



State Council appoints Sam Hou Fai as next CE

Tony Wong

The State Council has appointed Sam Hou Fai as the sixth-term chief executive of the Macau Special Administrative Region (MSAR), according to a Xinhua report on Friday.

Sam was elected Macau's next chief executive on October 13 when he garnered 394 of the 398 votes cast by the special administrative region's 400-member Chief Executive Election Committee, or 98.99 percent of the ballots cast, with two electors absent. There were four blank and no invalid votes. Sam was the election's sole candidate.

Sam's tenure will start on December 20, 2024, when he will be formally installed, according to a decision made during the 6th plenary meeting of the State Council in Beijing, presided over by Premier Li Qiang on Friday.

The October 13 chief executive election result validated by Macau's Court of Final Appeal (TUI) was published in the Official Gazette (BO) on Monday last week, confirming Sam as chief executive-elect.

The Xinhua report said that Friday's State Council plenary meeting reviewed a report from the Macau government on Sam's election as the sixth-term chief executive of the MSAR, and also heard a report on the sixth-term chief executive election from Xia Baolong, the director of the State Council's Hong Kong and Macao Affairs Office (HKMAO).

In accordance with the MSAR Basic Law, the meeting decided to appoint Sam as the MSAR's sixth-term chief executive, the report said.

According to the Xinhua report, Li said during the meeting that over the past 25 years since Macau's return to the motherland, the "One Country, Two Systems" principle

has been comprehensively and accurately implemented, the city has enjoyed rapid economic development and maintained social stability, and its population's well-being has been continuously improving, creating the best development situation in Macau's history.

Full support

Li pledged that the Central People's Government will continue to comprehensively, accurately and unswervingly implement the principles of "One Country, Two Systems", "Macau people governing Macau", and the MSAR's high degree of autonomy, the report said.

During the meeting, according to the report, the premier also pledged that the Central People's Government will fully support the chief executive and the MSAR government in exercising law-based administration, breaking new ground while upholding fundamental principles, shouldering responsibilities, and creating a new landscape for the successful implementation of the "One Country, Two Systems" principle with Macau characteristics.

The central government will continue to support Macau in integrating itself into, and contributing to the nation's overall development by leveraging its unique advantages, Li said.

According to the report, Li also pledged that the Central People's Government will continue to support the chief executive and local government in safeguarding national security, promote Macau's appropriate economic diversification, continuously improve the population's well-being, and fostering social harmony and stability, enabling the joint development and prosperity of Macau and the mainland.



Sam Hou Fai, then chief executive-elect and now chief executive-designate, addresses a press conference at the Forum Macao Complex on October 13 following his election as Macau's sixth-term and fourth chief executive. — Photo: Tony Wong

According to another Xinhua report on Friday, Li also signed a State Council decree on Friday appointing Sam as the MSAR's sixth-term chief executive.

With effect from Friday's official appointment by the State Council, Sam is Macau's chief executive-designate until his swearing-in by one of the most senior leaders of the People's Republic of China (PRC) on December 20, coinciding with the 25th Anniversary of the establishment of the MSAR.

Until Friday's appointment, Sam, 62, was Macau's chief executive-elect.

Current Chief Executive Ho Iat Seng, 67,

announced in August that for health reasons he was not seeking a second five-year term.

Macau's chief executives can serve a maximum of two consecutive five-year terms.

Since the establishment of the MSAR on December 20, 1999, Sam had headed the Court of Final Appeal for nearly 25 years until late August when he resigned as the MSAR's top judge so that he could run for chief executive.

Sam will be the MSAR's fourth chief executive, after Edmund Ho Hau Wah, Fernando Chui Sai On and Ho Iat Seng. The first two served two terms each. ■

Govt proposes new system for investment funds

Tony Wong

Secretary for Administration and Justice André Cheong Weng Chon, who is also the spokesman for the government's top advisory Executive Council, has announced that the government has finished drafting a new bill regulating the setting-up and operation of investment funds and fund management companies, with the aim of promoting the development of Macau's modern finance.

Cheong made the announcement during a press conference at Government Headquarters on Friday. The bill will be submitted to the Legislative Assembly (AL)

in due course for debate, review and vote.

Cheong said that with the aim of accelerating the development of Macau's modern finance, one of the government's measures promoting Macau's appropriate economic diversification, the government has drafted the bill after consulting representatives from the city's financial sector as well as experts and scholars in the field and referencing the respective laws in a number of countries and regions.

