

Ip says 'banking sector is healthy' despite rising NPLs

Interview by Yuki Lei

The proportion of non-performing loans (NPLs) of banks to their total loans rose to 5.1 percent in August, a month-on-month increase of 0.47 percentage point, responding to which Macau Association of Banks (ABM) Chairman Ip Sio Kai said: "The uneven recovery of the local economy, coupled with the high US interest rates, has led to an increase in the operating costs for small- and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), and the local business environment is considerably less favourable than in the past, which has naturally given rise to a number of non-performing loans".

According to the Monetary Authority of Macau (AMCM), in terms of non-performing loans, the banking system's NPLs stood at 54.12 billion patacas in August, rising to 5.1 percent overall from the previous month. Of these, local residents accounted for 38 percent of the total, while non-local residents accounted for 62 percent, and half of the latter were derived from real estate development loans involving the mainland property market. Recently, in reply to a written interpellation to lawmaker Wong Kit Cheng, AMCM President Benjamin Chan Sau San underlined in a statement that "the overall risk is manageable".

Speaking to the *Post* yesterday on the phone, Ip noted that Macau's loan portfolio is divided into local and non-local, with non-local non-performing loans accounting for a larger share of about two-thirds, mainly due



Undated file photo of Macau Association of Banks (ABM) Chairman Ip Sio Kai. Photo provided by Ip yesterday.

to the recent conditions of the mainland's real estate market and the high economic instability worldwide, pointing out that the impact of local loans and the local economy on NPLs was small: "Indeed, local NPLs stand at a reasonable level".

When asked whether there would still be an upward trend in the ratio of non-performing loans in the long term, Ip replied that, given that the global economic recovery was still underway, there was still an upward trend this



This photo taken yesterday shows several banks in the city centre. - Photo: Yuki Lei

year, but he stressed that it would not reach its market top: "I think the current [increase in the NPL ratio] shows the quality of the assets to a large extent. As Hong Kong continues to write off its non-performing loans and has even launched some new businesses to reduce its non-performing loans, this may indicate that the NPL ratio may remain at the present level for some time, and may even rise a little bit, but with the improvement in the operation of the banks, and even the emergence of a

cycle of interest rate reductions, the banks should be slowly moving towards a situation where they will be able to achieve success amidst difficulties".

According to Ip, NPLs are loans that are past due or expected to be past due, but are not equivalent to bad debts. They are a risk management measure of the banks, and are subject to the operational practices and requirements of the audit.

Continued on p.3

Xi says China to develop friendly cooperation with Iran despite int'l situation changes

KAZAN, Russia - President Xi Jinping said yesterday that no matter how the international and regional situation changes, China will unswervingly develop friendly cooperation with Iran.

Xi made the remarks when meeting with Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian on the sidelines of the 16th BRICS Summit.

Iran, Xi said, is a country with important regional and international influence and a good friend and partner of China.

The strategic significance of China-Iran relations has become more prominent as transformations of the world unseen in a century are unfolding at faster pace, he said.

The Chinese side supports Iran in safeguarding national sovereignty, security and national dignity,

steadily advancing its own economic and social development, and improving and deepening good-neighborly and friendly relations with neighboring countries, he added.

The Chinese side, he said, stands ready to work with Iran to firmly support each other, uphold the basic norms governing international relations such as non-interference in internal affairs, and safeguard the legitimate rights and interests of the two countries, adding that his country is also willing to strengthen exchanges and cooperation with Iran in various fields, promote the sound and steady development of the comprehensive strategic partnership between the two countries, and better benefit the two peoples. (More about BRICS Summit on pages 6,7 & 11) - Xinhua

Macau logs 25.9 million visitors in Jan-Sept, up 30 pct

Staff Reporter

Macau welcomed 25.9 million visitor arrivals in the first three quarters of this year, a year-on-year growth of 30.1 percent, recovering to 85.8 percent of the number in the same period in pre-pandemic 2019, the Statistics and Census Bureau (DSEC) announced yesterday.

Same-day visitors (13.83 million) and overnight visitors (12.08 million) grew by 42.8 percent 18.1 percent year on year respectively.

