

# Xi to attend Macau SAR's 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary celebration, new govt inauguration

BEIJING – President Xi Jinping will be in Macau from Wednesday to Friday to attend a solemn gathering marking the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Macau's return to the motherland, Xinhua has reported.

Xi, also general secretary of the Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Committee and chairman of the Central Military Commission (CMC), will be present at the inauguration ceremony of the sixth-term government of

the Macau Special Administrative Region (MSAR).

The MSAR's new chief executive, Sam Hou Fai, other principal government officials and the city's public prosecutor general (chief public prosecutor) will be sworn in by Xi on Friday.

Xi will also carry out an inspection tour during his stay in the MSAR, Xinhua said.

According to Macau's public broadcaster

TDM, this will be Xi's sixth visit to Macau and his third as president of the People's Republic of China (PRC). According to TDM/Rádio Macau, prior to 2019, he visited Macau in 2001, 2005, 2009, and 2014. He visited Macau in 2009 in his capacity as vice-president and in 2014 as president.

Meanwhile, both outgoing Chief Executive Ho Iat Seng and his predecessor welcomed Xi's three-day working visit to Macau in

separate statements released by the Macau Government Information Bureau (GCS) on Saturday. Ho, whose five-year term ends at midnight on Thursday, said the visit was proof of the Central People's Government's strong support for Macau. Sam said Xi's visit was of "great significance" for the MSAR. Both underlined the fundamental importance of the "One Country, Two Systems" policy for Macau's future development. – Xinhua

## Over 80 pct of local youth willing to work in Hengqin: survey



This photo provided by the Chinese Youth Advancement Association (CYAA) on Saturday shows CYAA representatives posing at Friday's press conference to release the findings of its survey "Macau Youth's Willingness to Integrate into the Guangdong-Macau In-depth Cooperation Zone in Hengqin".

Ginnie Liang

More than 80 percent of young respondents have expressed their willingness or strong desire to work in the Guangdong-Macau In-depth Cooperation Zone in Hengqin, according to a survey released by the Chinese Youth Advancement Association (CYAA) on Friday.

The survey, entitled "Macau Youth's Willingness to Integrate into the Guangdong-Macau In-depth Cooperation Zone", was conducted among over 1,000 young people aged 15 to 45 via electronic questionnaires from August 14 to 23, with the aim of understanding Macau young people's awareness, willingness to participate, and specific needs regarding the zone.

Participants represented a diverse range of employment statuses, including students, job seekers, businesspeople, and those currently unemployed, according to CYAA.

According to the findings, when considering their potential move to Hengqin, respondents highlighted "policy support" (54

percent), "cost of living" (over 51 percent), and "future development prospects" (48 percent) as the most critical factors.

The results indicated that over 80 percent of the respondents expressed optimism about the GBA's potential, with nearly 88 percent of them showing a strong desire to explore new opportunities. Meanwhile, social media (nearly 70 percent) and online platforms (over 65 percent) were identified as the primary sources for young people to access information about policies regarding the zone.

Additionally, convenient cross-border transportation was seen as essential, with around 72 percent considering it a key factor to enhance their willingness to relocate, the findings show.

The survey also revealed a robust entrepreneurial spirit among young people, with an overall willingness to start businesses reaching nearly 78 percent. Among those already engaged in business operations, enthusiasm for Hengqin was particularly high. ■

## PJ nab 84 illegal money exchangers involving HK\$9.6 million

Ginnie Liang

Judiciary Police (PJ) Deputy Director Sou Sio Keong announced in a special press conference on Friday that a total of 84 people involved in illegal currency exchange were arrested between October 29 and November 30, with a total of HK\$9.6 million in cash and in gaming chips seized.

The Legislative Assembly (AL) passed a government-drafted bill in October 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.

According to Sou, the operation was jointly conducted with the Ministry of Public Security in Beijing, adding that among the arrested 84 suspects, nine were from Macau, one was from Hong Kong and 74 were from mainland, involving 60 illegal currency exchange cases.

Sou said that the joint operation with the Ministry of Public Security has seen a total of five initiatives aimed at combating currency

exchange networks operating in and on the fringes of Macau's casinos since May which have resulted in a significant decrease in illegal currency exchange cases, as well as a reduction in related fraud cases, signalling the effectiveness of the ongoing crackdown.

In addition, the Ministry of Public Security held a press conference in Beijing on Friday announcing that it has put 16 major cases involving illegal currency exchangers cases under its direct supervision since May, clamping down on 263 criminal gangs suspected of illegal business operation, organising border smuggling, fraud, illegal detention and other derivative crimes, and smashing more than 100 underground banks, with more than 80 billion yuan being seized.