The bill proposes to update legislation on investment funds and fund management companies to replace the current decree law

enacted back in 1999 when Macau was still under temporary Portuguese administration.

According to Cheong, the bill proposes to strengthen coordination between Macau's legal system regulating investment funds and the international supervisory system.

The bill also aims to enhance the protection for investors, such as by proposing tougher statutory requirements for information disclosure for investment fund prospectus and investment portfolios.

Also addressing Friday's press conference, Henrietta Lau Hang Kun, a member of the Administrative Committee

of the Macau Monetary Authority (AMCM), said that modern finance is an important component of the government's campaign to appropriately diversify Macau's economy.

Lau said that the government has drafted the bill after referencing the respective legal systems in a number of countries and regions whose investment fund markets have been maturely developed such as Hong Kong, Singapore and the mainland.

Lau said that the bill aims to create favourable conditions in Macau aiming to attract companies from elsewhere to launch and operate investment funds here. ■

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Rising BRICS paves way for inclusive global development

The 16th BRICS Summit that took place earlier this week in Kazan, Russia, marks a new step in the development of BRICS cooperation mechanism.

— Story on p. 7

Netanyahu hails 'precise' strike on Iran as Israel pounds Lebanon, Gaza

Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu declared yesterday that Israel's "precise and powerful" strikes on Iran had been a success, as his country's forces pounded targets in Gaza and Lebanon.

— Story on p. 10

Locals fume as Lisbon's trams become tourist 'toy'

An age-old symbol of the Portuguese capital, Lisbon's rickety yellow trams have become such a magnet for tourists that some locals complain they can no longer grab a ride.

— Story on p. 12

Oktoberfest Macau at MGM 2024 taps the keg

Rui Pastorin

Oktoberfest Macau at MGM 2024 kicked off on Friday at MGM Cotai, with the Bavarian beerfest on until November 5.

According to a Friday statement from integrated resort (IR) operator MGM, this year's event features a raft of new elements, including authentic Munich snacks and vegetarian dishes. The event also sees the return of the HÖGL FUN BAND from Germany, along with a blue-and-white Bavarian patterned beer tent and traditional long wooden tables, German Oktoberfest brew Löwenbräu ("Lion's Brew"), traditional Bavarian food and beverages, carnival booth games and waitresses donning dirndl costumes, the statement noted.

The statement quoted MGM China Holdings Limited President and Executive Director Kenneth Feng Xiaofeng as

saying: "Throughout the past 13 editions, it [the event] has attracted more than 180,000 residents and tourists, which perfectly manifests the synergy of gastronomy, creativity, culture, festivals and tourism. This year's Oktoberfest is held for the fourth time at the outdoor venue of MGM COTAI, where locals and visitors can enjoy an innovative experience of cultural diversity prepared elaborately by MGM".

Feng also highlighted the upcoming third edition of "MGM Chef Nic Gastronomic Fest", which is slated to take place on November 30 and December 1 in the same venue.

The event, which is held on the Roof Terrace of MGM COTAI, is open from 6 p.m. to 12 a.m. Ticketing details can be found at <https://www.mgm.mo/en/cotai/entertainment/oktoberfest2024> ■



This undated handout photo provided by integrated resort (IR) operator MGM shows a performance taking place during the Oktoberfest Macau at MGM 2024.

Police make largest-ever meth bust in Macau, worth about 36.3 million patacas



Judiciary Police (PJ) officers escort the hooded drug suspect from the local airport to a PJ vehicle last night.



Evidence including methamphetamine, aka ice, and a large suitcase seized from the suspect is displayed by five PJ officers during last night's press briefing at the local airport. - Photos: Maria Cheang Ut Meng

Yuki Lei

The Judiciary Police (PJ) made at the local airport yesterday evening Macau's largest-ever methamphetamine bust, with the seizure of 11.1 kilograms of methamphetamine (aka ice) worth about 36.3 million patacas.

The drug was smuggled in a single attempt by a Taiwanese man, aged 27, from Thailand to Macau as an intermediate location at about 6:15 p.m. yesterday, PJ spokesman Leng Kam Lon said in

a press briefing last night, adding: "The suspect surnamed Wang flew to Macau with a large suitcase, and upon arrival he looked very shakey and panicky".