On average, overnight visitors stayed 2.3 days, unchanged from a year earlier. Foreigners accounted to 6.4 percent of all visitor arrivals in the nine-month period.

Last month, the number of visitor arrivals rose by 9.9 percent year on year to 2.52 million. ■



A tourist poses in the city's main square, Largo do Senado, last month. - Photo: Rui Pastorin

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The Macau Post Daily

Apple CEO Tim Cook pledges to increase investment in China

Apple CEO Tim Cook yesterday pledged to increase investment in China during his Beijing visit, which analysts believe highlights the importance of the Chinese market to the American tech giant.

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'Now is the time' to end Gaza war: Blinken

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken said yesterday "now is the time" to end the conflict in Gaza, and urged Israel to avoid further escalation with Iran.

- Story on p. 10

Greenland extends detention of anti-whaling activist Watson

A Greenland court yesterday extended the detention of anti-whaling activist Paul Watson for three more weeks, pending a decision on his possible extradition to Japan where he is wanted over an altercation with whalers.

- Story on p. 11

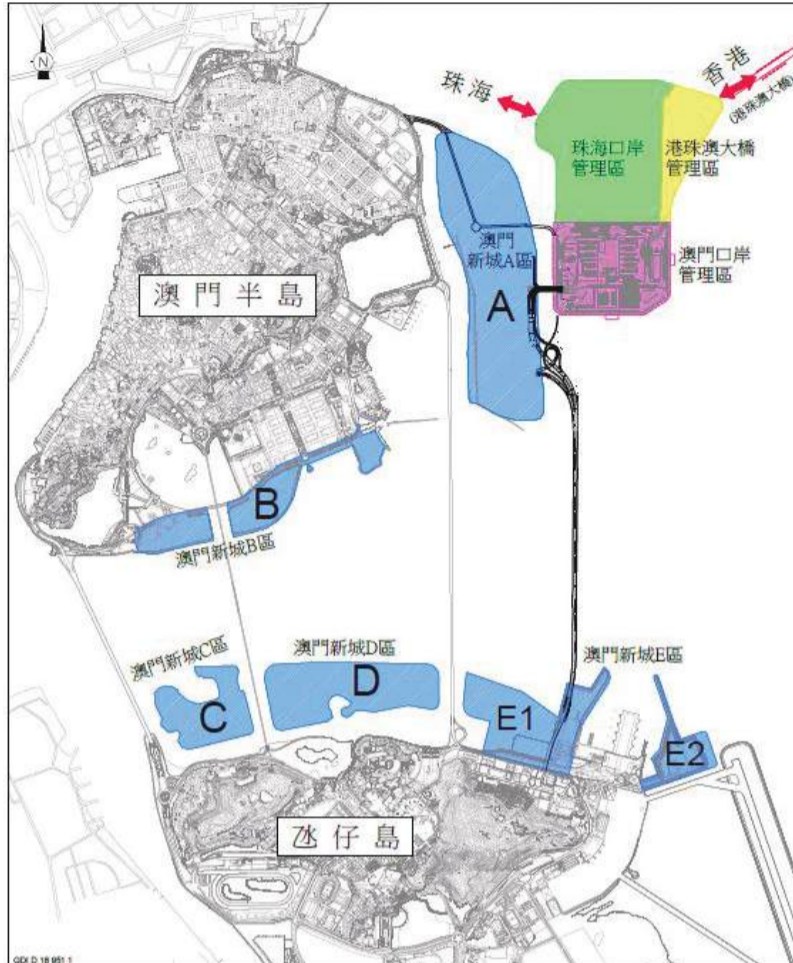
Zone D reclamation to start shortly: DSOP

Yuki Lei

The Public Works Bureau (DSOP) announced earlier this week that it has commenced the preliminary work of measuring the depth of the water at the reclamation site for the government's Zone D project, sampling and testing of silt and requesting permission from the central government to build a temporary loading jetty and launch dredging work, all of which was expected to be completed by the end of this year so that the Zone D land reclamation project could commence shortly.