A Ministry of Public Security official said on Friday that the situation facing the crackdown and remedial work remained relatively complicated, including the large number and wide distribution of illegal currency exchange gangs, and the high degree of furtiveness in the modus operandi of the criminals. ■



Judiciary Police (PJ) Deputy Director Sou Sio Keong (centre) and two senior PJ officers give a press conference on Friday at the PJ headquarters in Zape. – Photo: MPDG

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## Thriving Macau dispels doubts about 'One Country, Two Systems'

For centuries, the quiet city of Macau, nestled next to Hong Kong, has rarely captured as much attention as it does today. – Story on p. 8

## 25 years on, Macau prospers amid deeper integration into national development

In the Macau-Hengqin Youth Entrepreneurship Valley, a space where many young entrepreneurs from Macau chase their dreams, the aroma of coffee mingles with the smell of rain-kissed grass. – Story on p. 9

## A week after Assad's fall, UN urges justice, not revenge

A week after a lightning rebel offensive toppled longtime leader Bashar al-Assad, the United Nations special envoy for Syria yesterday called for justice to prevail, not revenge. – Story on p. 12



# Beyond all expectations



I have been asked by a raft of journalists, scholars and analysts over the past few weeks to summarise in just a few words my assessment of the first 25 years of the existence of the Macau Special Administrative Region (MSAR) – and my standard answer has been “beyond all expectations”.

And that’s, as someone who visited Macau for the first time in 1980, when it was still under Portuguese rule, covered the historic ceremony of December 19-20, 1999 that marked China’s resumption of exercising its sovereignty over the territory, and will cover this week’s 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary celebrations of the establishment of the MSAR and inspection tour by President Xi Jinping, what I sincerely believe, based on my personal experience in and knowledge of Macau over nearly half a century.

First of all, Macau’s phenomenal growth in its gross domestic product and per capita GDP has been beyond all expectations – not only mine but everyone I know – as no-one predicted, as far as I know, in late 1999 that Macau’s GDP would grow that much and its per capita GDP would figure among the highest in the world within just a few decades after its change from Portuguese to Chinese rule. But that’s what happened. It’s real!

GDP at current prices rose by almost 580 percent, according to figures available on the website of the Macau Statistics and Census Bureau (DSEC), from 54.369 billion patacas in 2000, i.e., the first full year of the existence of the MSAR, to 369,328 billion patacas last year. Per capita GDP grew from 126,271 patacas in 2000 to 544,530 patacas (US\$67,529; according to DSEC data) in 2023, up by 331 percent.

Some international consultancies and media outlets have forecast that Macau’s per capita GDP is set to reach the top of the per-capita GDP world ranking in no time, or even that it has reached it already, competing with Luxembourg and Singapore for the number-one position. As a realist, I prefer to wait for official figures such as those from the IMF to confirm

which economy takes gold.

Anyhow, having worked its way up to, for instance, the top five on the per capita GDP world ranking in just a quarter of a century is worth accolades.

But, of course, it’s not just Macau’s economy that has produced extraordinary results since 1999. It’s, the whole package. The SAR has also made considerable progress on the social welfare, public administration, public housing, education (from kindergarten to university level) and public health fronts, alongside an overall modernisation and, last but not least, digitalisation drive – such as virtually every resident’s Macao One Account that has made life much more convenient – and convenience is something that locals seem to appreciate more than everything else, apart from public security and political stability.

Public security has been a *fait accompli* since Macau’s return to the motherland. That’s not an exaggeration, it’s a plain fact. I guess that the sheer presence of a Chinese People’s Liberation Army (PLA) garrison here has scared the socks off the gangsters.

Alas, Macau was affected by gangland violence in the 1990s that threatened its image as a safe tourist destination and coincided with an economic downturn in the second half of the final decade of Portuguese rule. However, as someone who covered all this, I think it’s important to point out that Macau’s crime wave on the fringes of the gaming industry and a string of economic issues such as a huge housing glut at that time did not affect the city’s political transition period that formally began after the signing of the China-Portugal Joint Declaration on the Question of Macau in Beijing in April 1987 and gathered speed with the promulgation of the Basic Law of the MSAR of the People’s Republic of China (PRC) in March 1993. Compared with Hong Kong, Macau’s transfer from Portuguese to Chinese rule was markedly smooth.

Contrary to what I have been reading in the media over the past few decades, what occurred – with dignity – on December 19-20, 1999 was not that Portugal “handed over” its sovereignty over Macau to China but that the latter “resumed the exercise of sovereignty over Macau”

in order to establish the MSAR and in line with Article 2 (1) of the Joint Declaration, which at midnight on December 19, 1999 fulfilled its mission to tackle a question left over from history and, consequently, ceased to be an “active” document. Of course, it is an important historic arrangement signed by two states in their joint determination to solve a bilateral matter between them in a peaceful and dignified way. That’s what happened – and what counts now, on a daily basis, is the strictly adhere to the spirit and wording of the Basic Law.

