law in Hong Kong.

It is widely acknowledged that Hong Kong has a free, open and fine business environment. In the future, Hong Kong will only open its doors wider to the world, offering limitless business opportunities.

Any egregious moves by the United States aimed at slandering Hong Kong cannot stop the region from prospering in a law-based and increasingly open environment. Certainly, the United States playing the Hong Kong card will never succeed in containing China either. —Xinhua