On its official website, the bureau noted on Tuesday that Zone D, with a reclaimed area of about 570,000 square metres, is located off the northern part of Taipa, in the waters off Estrada Nordeste (東北馬路), between the Macau-Taipa Friendship Bridge and the Governor Nobre de Carvalho Bridge (informally known as the "old bridge"). Planned as a residential area, the tender for the landfill and embankment in Zone D was launched in May 2019, involving an estimated cost of 1.53 billion patacas and a maximum construction period of 1,350 working days.

According to previous news reports, Secretary for Transport and Public Works Raimundo do Rosário said in 2020 that the local government has decided to cancel its Zone D land reclamation project, but to reclaim land in the waters between the north-eastern coast of the peninsula and the Zone A land



This image taken from the Public Works Bureau (DSOP) website shows the government's plan of its Zone D land reclamation project.

reclamation area for a city park. However, the local government's decision was eventually not approved by the central government in Beijing.

According to the bureau, the total landfill volume in Zone D is estimated to be about seven million cubic metres, including backfilling

of natural sand and inert materials. It added that priority will be given to the use of soft subsoil as reclamation material in order to achieve reuse of resources, and to reduce the cost of purchasing natural sand instead of procuring sand for reclamation by the contractors, thereby reducing the risk of possible supply uncertainty. ■

Mainlander lets scammer use bank account for money laundering: police

William Chan

A man from the mainland has been arrested for allegedly allowing a scammer to use his bank account which was then used for laundering money linked to an online sexual extortion scam, Judiciary Police (PJ) spokesman Leng Kam Lon said at a special press conference yesterday.

The 32-year-old suspect surnamed Huang is a chef.

According to Leng, a local man told the police in June that he had been blackmailed after a nude online chat with a female, who threatened to send nude photos of him to people on his mobile phone contact list. He paid the fraudsters a total of 128,000

patacas, and later reported the case to the police.

While tracking the money, the police discovered that Huang's bank account had received money from the victim. Leng noted that Huang was a non-resident worker (NRW) in Macau when he opened the bank account for the fraud gang to launder money, and the money had been withdrawn by gang members.

He was arrested at the Barrier Gate checkpoint on Tuesday. Under questioning, he refused to cooperate.

Huang was transferred to the Public Prosecutions Office (MP) yesterday, facing charges of money laundering and fraud, Leng said. ■



The hooded money-laundering suspect is being escorted by Judiciary Police (PJ) officers from the PJ headquarters in Zape to a vehicle yesterday.

- Photo: William Chan

Police nab local septuagenarian for drunk driving

William Chan

A local man in his seventies has been arrested for drunk driving, Public Security Police (PSP) spokesman Wong Chi Weng said during a regular press conference yesterday.

Wong identified the suspect as a male surnamed Leong who works as a waiter.

According to Wong, while Leong was riding his motorcycle along Avenida do Almirante Lacerda (提督馬路) in the wee

hours of yesterday, he was stopped by officers at a roadblock. Leong was found to be reeking of alcohol, and a breathalyser test showed that his alcohol concentration was 1.56 grams of alcohol per litre of blood.

Under questioning, he admitted to drinking in his friend's home that night.

The suspect has been transferred to the Public Prosecutions Office (MP), facing a drunk-driving charge, Wong said. ■

Elderly man critical with Legionnaires' disease, this year's 8th case

Ginnie Liang

Macau recorded this year's eighth case of Legionnaires' disease yesterday, the Health Bureau (SSM) announced in a statement yesterday.

According to the statement, the patient is a 69-year-old local man inflicted with chronic diseases who visited Shanxi Province with his family from October 12 to 14. He came down with a fever and dyspnoea (difficulty in breathing) on Saturday.

The man's symptoms worsened on Monday, the statement said, and he immediately sought treatment at the emergency department of the public Conde de São Januário Hospital Centre where he was diagnosed with pneumonia and Legionnaires' disease.

The statement said that the patient has been put on a ventilator and transferred to the intensive care unit (ICU).