According to Leng, the Judiciary Police had recently received intelligence that a drug trafficking gang had arranged for its members to smuggle ice into Macau from Southeast Asia. Yesterday, the Judiciary Police identified Wang as the gang's smuggler, in whose luggage PJ officers found three large

gift boxes containing 10 packets of ice disguised as tea leaves, weighing about 11.1 kilograms, a record-breaking amount of ice seized in Macau.

Under questioning, the jobless suspect told the police that he had been promised about 12,000 patacas, or about NT\$50,000, as "commission" for the smuggling trip.

Leng noted that the Judiciary Police will transfer the suspect to the Public Prosecutions Office (MP) after further questioning at the PJ headquarters in Zape. ■

Applications open for local brands to join fashion pop-up in Shenzhen

Rui Pastorin

Applications are now open for local original fashion brands to participate in the "Macao Fashion Pop-up Store" to be set up in Shenzhen from December 7 to 8, the Cultural Affairs Bureau (IC) said in a statement on Friday.

Applications, which are free of charge, can be submitted until 5 p.m. on November 6, according to the statement.

The statement noted that the event will be held in Shenzhen OCT-LOFT, with the pop-up store to be launched in conjunction with the "Shenzhen T-Street Creative Mart x Macao Tap Siac Craft Market".

The statement said that brands can apply via <https://shorturl.at/8I4Ab>. The statement added that applicants need to submit an inventory of products for sale, a copy of their trademark registration certificate, and an introduction of the brand/designer's experience and awards.



This undated handout photo provided by the Cultural Affairs Bureau (IC) shows a previous edition of the "Shenzhen T-Street Creative Mart x Macao Tap Siac Craft Market", the event where the "Macao Fashion Pop-up Store" will also be installed next month.

Chosen candidates, the statement noted, "will present five to eight types of originally designed clothing, with a minimum of three pieces for each type, and sell them on consignment". The candidates

will keep all profits after bank charges are deducted.

Enquiries can be made by calling 6651 8290 or emailing events@morpheusideas.com ■

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Taipa Central Park pool reopens

Rui Pastorin

The Taipa Central Park Swimming Pool reopened yesterday after the completion of cleaning and disinfection work.

The pool had previously been closed due to the exceedance of the

E. coli standard in the pool water because of external contamination.

In a statement on Saturday, the Sports Bureau (ID) announced that the pool has "met the requirements for reopening for public use after disinfection, cleaning, and water replacement".

The statement noted that the online booking service has also resumed. One can buy tickets online or on the spot. More information can be found by visiting <http://www.sport.gov.mo> or call the bureau's hotline on 2823 6363. ■

AAMC Karting Academy vows to further nurture young racers



Davina Chu Miu Lai, principal of the Automobile General Association of Macao-China (AAMC) Karting Academy, poses after yesterday's interview at the Coloane Karting Track. - Photo: Yuki Lei



This photo provided by Andy Chang Wing Chung yesterday shows him celebrating his F4 victory on the podium during the 69th Macau Grand Prix in 2022.



A young karting driver drives during his lesson at the Coloane kart circuit yesterday.

Interview by Yuki Lei

As the 71st Macau Grand Prix gets underway on November 14, drivers from all over the world will gather in Macau to test their skills as part of an elite group of drivers and riders looking to make an unforgettable impression on the city - with just over half a month to go before the annual race, a group of young drivers under the age of 10 were the first to leave their mark on the circuit of the Coloane Karting Track yesterday - students from the AAMC Karting Academy!

Is becoming a racer in Macau a distant dream? In order to pass on the tradition and train new motor-racing talents, the Automobile General Association of Macao-China (AAMC) officially set up a karting academy last year, organising a

raft of driving courses at different levels to further nurture children and young people interested in karting and to create a good future for motor racing in Macau.

Davina Chu Miu Lai, principal of the academy, told the Post yesterday that in the past, due to safety considerations, AAMC only issued licences to youngsters aged at least 13 to 14, but nowadays, all over the world, including the mainland and Europe, quite a few children have started to get in touch with car racing at a tender age: "We want to lower the age group a little bit and see if there are any youngsters who can represent Macau in the future, from karting to Grand Prix".

Completed in 1996 and renovated in 2003, the 50,000-square-metre, 1.2-kilometre-long, 10-metre-wide

and 10-turn kart track in Coloane is one of the most exciting kart tracks in Southeast Asia and the only kart track in Hong Kong and Macau, according to Chu, who pointed out that having hosted a number of international races, the circuit is also the starting point for many racing drivers' motorsport careers, local racer Andy Chang Wing Chung being one of them.