I may add that Portugal made the right choice soon after its anti-colonialist Carnation Revolution of April 25, 1974 by unilaterally relinquishing all claims of sovereignty over its so-called “overseas provinces” and changing Macau’s status into a territory under Portuguese administration. The understanding was, when both sides signed an agreement in Paris in 1979 to establish diplomatic relations that Macau was a Chinese territory under temporary Portuguese administration. Reality in their bilateral relationship finally took the upper hand and, ultimately, smoothed the way for launching the Sino-Portuguese talks on Macau’s return to Chinese rule in 1986.

Annex I to the Sino-Portuguese Joint Declaration, amounts to an “elaboration” by the Chinese government of its “basic policies regarding Macau”. Article I of Annex I states that Macau’s future Basic Law, after the establishment of the MSAR, will ensure that “the socialist system and socialist policies shall not be practised and that [Macau’s] existing social and economic systems and way of life shall remain unchanged for 50 years”.

Article I is the legal foundation of the “One Country, Two Systems” formula, which is imminently political. Without “One Country, Two Systems”, which also applies to Hong Kong and, let’s hope, to Taiwan in the not-too-distant future, Macau’s politico-economic success over the past 25 years would, most probably, never have been achieved. “One Country, Two Systems” was a political masterstroke initiated in the early 1980s by the nation’s then paramount leader Deng Xiaoping, who, regrettably, was unable to witness Hong Kong’s return on July 1, 1997 from British to Chinese rule as he passed away on February 19, 1997, aged 92. I was covering the visit of Portugal’s president at that time, Jorge Sampaio, to Macau. I remember that he was visibly shaken by the sad news.

While the December 19-20, 1999 events – Macau’s most significant since it gradually became an entrepot for commercial and cultural exchanges after the mid-16<sup>th</sup> century – “only” happened a quarter of a century ago, I do feel, both as a long-time resident and journalist who “was there” covering them, that

they happened a “very long time” ago. I think the point is that since then so many things have happened here, mostly for the better, such as its phenomenal economic growth, modernisation drive, administrative reforms that resulted in a much more people-orientated approach than before 1999, the setting up of Forum Macao as a platform for economic, commercial and even cultural relations between China and Portuguese-speaking countries that has brought together 10 countries with a combined population of over 1.6 billion people, or one-fifth of the world’s population, the setting-up of the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macau Greater Bay Area (GBA) and the establishment of the Guangdong-Macau In-depth Cooperation Zone in Hengqin, as well as the government’s “talent acquisition” import scheme. Macau’s ongoing incorporation into the GBA, including the cooperation zone in Hengqin, entail both opportunities and challenges for Macau that, in my view, need time to be “digested” by the local residents.

In any case, Macau’s return to the motherland happened at the end of the last century when it was high time for the situation of Westerners ruling territories in what then was still known as the Third World to draw to a close. Incidentally, the United States returned control of the Panama Canal to Panama on December 31, 1999. Incredibly, there are, however, still quite a number of territories in what is now known as the Global South that continue to be ruled by Western countries.

And then there was the three-year impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on Macau, which affected all of us, both as individuals and as businesspeople. The three years weren’t a walk in the park but, in all fairness, outgoing Chief Executive Ho Iat Seng and his team deserve praise for having been able to keep the nasty virus largely at bay, as much as was humanly feasible, also because of the close cooperation between local and central government officials on the public health front.

Macau’s 25 years of progress, patriotism and prosperity (the three Ps – a catchy and meaningful front-page headline by the latest issue of *Macao* magazine) have benefited a great deal from the strong support by the central authorities, not only in Beijing but also their representatives in Macau – the Liaison Office and Foreign Ministry Commission, since 2012/2013 when Xi Jinping assumed the post of general secretary of the Communist Party of China (CPC) and the position of president and chairman of the Central Military Commission (CMC). In his capacity as head of state, Xi paid inspection visits to the MSAR in 2014 and 2019, and he is scheduled to arrive in Macau for his third such visit on Wednesday. During his stay he will also swear

in the next government under Chief Executive Sam Hou Fai, who in the past few weeks has repeatedly reaffirmed the significance of the “One Country, Two Systems” principle, national security and people-focused policies.

On the home front, Sam will have his work cut out for him. While there are no political issues at stake, and patriotism is an accomplished fact here, there are, nevertheless, quite a few bread-and-butter issues that need to be tackled in the next few years as they affect residents and even tourists, such as the traffic and public transport conundrum. I also think that social welfare for our senior citizens, most of whom have long and often hard working lives behind them, deserve better care, while small- and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), which form the bedrock of the local economy, in terms of employment numbers in particular, but are suffering from a range of challenges, such as the still lingering aftermath of the economic impact caused by the COVID-19 outbreak and rapidly changing consumption patterns by locals and visitors alike, will have to rely on the government’s special attention for years to come.