Last night's statement said that the patient was in a critical condition. His family members that had travelled with him have also come down with cough and intermittent shortness of breath, the statement said.

The statement pointed out that Legionellosis, with an incubation period of between two and 10 days, is an infectious disease caused

by Legionella bacteria thriving in warm water between 20 and 45 degrees Celsius and in warm and moist places, such as artificial water systems including massage pools, fountains, and household respiratory medical equipment.

The statement noted that people can be infected with Legionnaires' disease after inhaling mist contaminated with Legionella bacteria released by artificial water systems such as central air-conditioning systems' cooling towers, jacuzzis, fountains, and household respiratory medical devices.

The statement underlined that males, senior citizens, smokers, drinkers and those with weakened immune systems, especially those with chronic medical conditions, such as cancer, diabetes, chronic lung or kidney disease, and patients receiving steroids or other immunosuppressive drugs are at increased risk of catching the disease.

Symptoms of the disease include fever, cough, difficulty breathing, tiredness, headache, muscle pain, abdominal pain and diarrhoea, according to the statement. ■

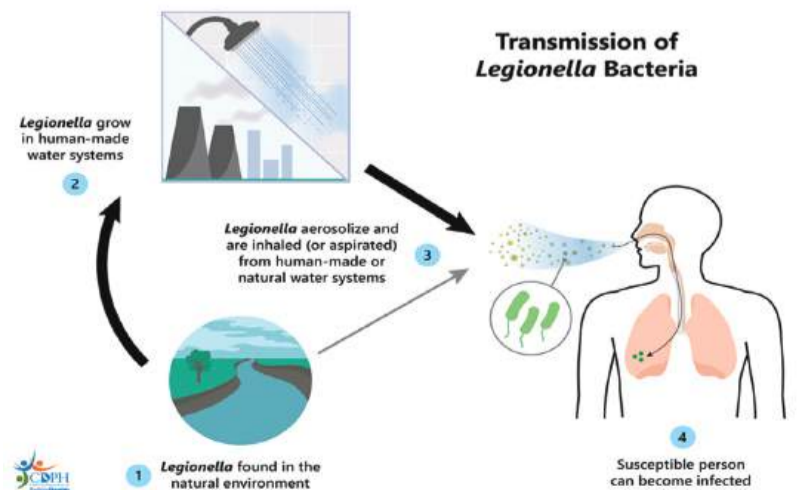


Image courtesy of California Department of Public Health

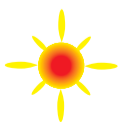
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Macau Weather

VERY DRY. FINE. FORCE 4 TO 5 NORTHERLY WINDS, OCCASIONALLY FORCE 6 WITH GUSTS. RELATIVE HUMIDITY WILL RANGE BETWEEN 30% AND 60%.



20°C~28°C

Source: SMG

PJ hold school safety network exchange meetings

Ginnie Liang

The Judiciary Police (PJ) held a total of six crime prevention exchange meetings via the School Safety Network from October 7 to 16 with more than 100 representatives from 79 primary and secondary schools, tertiary education institutions and evening schools in Macau, in order to strengthen communication and cooperation with the education sector in preventing crimes against young people, according to a PJ statement yesterday.

The School Safety Network is a programme set up by the Judiciary Police in 2008 to provide closer communication between the police and education institutions.

Six exchange sessions were held at the private City University of Macau (CityU), Colégio Mateus Ricci Secondary School, Yuet Wah College, Macau Kung Luen Vocational & Technical Middle School, Taipa Fong Chong School, and Saint Paul School Macau.

At the meetings, PJ officers introduced the trends of crimes

involving young people this year, explained the law and order situation in the vicinity of schools, and explored in-depth exchanges on topics related to young people, such as awareness of deception and refusal to take drugs, as well as mental health.

According to the statement, PJ officers will further strengthen crime prevention training for parents, so as to enhance their awareness and insight into crime prevention, and to jointly prevent juvenile delinquency and other problems affecting young people from occurring.