Chang, 28, started racing at the age of five. Recalling his youthful participation in racing training, he said: "Almost no one of my age was there with me", adding that as motor racing was not so popular in Macau at that time, he could only train and participate in races in the mainland: "I could only rely on myself and my family members to explore the sport alone".

From figuring out racing on his own to travelling from the mainland

to elsewhere in Asia and then even Europe, Chang was invited back to Macau in 2013 to compete in the 60th Macau Grand Prix Formula Junior Championship. In the grand finale of the 69th Macau Grand Prix in 2022, Chang got a boost to his racing career by winning the Formula 4 championship.

Is it the end of Chang's racing career given that he has never raced in a Grand Prix race again? The answer is no...in fact, he just switched to a different track from being a racing driver to becoming a karting instructor, giving lessons to children at the local karting academy, promoting Macau's racing culture and motorsports, as well as organising a special training programme to identify children showing great potential.

When asked about the difference between teaching students and being a racing driver, Chang said that "as a driver, we know what we need to improve after communication with the team". As a mentor, he was quick to add, "we hope that our children can represent Macau to compete in international races in the future".

Meanwhile, according to Chu, the academy has seven instructors, one of whom is Chang, all former racing drivers. The age range of the students is from five to 14, and the academy provides different levels of basic training for different age groups. The young drivers have to complete theoretical courses and technical training as well as pass examinations for them to obtain a motor-racing licence before they can take part in Grand Prix races. ■

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ABOUT The Young Post

The Macau Post Daily's The Young Post will be published every Monday to present and discuss topical issues that may interest not only the younger but also all the other generations.

HALLOWEEN EDITION

Local trick-or-treaters celebrate Halloween

Rui Pastorin

Macau experienced short bursts of rain on Saturday evening, while Tropical Cyclone Standby Signal No. 1, and later, Warning Signal No. 3, were hoisted throughout the day. But the weather did not stop Macau's many young trick-or-treaters* as they gathered and went around Calçada da Igreja de São Lázaro (瘋堂斜巷) and Praça do Tap Seac (塔石廣場).

With the streets crowded with many revellers, kids, teenagers and adults, celebrating Halloween**, it was not uncommon to see ghosts and ghouls conversing and exchanging sweets with superheroes or popular anime characters throughout the night. Strangers were not strangers for long as friendships were formed over things like the admiration for one another's costumes, excitement over their favourite characters running along with them and, of course, the trading of sweets. Many kids were overjoyed as they excitedly yelled out the words "trick or treat" to others, many of whom,

I assumed, were heading to or back from the two-day "Halloween Albergue SCM", which celebrated its 10th edition this weekend and featured various activities.

I accompanied my goddaughter, who firmly chose to be a pumpkin this year, and as she joined a unique crew of skeletons, princesses, dinosaurs and vampires, among other creative trick-or-treaters, I was again able to see just how alive Halloween is in Macau.

I also saw that the day wasn't just about the celebration's typical horror or spooky aspects, nor was it only about youngsters receiving sweets and being able to dress up as different characters. Looking beyond all of that, there was a certain, undeniable warmth to be found as well.

Many families were out that night, smiling as they went around and spent time with their kids, many of whom carried a sense of excitement and happiness that neither a costume or mask could hide. There were instances when it wasn't the colourful outfit or creative trick-or-treat pail that stood out to me, but just the joy and warmth that several families exuded and shared as they were brought together. At the same time, I saw many parents actively encouraging their kids to go up to others to make friends and share sweets with them. It didn't matter who you were or if you spoke a different language. It was a day to be around people and, hopefully, make new friends. More importantly, it was a time to enjoy Halloween.



**Trick-or-treating is a traditional Halloween custom for children and adults in some countries. During the evening of Halloween, on October 31, people in costumes travel from house to house, asking for treats with the phrase "trick or treat". -Source: Wikipedia*

***Halloween, a Scottish word, is observed on the eve of All Hallows' Day, October 31, in many, mostly Anglophone countries.*



The local community celebrates Halloween at Calçada da Igreja de São Lázaro (瘋堂斜巷) and Praça do Tap Seac (塔石廣場) between Saturday and Sunday evening. - Photos: Rui Pastorin

Gongbei Customs seizes 6 endangered tortoises, 66 'vampire crabs'



These undated handout photos provided by the Gongbei Customs on Friday show the tiny vampire crabs in plastic mini-containers and endangered tortoises.