That’s why Macau’s new policy secretaries for Economy and Finance, Tai Kin Ip, and Transport and Public Works, Raymond Tam Vai Man, will have a lot on their plates, which doesn’t mean, evidently, that their three colleagues won’t have tough assignments ahead of them either, such as reducing surgery waiting times, further streamlining bureaucratic procedures and, equally important, ensuring that Macau’s public and national security arrangements will continue to be upgraded and the discipline of our police forces will be further strengthened.

Anyhow, I wish Sam and his team of principal officials and advisors the best of success.

On Friday, I expect Macau will enter another quarter-of-a-century period of growth, modernisation and GBA integration. I am convinced that many more such 25-year periods lie ahead of Macau, perhaps by merely amending Article 5 of the Basic Law, which in its current version states that “the socialist system and policies shall not be practised in the MSAR, and the previous capitalist system and way of life shall remain for 50 years,” or by altering Macau’s status, such as by becoming an autonomous region or special municipality. Any such change would have to be passed by the National People’s Congress (NPC). Well, I am sure that Macau will always be a “special” place in China – a history-laden fact that benefits not just our little city but also the great Chinese nation as a whole – one of the world’s giants in terms of population, size, economic and political clout, and arts and culture.

– Harald Brüning

## Published since Aug 2004

- Director & Chief Editor – Harald Brüning
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- Printed by Tipografia Welfare Lda., 82-86 Rua dos Pescadores
- Wire services – AFP, Xinhua



## Macau Weather

**COLD AND VERY DRY.  
CLOUDY, BECOMING FINE.  
FORCE 3 TO 4 NORTH TO  
NORTHEASTERLY WINDS.  
RELATIVE HUMIDITY WILL  
RANGE BETWEEN 30% AND 60%.**



**12°C~19°C**

Source: SMG



## Christmas Charity Bazaar at Grand Coloane Resort wraps up

Rui Pastorin

The annual Christmas Charity Bazaar - "Island's Gift of Giving" took place yesterday on the Grand Coloane Resort's Outdoor Lawn, with this year's event having attracted around 30 vendors and over 500 attendees, according to a statement from the resort last night.

The vendors of the one-day event, hosted by the resort in partnership with the International Ladies' Club of Macau (ILCM), also included those invited from other cities in the Greater Bay Area (GBA), the statement said, while activities including games, work-

shops and performances, were held throughout the day. The proceeds, meanwhile, directly went to the ILCM Charity Fund, benefiting around 20 charities across Macau, according to the statement.

The statement did not reveal the amount of the proceeds.

The statement quoted Grand Coloane Resort General Manager Christian Buggelsheim as saying: "Today isn't just about soaking up the beauty of this special place - it's about coming together for a bigger purpose: spreading goodwill and supporting those in need. Back in 2011, we dreamt up

the idea of a charity bazaar that would not only kick off the festive season in style, but also give back to our community. And here we are today, carrying on this heartfelt tradition with another exciting year of generosity, togetherness, and festive cheer."

ILCM President Jolene Zhao do Amaral was quoted as saying: "The real gift of giving isn't about the things we give, but the happiness it brings to both the giver and the receiver. When we share what we have, we spread kindness that can make a difference to people's lives." ■



This handout photo taken and provided by Grand Coloane Resort yesterday shows children posing with Santa Clause and mascots during yesterday's Christmas Charity Bazaar - "Island's Gift of Giving".

## Liaison Office gets new deputy director, Yunnan's former top judge



Undated file photo of Zhang Yingjie, a newly appointed deputy director of the Liaison Office of the Central People's Government in the MSAR - Photo courtesy of Liaison Office

Tony Wong

The State Council in Beijing has appointed Zhang Yingjie, the former president of the Yunnan High People's Court, as a deputy director of the Liaison Office of the Central People's Government in the Macao Special Administrative Region (MSAR), the Liaison Office has announced in a statement.

The Liaison Office in the MSAR has four deputy directors in its organisational structure.

After Zhang's appointment to his new post on Friday, the Liaison Office in the MSAR now has three serving deputy directors, i.e., one of the four deputy director positions

is still left vacant. The other two currently serving deputy directors of the Liaison Office are Huang Liuquan and Lyu Yuyin.

The Liaison Office in the MSAR has been headed by Zheng Xincong since May 2022. Zheng is the highest-ranking official of the Central People's Government posted to the MSAR.

According to Friday's statement, Zhang, born in 1968 in Fujian Province, holds a master's degree in Legal Studies.