At the same time, in view of the legalisation of cannabis in some countries or regions and the adverse impact of misleading information on the internet on the physical and mental development of young people, PJ officers will continue to carry out anti-drug education and publicity work in schools to help young people develop the correct attitude about staying away from drugs, the statement said. ■



This undated handout photo provided by the Judiciary Police (PJ) shows PJ officers and representatives from Macau Kung Luen Vocational & Technical Middle School pose on the sidelines of one of the recent PJ crime prevention exchange on-campus meetings.

Ip says 'banking sector is healthy' despite rising NPLs

Continued from p.1

Whether or not the banking sector is operating in a sound manner depends not only on NPLs, but also on a series of indicators, including operating income, profitability and capital adequacy ratio, as well as deposits by residents, Ip said, underlining that "Macau's banking sector is healthy".

Citing the rise in interest rates for Macau deposits as an example, Ip pointed out that the economic capacity of residents and non-residents alike has not been diminished. According to the Monetary Authority of Macau, local residents' deposits increased by 0.6 percent month-on-month to 747.7 billion patacas in August, while public sector deposits with the banking system increased by 2.3 percent to 198 billion patacas.

He also said that the capital adequacy ratio of the local banking sector as of the end of August remained at a "good level"

of 14.21 percent, which was well above the core supervisory target of 8.0 percent or 8.12 percent, adding that with the performance of Macau's gearing ratio* which, he underlined, is well above international standards, even though the NPL rate, in terms of these figures, is higher than before, it is "still in line with a reasonable level".

When asked whether the NPLs would affect foreign investors' confidence in Macau, Ip said that with the advantages created by government policies' "dividends" and the special administrative region's attractively low tax rates, he believed that the rise in NPLs would not have a significant impact on investors and Macau's business environment, "mainly due to the interest rate factor". ■

*The gearing ratio is a financial metric used to assess a company's financial leverage and risk.

Macau attracts 223 investment projects worth 3.4 billion patacas in Jan-Sept: IPIM

Yuki Lei

Macau attracted at least 223 investment projects in the first three quarters of this year worth about 3.4 billion patacas in total, showing investors' confidence in Macau's tourism industry, Commerce and Investment Promotion Institute (IPIM) President Vincent U U Sang said yesterday.

"In the first three quarters of this year, IPIM's "One-stop Service" followed up on 223 investment projects, a year-on-year increase of 15 percent, involving investments amounting to 3.4 billion patacas, a surge of 188 percent year on year, mainly three hotel projects," U said during yesterday's phone-in programme Ou Mun Gwong Cheung ("Macau Talkshow").

He also summarised IPIM's work in the past five years, including Forum Macao's 6th Ministerial Conference held in April and the signing of the new Strategic Plan for Economic and Trade Cooperation by China and the world's nine Portuguese-speaking countries (PSCs), which he described as Forum Macao's most important work in the past five years.

U also said that IPIM, in the past



Commerce and Investment Promotion Institute (IPIM) President Vincent U U Sang speaks to reporters after yesterday's phone-in programme Ou Mun Gwong Cheung hosted by public broadcast TDM.

— Photo courtesy of TDM

six months, visited five Portuguese-speaking countries, among which it contacted a private enterprise in Angola in July. In addition, he added, the operational headquarters of a Portuguese-speaking country's company was set up in Macau during last week's Macao International Trade & Investment Fair (MIF).

'Visitors spent more in Macau': MGTO vice-chief

Meanwhile, while also attending yesterday's phone-in programme hosted by public broadcaster TDM, Macau Government Tourism Office (MGTO) Deputy Director Cheng Wai Tong noted that Macau received 26 million visitor arrivals in the first nine months of this year, recovering to 85 percent of the same period in pre-pandemic 2019, "slightly better than expected", while the number of foreign tourists has returned to 70 percent of the pre-epidemic level.

Independent travellers make up the majority of Macau's total visitor arrivals, leisure activities and eating-out being the main purpose of their visit, Cheng said, citing figures from the Statistics and Census Bureau (DSEC) as pointing out that the majority of visitors spent more in Macau this year than in 2019: "The per capita spending of tourists in 2019 stood at about 1,600 patacas, but by the first half of this year traveller spending had already reached 2,260 patacas per capita, an increase of nearly 40 percent".