Ginnie Liang

Gongbei Customs said in a statement on Friday that its officers have recently intercepted separately three mainland women at Zhuhai's Gongbei checkpoint, as customs officers found they were carrying six live tortoises in the plastic carrier bags they were carrying when they entered Zhuhai from Macau through the "nothing to declare" channel.

According to the statement, customs officers intercepted two women skipping the baggage inspection when walking past the X-ray machine on September 30.

Customs officers found four tortoises in the first woman's luggage, which were hidden in socks inside black mesh bags in yellow plastic carrier bags, the statement said, adding that an hour later, customs officers discovered another woman who used the same method to smuggle two tortoises.

The six tortoises were confirmed to be yellow-margined box turtles (Cuora flavomarginata), also known as Chinese box tortoises, which are an endangered species, an ancient animal of the era of the dinosaurs,

because of which they are known as a "living fossil", the statement pointed out.

According to the statement, the tortoises are listed in Appendix II of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), and the Gongbei customs will transfer the tortoises to the Zhuhai agriculture authorities.

The statement did not reveal the purpose of smuggling the tortoises from Macau to the mainland.

90 live 'vampire crabs' seized from local man

Meanwhile, Gongbei Customs said in a separate statement on Friday that its officers recently intercepted a man from Macau at Zhuhai's Gongbei checkpoint, as they found he was carrying 66 live "vampire crabs" and four live snails in his hand luggage when entering Zhuhai through the "nothing to declare" channel.

The statement said the man appeared to be attempting to intentionally blend into the crowd at the checkpoint in an effort to evade customs inspection. Nevertheless,

customs officers intercepted him.

According to the statement, the 66 live crabs seized from him included seven kinds of vampire crabs, all wrapped in a white plastic bag containing a large number of transparent plastic tubs carrying one small live crab each inside.

The crabs have bright colours and are of different varieties, each with a body length of no more than three centimetres, the statement said.

According to Wikipedia, vampire crabs, scientifically known as geosesarma dennerle, are native to India, Southeast Asia and other regions. They are regarded as an alien species in China. The vampire crabs are popular in the aquarium trade, comprising 67 recognised species.

Gongbei Customs stressed that carrying or mailing alien species and their products to the mainland must be approved by the relevant administrative department in advance. Their owners must hold an import certificate and take the initiative to declare the animals to customs officers, as otherwise the border crossers face legal action by the judicial authorities. ■

Loan shark takes nude photos & videos of defaulting female borrower: police

Ginnie Liang

The Judiciary Police (PJ) arrested a mainlander on Thursday for his alleged involvement in a loan-sharking case who forced a defaulting female borrower to pose in the nude for photos and videos to blackmail her into paying up, PJ spokesman Leng Kam Lon said on Friday at a regular press conference.

According to Leng, the suspect is a 43-year-old man from the mainland surnamed Hu. He told the police that he is unemployed. Other suspects were still at large at the time of the press conference, Leng said.

In the early morning of August 4, the victim was introduced to the other suspects through Hu in a casino in Taipa, and she borrowed HK\$50,000 from them to gamble. The deal was that the borrower needed to pay HK\$5,000 first in "interest", and then 20 percent of the amount of the wager each time, regardless of whether she won or lost.

During the gambling period, Hu placed bets on behalf of the victim, and a number of accomplices took the interest, until about 4 a.m. on the same day, when the victim lost the loan and was unable to return it, after which she was taken to a flat in Nape to be held there against her will, and a total of HK\$10,000 in "interest" had been taken by the gang.

During her detention, the victim called her friends and relatives to raise money, and one of her friends learnt about the

incident and reported it to the police.

As the money was not forthcoming, one of the gang members forced the victim to pose for nude photos and videos, after which she was released at noon on August 5 after she had been falsely imprisoned for more than 32 hours. She was told to repay the loan as soon as possible to redeem the photos and videos.

Police officers identified Hu and intercepted him at the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macau Bridge (HKZMB) checkpoint on Thursday when he was trying to re-enter Macau.