Zhang became Yunnan's top judge in January last year. Previously, Zhang headed Shenzhen's Intermediate People's Court. ■

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Acknowledgments: Fundação Oriente, Associação dos Proprietários do Teatro Dom Pedro V



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21-22.12  
24-25.12  
20:00

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Vocalist  
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# Art on the streets: discover this year's !OUTLOUD festival



Macau: AAFK



Hong Kong: Apple 果



Japan: Cook

Interview and review by Ginnie Liang

The sixth edition of !OUTLOUD - International Street Art Festival took place last week, showcasing vibrant street art that will remain on display until next year, inviting everyone to appreciate the ever-changing walls.

### Macau: AAFK

AAFK created a striking mural featuring a stone lion on the left, while they cooperated with a Singaporean artist who drew a monkey character. Their artwork combines elegant lines with bold textures in a vivid red and blue palette, highlighting their imaginative take on animal forms.

### Hong Kong: Apple 果

This Hong Kong artist describes her work as spontaneous, exploring her identity through art. Known for her totemic style and body painting, she embraces the freedom to paint whatever comes to mind.

### Japan: Cook

Cook's mural reflects his vision of Macau, featuring a shimmering golden sphere that symbolises the city's vibrancy. This was the first time he has taken part in the festival, and he expressed his happiness at being part of it.

### South Korea: Junkhouse

Junkhouse brought a beautiful colour palette to their mural. They initially found it challenging to paint from high up on the wall but were impressed by the local artists' teamwork and support, which fostered a strong sense of community.

### Denmark: Storm

Storm's traditional graffiti focuses on lettering, complemented by a humorous bird cartoon that adds balance to his piece. He appreciates the freedom to express subculture through art in Macau,

highlighting the importance of festivals like this.

### Taiwan region: 頌君

Her work, titled “逃不掉也找不到 (you can't escape and you can't be found)”, explores the struggle in pursuing a goal. It illustrates the disparity between expectations and reality, featuring characters in various states of hope and escape.

The annual !OUTLOUD festival not only showcases diverse artistic expressions but also fosters a sense of community among artists from around the world, celebrating the dynamic spirit of street art in Macau.



South Korea: Junkhouse



Denmark: Storm



Taiwan: 頌君

All Photos: Ginnie Liang



# Wynn inaugurates Qi Baishi exhibition



President of the Beijing Fine Art Academy Wu Hongliang (second right) and President and Vice Chairman of the Board of Wynn Macau, Limited Linda Chen Chih-ling (second left) pose with other guests while holding up four Qi Baishi prints.



A children's dance performance entitled "The Escaping Drop of Ink" takes place at Illuminarium at Wynn Palace in Cotai after yesterday's inauguration.

— Photos: Rui Pastorin

Rui Pastorin

The "Lotus Blossoms in Pairs, Plum Blossoms in Clusters – the Artistic World of Qi Baishi" exhibition was inaugurated yesterday at Wynn Palace.

Presented until February 15 and showcased at the integrated resort's "Illuminarium" across two sections, the free-admission exhibition features the digitalised artworks of Xiangtan-born influential mainland Chinese artist Qi Baishi (1864-1957), along with 25 of his selected works and paintings, as well as several lotus-themed works.

Qi, according to Wikipedia, is noted for the whimsical, often playful style of his works.

In a speech yesterday, Beijing Fine Art Academy President Wu Hongliang was quoted as saying that the 25 painting and calligraphy works symbolise the 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Macau's return to the motherland, while the several lotus-themed artworks also reflect "the beauty of Xiangtan, Hunan—Qi Baishi's hometown, also known as the 'City of Lotus'—and symbolising the deep connection between Macau, the 'Island of Lotus', and Xiangtan".

President and Vice Chairman of the Board of Wynn Macau, Limited Linda Chen Chih-ling said: "Through the combination of digital media technology and traditional aesthetics, this exhibition realises the perfect integration of Qi Baishi's art of

calligraphy and paintings with Macau as a Culture City of East Asia, allowing viewers, especially young people, to immerse themselves in the artistic world of Qi Baishi and motivating us to be dedicated to the promotion of Chinese culture in the world".

Moreover, Federation of Associations of Cultural Sectors of Macau President Wu Zhiliang added: "This exhibition not only promotes Chinese culture but also incorporates modern technology to offer visitors a fresh perspective of Qi Baishi's art, demonstrating the in-depth integration between art and technology".

Yesterday's event also saw Beijing Fine Art Academy and Wynn jointly release four Qi Baishi prints to commemorate the artist's 160<sup>th</sup> birthday, while a cooperative

agreement on the founding of the Qi Baishi's Art International Research Centre (Macao) was also signed. The centre, according to a Wynn Resorts statement provided yesterday, aims to connect Macau, Beijing and artists from all disciplines through Qi's art.

Deputy Director of the Central Government's Liaison Office in the Macao Special Administrative Region (MSAR) Huang Liuquan; Legislative Assembly President Kou Hoi In; and Counsellor and Director of the Department of Information and Public Diplomacy of the Office of the Commissioner of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China in the MSAR Gao Yuan were also among the guests attending yesterday's opening ceremony. ■



Qi's art is showcased at Illuminarium at Wynn Palace.