Macau's visitor arrivals are now younger and mostly female, according to Cheng. ■

Raffles at Galaxy Macau celebrates completion

Rui Pastorin

The "Celebration of Raffles Luxury at Galaxy Macau" was held yesterday at the all-suites property in Cotai, where its completion was announced and celebrated.

In a speech, Galaxy Entertainment Group (GEG) Vice Chairman Francis Lui Yiu Tung said: "This moment marks our unwavering commitment to Macau's positioning as a World Centre of Tourism and Leisure, and our unique strategy of cultivating our house of brands that refines the future of luxury hospitality".

"This property elevates our portfolio to a total of eight exceptional hotels and over 5,000 rooms and suites", Lui added. Moreover, a statement provided by Galaxy Macau yesterday after the event noted that the property features around 450 "timelessly elegant" suites.

Also attending yesterday's event was Accor Greater China CEO Gary Rosen, who noted in his speech that "among the Raffles family of elegant and culturally well-connected landmark addresses, Raffles at Galaxy Macau is the brand's largest destination in the world and an all luxurious, all suites experience". He said that he was honoured to join attendees in celebrating the property's completion.

In terms of dining offerings, yesterday's statement highlighted that Raffles at Galaxy Macau features three-Michelin starred Japanese sushi master Masaaki Miyakawa's first international restaurant Sushi Kissho; Japanese teppanyaki



Galaxy Entertainment Group (GEG) Vice Chairman Francis Lui Yiu Tung (left) and Accor Greater China CEO Gary Rosen pour a "golden liquid", according to the event's MC, into an ice sculpture during yesterday's "Celebration of Raffles Luxury at Galaxy Macau" in Cotai yesterday.

— Photos: Rui Pastorin



Musicians perform at the Raffles Lounge & Terrace yesterday.

Omakase specialist Teppanyaki Shou; and the world's first speakeasy rendition of the Raffles Long Bar.

The term "speakeasy" describes

a bar or lounge that has a vintage or hidden vibe, often with a focus on craft cocktails and a cosy, intimate atmosphere. ■



Local artist Wilson Lam Chi Ian gives a speech during the opening ceremony of the “4th Cycle of Lusophone Polychromies” exhibition at the Forum Macao Complex gallery.

3 contemporary artists show works at Forum Macao Complex

Interview by Rui Pastorin

The works of Brazilian photographer and visual artist Luiz Bhering, mixed-media artist Maria Madeira from Timor-Leste (East Timor), and local painter Wilson Lam Chi Ian are on display at the Forum Macao Complex gallery for the exhibition “4th Cycle of Lusophone Polychromies”.

Polychromie refers to the use of multiple colours in art, particularly in sculpture, architecture, or decorative arts.

On display until November 24, the exhibition is part of a series of activities of the 16th Cultural Week of China and Portuguese-speaking Countries.

Madeira attended Monday’s opening ceremony. According to her website, she has produced works using a variety of media and showcased them in over 30 international exhibitions.

The artist told the *Post* after the Monday’s opening ceremony that the event marks the second time that she is showing her works in Macau, with the first 15 years ago. Her pieces on display include both

those created recently, as well as some that date as far back as a decade ago.

“I work every day, I paint every day”, the artist said. “Whatever comes to mind, whichever concept that I feel needs to be spoken about, I work with it”, she said.

The pieces Madeira is showcasing, which were made through mixed media, are mainly about the plight of women, emphasising: “As an East Timorese female artist, I find that we are very silenced”.

Though the conditions are better now, Madeira remarked that 99.9 percent of contemporary visual artists in Timor-Leste are male. “I feel like there is a need to speak about the women, because the traditions of Timor-Leste are very much female, although it’s a patriarchal society. So, what is in public is male, but what works behind closed doors is all female”, wanting to show that women “are part of the big resistance, we are part of our cause for independence”.

Meanwhile, Lam, an artist who has won multiple design awards, who was also at

Monday’s opening event, told the *Post* that his colourful and fluid paintings displayed are all about Macau, each created when he has free time, and not particularly created for the exhibition.