Hu was transferred to the Public Prosecutions Office (MP) on Friday, facing charges of usury and false imprisonment, as well as the illegal recording of video or photographic footage, Leng noted, adding that the Judiciary Police, at the time of the press conference, were still looking for other gang members at large. ■



Judiciary Police (PJ) spokesman Leng Kam Lon looks on during Friday's regular press conference at the PJ headquarters in Zape.

Vietnamese NRW steals bike: police

Ginnie Liang

A Vietnamese man was arrested last Wednesday for stealing a bike in San Kio district, a Public Security Police (PSP) spokesperson said during a regular press conference on Friday.

The spokesperson said that the suspect is surnamed Nguyen, a non-resident worker (NRW), who told police that he is a machine operator in his thirties.

According to the spokesperson, police officers received a report from the owner of the bike saying that his bike, which the owner said was worth 3,200 patacas and parked on the pavement in San Kio district had vanished, despite being locked at that time, suspecting that his bicycle was stolen.

The spokesperson said that after watching the area's CCTV footage, the police identified the suspect and discovered that he was holding a large pair of scissors when he was walking long the pavement in San Kio district in the evening of last Sunday, before he cut the lock of the

bike and stole it.

On Wednesday, police officers found the lost bicycle in the carpark of an industrial building near the crime scene and arrested the suspect.

The suspect confessed that

he wanted to have a bicycle for transportation and therefore stole it.

The spokesperson said that the suspect faces a theft charge, and has been transferred to the Public Prosecutions Office (MP). ■



This undated handout photo provided by the Public Security Police (PSP) on Friday shows the Vietnamese theft suspect being escorted by PSP officers to a police station in Nam Van.

THE MACAU POST DAILY RECOMMENDS

Unchinho di PATUÁ
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Govt Headquarters Open Day attracts over 16,000 visitors



Chief Executive Ho Iat Seng (left) shakes hands with an Open Day visitor at Government Headquarters yesterday.

– Photo: GCS

Ginnie Liang

The two-day Government Headquarters Open Day event concluded at 6 p.m. yesterday, having attracted more than 16,000 visitors, according to a statement by the Government Headquarters Affairs Bureau (DSASG) yesterday.

Located on Avenida da Praia Grande, the headquarters is open to the public on two consecutive days each year. This year's open day was on Saturday and yesterday.

During the weekend's Open Day, visitors could explore the garden of the headquarters, as well as the interior of the building, including its Multi-purpose Room, Lotus Room on the ground floor as well as the Great Hall, Green Room, Yellow Room and Blue Room on the upper floor, complete with guided tours by DSASG officials.

The Open Day also included a flower show entitled "The 75th Anniversary of the founding of the People's Republic of China (PRC) and the 25th Anniversary of Macau's return to the motherland"

with carnations as the theme flower, as well as a series of music and dance performances by the Public Security Police Force Band and students from the Macau Conservatory.

Yesterday morning, on the second day of the event, Chief Executive Ho Iat Seng was also present at the headquarters to greet and talk to visitors, with members of the public and government officials taking photos with him.

Some residents told Ho that they were glad to participate in the Open Day activities and felt that it had enhanced their relationship with the government, adding that this year's flower show was not only bright and attractive, but also had a meaningful theme for the "double celebration", the statement said.

Meanwhile, some tourists said they deliberately chose to travel to Macau on the occasion of the Open Day and felt lucky to have visited the local government headquarters and made the trip worthwhile, the statement said. ■

China endeavors to promote peace with nature: eco-minister

Interview by Xinhua writers Zhao Kai, Wang Linyuan and Liao Siwei

CALI, Colombia – China has been vigorously promoting society-wide biodiversity conservation to achieve peace with nature, Chinese Minister of Ecology and Environment Huang Runqiu says.

"More people, especially teenagers, are engaging in biodiversity conservation, creating beautiful scenes of harmony between humanity and nature," Huang has said in a recent interview with Xinhua on the sidelines of the 16th meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the UN Convention on Biological Diversity (COP16), which began last Monday and ends on Friday in the Colombian city of Cali.

The theme this year is "Peace with Nature."

In recent years, China has taken the lead in establishing an ecological protection redline system, accounting for more than 30 percent of the country's total land area, Huang said. The results have been astounding, with 90 percent of China's terrestrial ecosystem types and 74 percent of key protected wild animal and plant species populations now effectively safeguarded.

Huang said China has implemented 52 protection and restoration projects covering mountains, rivers, forests, fields, lakes, grasslands and sand ecosystems. The total treatment area has reached 100 million mu (6.67 million hectares), and China's forest coverage rate has increased to over 24 percent.