## Filipino trio busted for drug trafficking: police

Ginnie Liang

Three non-resident workers (NRWs) from the Philippines, aged 35, 38 and 44, were arrested on Wednesday for their involvement in drug trafficking in Macau, a Judiciary Police (PJ) spokesperson said during a special press conference on Friday.

According to the spokesperson, having received intelligence that a Filipino trio were involved in drug trafficking in Macau's San Kio district, the Judiciary Police launched a follow-up investigation, which identified Paslua, 35, a janitor, and Campaner, 38, a general service attendant, as well as Escalan, 44, also a general service attendant, so PJ officers put them under surveillance.

The spokesperson pointed out that the officers arrested one of the trio on Wednesday near San Kio district and seized a small package of crystal methamphetamine and drug taking paraphernalia in his flat.

Later the same day, PJ officers

intercepted the second suspect for trafficking in drugs, and found a number of packets of crystal methamphetamine, as well as drug taking paraphernalia in his flat.

In the evening of the same day, PJ officers intercepted the third drug trafficking suspect, the spokesperson said, adding that he tried to run but was intercepted by the officers.

The Judiciary Police believe that the trio had been selling drugs in Macau for about a month, the spokesperson said, adding that PJ officers seized 8 grams of crystal methamphetamine, with a total street value of about 20,000 patacas.

The spokesperson pointed out that the trio tested positive for drugs.

The trio were transferred to the Public Prosecutions Office (MP) yesterday, facing charges of drug trafficking and drug abuse, the spokesperson said.

The Judiciary Police are continuing their investigation, according to the spokesperson. ■



The three hooded drug suspects from the Philippines are escorted by Judiciary Police (PJ) officers from the PJ headquarters to a PJ vehicle on Friday. — Photo: MPDG

澳門特別行政區政府消費者委員會  
Conselho de Consumidores do Governo da RAEM  
Macao SAR Government Consumer Council

THE CONSUMER COUNCIL RECOMMENDS  
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<b>CINCO DE OUTUBRO PASTELARIA</b> Rua de Cinco de Outubro no.117, r/c, Macau	<b>FARMACIA POPULAR (FONTE)</b> Largo do Senado no. 16-A, Macau
<b>COMPANHIA DE JOALHARIA EMPHASIS LIMITADA</b> Estrada da Baía de Nossa Senhora da Esperança, Galaxy Macau, loja G16, r/c, Taipa Macau	<b>FARMACIA POPULAR (TRI-LIGHT)</b> Rua de Fernão Mendes Pinto no.19-C edf. Jardim Ka Loc, r/c-C e D, Macau
<b>COMPANHIA TONG REN TANG DE BEIJING (MACAU) LIMITADA</b> Avenida Almeida Ribeiro, no.515 r/c e 1-2 Andar, Macau	<b>JOALHARIA FU VA</b> Avenida de Horta e Costa no. 83-B edf.Weng On, r/c, Macau
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	<b>PASTELARIA YENG KEE</b> Rotunda do Dique Oeste Hotel Broadway loja E-G034A, Taipa Macau
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# Sam appoints 6 new ExCo members, keeps 5

**Tony Wong**

Chief Executive-designate Sam Hou Fai, who will take office on Friday, has appointed the members of his top advisory Executive Council (ExCo), comprising five re-appointees and six newcomers.

The Macau Government Information Bureau (GCS) announced the list of the 11 ExCo members of the incoming sixth-term government of the Macau Special Administrative Region (MSAR) in a statement on Friday, when the bureau also published a separate statement about their respective CVs.

Sam, 62, will become the MSAR's sixth-term and fourth chief executive on December 20, the 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Macau's return to the motherland.

Sam, his nine principal officials, and chief public prosecutor will be sworn in by President Xi Jinping on Friday. Xi will pay a three-day visit to Macau starting on Wednesday.

The 11 ExCo members of the incoming government will be sworn in by Sam on Friday this week.

The five reappointed ExCo members are André Cheong Weng Chon, the current government's secretary for administration and justice who has been reappointed to Sam's incoming administration, as well as lawyer and former legislator Leonel Alberto Alves, lawmaker-cum-restaurateur Andrew Chan Chak Mo, businessman Frederico Ma Chi Ngai, and educator John Chan Ka Leong.

According to Article 50 (8) of the MSAR Basic Law, it is the chief executive who appoints or removes ExCo members. Article 56 states that the council "shall be an organ for assisting the chief executive in policymaking", while Article 57 states that the councillors shall be Chinese citizens who are permanent residents of the MSAR.

According to Article 57 of the MSAR Basic Law, the council shall be composed of 7 to 11 members, who are chosen by the chief executive from among the government's principal officials, lawmakers and community representatives.