Lam said he often paints without doing any sketches, noting: “I just do what I like. I just sit there, look around, and just start”, adding that he likes incorporating colour and light.

Remarking on the importance of taking part in the ongoing exhibition, Lam cited cultural exchanges and making new friends as important factors, adding that when they create art, “the most important thing is to share [their creations] with people”, particularly those from a different culture. “They will have a different point of view” and perspectives, he said, adding that he was proud to be a participant in the event.

Aside from being able to meet new friends and benefitting art culture, Lam said that the exhibition was also a advantageous way to promote Macau and allow people to see it from a different angle.



Artist Maria Madeira from Timor-Leste introduces one of her artworks on display at the exhibition. – Photos: Rui Pastorin

As an artist and designer, Lam said that he finds Macau to be a gorgeous city, with the integration of elements like the mix of Eastern and Western cultures, as well as the new and the old, coming together and creating something very special, Lam pointed out.

More details about the artists and exhibition can be found on <https://semanacultural.forumchinaplp.org.mo/pt/event/view/46>



42 illegal currency exchange dealers deported to mainland



The 42 mainland illegal money exchange dealers are being transferred to the mainland authorities in the area between Zhuhai's Gongbei and Macau's Barrier Gate border checkpoints yesterday. — Photos: William Chan



Judiciary Police (PJ) Deputy Director Sou Sio Keong (centre) shakes hands with a mainland Public Security Bureau officer after the transfer process.

Ginnie Liang

The Judiciary Police (PJ) handed over 42 mainlanders involved in illegal currency exchange activities in Macau to the Zhuhai police yesterday evening.

PJ Deputy Director Sou Sio Keong briefed reporters about the cases after the transfer of the illegal currency exchange dealers in the area between Zhuhai's Gongbei and Macau's Barrier Gate border checkpoints.

Sou noted that the 42 unlicensed dealers comprised 29 males and 13 females aged between 27 and 63. Two of the dealers were non-resident workers (NRW) suspected of illegally engaging in currency exchange activities in Macau using their employment as a cover, while another dealer overstayed in Macau in an illegal inn for nine months. Notified by the Judiciary Police about the case, the Macau Government Tourism Office (MGTO) has meanwhile sealed the clandestine inn.

According to Sou, the Ministry of Public Security has recently announced a crackdown on money exchange syndicates. After sorting and analysing the data, Sou noted, gangs involved in illegal currency activities in the mainland and Macau were identified and the Judiciary Police were informed about their activities here.

Sou noted that the Judiciary Police dispatched 100 officers at

7 a.m. yesterday to various hotels and residential units in different areas in Macau, especially in Cotai, where they apprehended the 42 targeted mainlanders.

The operation resulted in the seizure of approximately HK\$3 million in cash, HK\$160,000 in gambling chips, and 56 smartphones.

Sou noted that the local and mainland law enforcement authorities have consistently maintained close communication and cooperation, and that they will intensify intelligence sharing and take timely joint actions to combat cross-regional crimes.

Last Wednesday, the Legislative Assembly (AL) passed a government-drafted law bill aimed at combating gambling-related crimes, under which legislation has been amended in order to criminalise illicit money exchanges occurring on casino and other gaming industry-related premises.

Sou pointed out that the new law aimed to help combat illicit money exchanges activities. "After the new law comes into effect, there will be a legal basis for combating multiple activities involving illegal money-changing in Macau, as well as legal tools and related enforcement powers that will allow us to severely penalise unlicensed currency-exchange dealers," Sou told reporters yesterday. ■

Double Happiness: Ponte 16, Sofitel celebrate anniversaries

Rui Pastorin

A lighting-up ceremony for a "16 x 60" installation was held in the Inner Harbour area on Tuesday night, commemorating both the 16th anniversary of the Ponte 16 Resort and the 60th anniversary of the Sofitel hotel brand.

The ceremony was held at the Outdoor Plaza of the resort. According to a statement on the Ponte 16 website, the installation symbolises the "profound connection" shared between the resort and brand.