By promoting the protection and restoration of marine ecosystems, the total area of mangroves has increased to 438,000 mu, making China one of the few countries with a net increase in mangrove coverage, the minister added.

Huang said the trend of biodiversity loss in China has been effectively contained. The wild population of more than 300 rare and endangered species, such as Asian elephants and snow leopards, is recovering and growing, and nearly 500 species of wild animals and plants, such as giant pandas, are becoming less threatened.

In January, China updated and released the National Biodiversity Conservation Strategy and Action Plan (2023-30) in line with the global goals of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, Huang said.

The Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework was adopted in December 2022 and consists of global targets to be achieved by 2030 to safeguard biodiversity and set the world on a path of recovery.

"China is the first developing country to complete the update of the biodiversity strategy and action plan after the adoption of the framework," Huang noted.

The updated action plan outlined the country's goals for biodiversity conservation by 2030 and 2035, highlighting priority areas and dozens of priority projects, and providing a "Chinese solution" to achieve the framework's goals. – Xinhua

Solar power drives greening of China's desert landscapes

Analysis

HOHHOT – On the edge of the Ulan Buh Desert in north China, rows of photovoltaic panels shine in the sun. Masses of plants can be seen growing beneath and between them in summer. This new "photovoltaic plus ecological governance" project is transforming the appearance of this arid landscape, adding vivid blues and greens to the yellow desert sand.

"The panels take in the sunlight, which helps reduce evaporation from the sand and foster a favorable environment for desert plants like saxaul trees. This helps mitigate the flow of wind and sand," said Zheng Qian, head of an ecological company implementing the project in Dengkou County, in the city of Bayannur, north China's Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region.

The height of the panels and space between them has also been increased to provide enough room for the plants to grow, Zheng said.

The project is expected to generate 1.65 billion kilowatt-hours of power annually once it is put into operation, with an annual output value of 467 million yuan. It will also cut carbon emissions by 1.72 million tonnes and save 672,700 tonnes of coal every year. The project, covering around 26,000 mu (1,733 hectares), has created over 4,000 jobs during the construction phase.

Dengkou had only about 50,000 trees in 1949, while 77 percent of its area was desert. Over the past several decades, a total of 2.1 million mu of land has been afforested.



This aerial drone photo taken yesterday shows the autumn scenery of the desert poplar (populus euphratica) forest in Ejina Banner of Alxa League of the Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region. – Xinhua

Inner Mongolia, the largest and most diverse ecological functional area in northern China, serves as the country's key line of defense against sandstorms.

In recent years, Inner Mongolia has advanced the integrated development of desertification prevention and new-energy development. Thanks to such efforts, a total of 2.3 million mu of desertified land is expected to be treated, and new-energy equipment with

a capacity of 27.27 million kilowatts will be installed this year.

In Shaya County, Aksu Prefecture of the Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region, a photovoltaic company has figured out a way to collect water with photovoltaic power, which will help clean the photovoltaic panels and nurture the desert plants.

Located on the northern edge of the Taklamakan Desert, the largest desert in

China, Shaya faces a challenge in developing the photovoltaic industry.

Installing panels in the desert requires the regular removal of dust, which can accumulate to several centimeters thick, said Wang Zhijun, head of the desertification control project of the photovoltaic company. The vegetation beneath the panels also needs water.

Researchers have found that the desert holds significant underground water resources. Although the water is highly saline, it can be used to irrigate desert and salt-tolerant plants.

The company decided to use photovoltaic power to pump water. A photovoltaic-powered pump well can irrigate 2,000 mu of land at a construction cost of 215,000 yuan. Compared with an electrical pump well irrigating the same land area, such a pump well is expected to save 133,000 yuan in the first year and 160,000 yuan annually from the second year.

Photovoltaic forestation primarily involves saxaul and red willow trees. Some companies are seeking to collaborate with photovoltaic companies to inoculate the roots of saxaul trees with *Cistanche deserticola*, a Chinese herbal medicine, for the production of health products and Chinese liquor.

In Aksu, plans for this year include piloting photovoltaic forestation with *Cistanche deserticola*, expanding *Cistanche deserticola* cultivation by 20,000 mu and establishing a seed production base.

With advancements in science and innovation, photovoltaic desertification control is emerging as a promising approach to managing desertification. – Xinhua