**André Cheong Weng Chon**  
(reappointed), 58



**Leonel Alberto Alves**  
(reappointed), 67



**Andrew Chan Chak Mo**  
(reappointed), 73



**Frederico Ma Chi Ngai**  
(reappointed), 51



**John Chan Ka Leong**  
(reappointed), 47



**Ip Sio Kai, 64**



**Lao Ngai Leong, 67**



**Leong Wai Fong, 48**



**Becky Song Pek Kei, 39**



**Samuel Tong Kai Chung, 59**



**U Seng Pan, 54**

The up to 11 members of the Executive Council do not include the chief executive.

According to Article 58 of the MSAR Basic Law, the council shall be presided over by the chief executive, while it shall hold at least one meeting a month.

According to Article 58, the chief executive shall consult the Executive Council before making important policy decisions, submitting bills to the Legislative Assembly (AL), drawing up administrative regulations, or dissolving the Legislative Assembly, except for the appointment, removal and disciplining of officials and the adoption of measures in emergencies.

The current-term Executive Council, chaired by outgoing Chief Executive Ho Iat Seng, also comprises 11 members.

According to Friday's GCS announcements, the six newcomers to the Executive Council are 1) lawmaker-cum-banker Ip Sio Kai, 2) Lao Ngai Leong, a veteran community leader of the city's returned overseas Chinese community, 3) Leong Wai Fong, a vice-chairman of the Macau Federation of Trade Unions (commonly known as Gung Luen), 4)

legislator Becky Song Pek Kei, also a community leader of the city's sizeable Fujianese community, 5) economist Samuel Tong Kai Chung, 6) U Seng Pan, a well-known microelectronics entrepreneur and expert.

Song will be the only female in the incoming-term Executive Council, while its current 11 members are all males.

Song, 39, is also the youngest among the 11 ExCo members of the incoming government.

Ip Sio Kai, 64, a vice-president of the Bank of China (BOC) Macau Branch, headed Sam's election campaign office when Sam was running in the chief executive election earlier this year. Ip has been an indirectly-elected lawmaker representing the city's business sector since 2017.

Ip, born in Macau, is understood to be succeeding Chao Weng Hou on the council. Chao became an ExCo member in December 2019 when he worked in the BOC Macau Branch.

Lao Ngai Leong, 67, a descendant of overseas Chinese in Indonesia, is a veteran National People's Congress (NPC) deputy from Macau.

Lao, born in Guangzhou, is the permanent chairman of the Macau Association of Returned Overseas Chinese. He is known to be familiar with matters, measures and policies concerning the operations of mainland-Macau border checkpoints.

Leong Wai Fong, 48, born in Macau, is a social worker by profession. Leong is understood to be succeeding Jimmy Lee Chong Cheng, who became an ExCo member in December 2019 when he was a Gung Luen vice-president. Lee, a former lawmaker, is Gung Luen's current president.

Becky Song Pek Kei, 39, has been a directly-elected lawmaker since 2013. Song, born in Macau, is understood to be succeeding Zhang Zongzhen, who became an ExCo member in December 2019. Zhang is a businessman and community leader of the city's sizeable Fujianese community.

Samuel Tong Kai Chung, 59, is the president of the Macau Institute of Management (MIM), one of the city's higher education institutions. Tong, born in Hong Kong, holds a doctoral degree in Economics from the Chinese Academy of Social

Sciences in Beijing.

Tong is understood to be succeeding Ieong Tou Hong, who became an ExCo member in December 2019. Ieong is also an economist.

U Seng Pan, 54, holds a doctoral degree in Electronics Engineering from the University of Macau (UM). U, born in Shanghai, currently heads a number of microelectronics tech companies. He is one of the co-founders of the State Key Laboratory of Analog and Mixed-Signal VLSI Very-large-scale integration run by the University of Macau.

The other ExCo members who have not been reappointed are Peter Lam Kam Seng and Iau Teng Pio.

Lam heads the government-fully-owned Macau Urban Renewal Limited (MUR), while Iau is an associate professor of the University of Macau's Faculty of Law. Iau is a former legislator.

In the first-term MSAR government, all five policy secretaries were appointed as members of the Executive Council. Since the second-term government, only the secretary for administration and justice has been appointed to the council. ■

## 'Macau 2049' premieres at MGM Theatre

**Rui Pastorin**

"Macau 2049" had its premiere last night at MGM COTAI, during which the mechanical flipping matrix kinetic art installation "The Dancing Lion: Rise of Good Fortune" was also unveiled.