"Ponte" means "wharf" or "bridge" in Portuguese. Founded in France in 1964, Sofitel Hotels & Resorts is a French chain of luxury hotels based in Paris, and owned by Accor since 1980.

SJM Resorts Managing Director Daisy Ho Chiu Fung, as quoted by the statement, remarked in her speech on Tuesday that "Ponte 16 has been a cornerstone of the Inner Harbour, driving footfall to the UNESCO Historic Centre of Macau and bringing vitality to local SMEs. In addition, its outdoor plaza has been home to numerous events that have become cherished memories for both tourists and residents, adding to the dimensions of cultural and community tourism".

Ponte 16 Deputy Chief Executive Officer Hoffman Ma (馬浩文)



SJM Resorts Managing Director Daisy Ho Chiu Fung (centre) looks on during Tuesday's lighting-up ceremony of the "16 x 60" installation at the Outdoor Plaza of Ponte 16. — Photo: MPDG

also said: "Throughout the years, Ponte 16 has been actively engaged in various initiatives to promote local cultural events, contributing to the transformation of Macau into a World Centre of Tourism and Leisure. Our commitment remains steadfast in showcasing the vibrant spirit of Macau, its remarkable people, stunning landmarks, and unique culture to the world. We are committed to long-term development and look forward to achieving another exciting 16 years."

Meanwhile, the statement said that the "Precious Moment with

Ponte 16 Photo Contest" has also been launched, which features a total prize pool of up to 100,000 patacas.

The competition is open to all members of the public and features both aerial and open categories. A prize-giving ceremony will be held in December with awards for a Champion, a first and a second runner-up, and 10 outstanding prizes to be given out, the statement said. An exhibition of the works will also be held.

Details can be found on <https://photocontest.ponte16.com.mo/> ■

Taipa Central Park Swimming Pool temporarily closes

The Taipa Central Park Swimming Pool has been temporarily closed due to "the exceedance of the E. coli standard" in the pool water because of external contamination, the Sports Bureau (ID) announced in a statement last night.

Cleaning and disinfection are underway, the statement pointed out.

The statement noted that refunds will be provided for those who bought tickets through the online booking system via their respective e-payment method. More information can be found on <https://www.sport.gov.mo> or by calling 2823 6363. ■



This undated photo downloaded from the Sports Bureau (ID) website last night shows the Taipa Central Park Swimming Pool.

Macau hosts int'l forum for young space scientists

The four-day International Forum for Young Space Scientists is taking place at the Macau Science Centre until tomorrow, attracting nearly 100 scientists from various countries and regions.

At the forum's formal opening ceremony yesterday, Wu Ji, president of the Chinese Society of Space Research (CSSR), expressed his hope that the forum will provide a platform for exchanges and cooperation and lay the foundation for future cooperation.

Zong Qiugang, director of the Space Science Institute of

the private Macau University of Science and Technology (MUST), introduced the scientific output of Macau's first space science satellite, "Macao Science 1", in geomagnetic science research and space environment monitoring and stressed that MUST will continue to contribute to international exchanges and cooperation in space science.

Yesterday afternoon, young space scientists had in-depth exchanges and discussions about disciplinary frontiers, the new discoveries of domestic and international satellite

missions, the progress of relevant modelling and technology, and future joint research.

As part of the forum, participants will visit the related laboratories of MUST and the University of Hong Kong (HKU).

As the first international conference for young space scientists held in Macau, the forum was co-organized by the CSSR, MUST, the National Space Science Centre of the Chinese Academy of Sciences, HKU, and the International Space Science Institute - Beijing. — Xinhua, MPDG

STOCK MARKETS

Hang Seng Index closes 1.27 pct higher

HONG KONG — Hong Kong's stock market ended higher yesterday with the benchmark Hang Seng Index up 1.27 percent to close 20,760.15 points.

The Hang Seng China Enterprises Index rose 1.56 percent to end at 7,478.23 points, and the Hang Seng Tech Index rose 1.86 percent to end at 4,605.62 points. — Xinhua