The 80-minute show, directed by leading Chinese filmmaker Zhang Yimou and marking the MGM Theatre's first residency, features chapters that use advanced technologies from 20 countries and regions to reimagine eight forms of Chinese intangible cultural heritages, with the chapters being: "Drumming-Shadows", "Khoomei-Ethereal", "Miao Songs-Transcendent", "The Crossroads Inn-Masks", "Yange-Robots", "Yi Song-Ocean", "Lion Dance-Radiance" and "Storytelling-Origin". It is also presented with subtitles in eight international languages.

On the show, Chief Director Zhang Yimou was quoted in a statement provided at yesterday's packed premiere as saying: "If we view the progression of civilisation through a linear lens, one end represents the 5,000 years of ancient civilisation, while the other signifies a future driven by rapid technological advancement. Macau 2049 brings together the two ends of time and space at this moment, converging horizons of East and West in this place. We seek harmony without uniformity, thus celebrating the diversity of civilisations around the world."

Chairperson and Executive Director of MGM China Holdings Limited Pansy Ho Chiu-king said: "Macau is a melting pot of Chinese and Western cultures, and we hope to truly integrate both cultures into the show. Macau 2049 opens up new

pathways for preserving, innovating, and promoting intangible cultural heritage in modern society. The show enables audiences to appreciate the charm of traditional culture and infinite possibilities of advanced technology. It also acts as a catalyst for the growth and development of the performing arts industry in Macau".

Meanwhile, the installation, the prototype of which came from the show's "Lion Dance-Radiance" chapter, comprises 3,988 gold bricks and features both ancient and modern influences, while using advanced technology for its mechanical flipping and dynamic graphic displays, according to the statement.

Tickets are priced between 288 patacas and 888 patacas, with more details available on <https://www.mgm.mo/en/cotai/entertainment/Macau2049>. ■



**Macau 2049 Chief Director Zhang Yimou (left) poses with Chairperson and Executive Director of MGM China Holdings Limited Pansy Ho Chiu-king after unveiling the matrix kinetic art installation "The Dancing Lion: Rise of Good Fortune" at MGM COTAI's Lion Lobby.**  
— Photo: Rui Pastorin



# Airbus Helicopters: leveraging advantages of Hengqin-Macau and GBA to enhance strategic value of low-altitude economy

**Liu Qian, Hu Nan, Zeng Xiangxing**  
"Macao's proximity to the Guangdong-Macau In-depth Cooperation Zone in Hengqin, along with its connectivity to Greater Bay Area cities (the new headquarters of Airbus Helicopters China), can enhance the strategic values of the low-altitude economy and the general aviation market," said Colin James, managing director of Airbus Helicopters China, in a recent interview with GDToday.

Last month, Airbus Helicopters China held an opening ceremony for its new headquarters in the zone, marking it as the first regional headquarters of a multinational Fortune 500 company to land in the region. James said he believes it is a region that significantly emphasises business cooperation, offering many advantages to foreign enterprises engaged in business in China. Therefore, they look forward to developing the zone's economy and the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macau Greater Bay Area (GBA), where Chinese and Western companies come together.

This year marks the 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Macau's return to the motherland and the 3<sup>rd</sup> Anniversary of the establishment of this Guangdong-Macau In-depth Cooperation Zone in Hengqin. The zone was established in September 2021, aiming to serve as a new platform to boost Macau's appropriate economic diversification, a new space that provides convenience to Macau



residents' life and employment, a new model to enrich the practice of "One Country, Two Systems", as well as a new high ground for building the GBA. Over the past three years, the zone has continuously improved its cooperation mechanism with Macau, strengthened policy communication, rule convergence, and mechanism docking, promoting the further formation of an integrated development pattern between Hengqin and Macau.

## Favourable business environment & preferential policies in Hengqin

Airbus provided its first aircraft to China in 1967, and its team is

currently present in Harbin, Beijing, Shanghai, Chengdu, Shenzhen, and Hong Kong. With the implementation of China's policy to develop the low-altitude economy, the general aviation sector in China holds tremendous potential for development in the next 20 to 30 years. The continuous introduction of new policies related to the low-altitude economy in the GBA signifies a considerable market size and abundant opportunities in the region.

James said they have finally placed the "heart" of Airbus Helicopters China at the In-depth Cooperation Zone, hoping to work hand in hand with other Chinese and foreign companies to jointly boost

the zone's economic development and even the GBA. Moreover, the zone focuses on commercial development, and the preferential policies for corporate and individual income tax benefit both enterprises and employees, providing a secure business environment for enterprises and making it highly advantageous to conduct trade there.

James said he believes that the establishment of the Airbus Helicopters headquarters in Hengqin fully demonstrates Airbus Helicopters' commitment to promoting the development of the helicopter industry in China and also marks a new phase in cooperation between Airbus Helicopters and Guangdong Province, as well as the GBA.

Confident in the development of China's low-altitude economy

James revealed that demand for Airbus helicopters in the Chinese market has maintained robust growth. The current market demand is approximately 300 percent of the 2022 level, indicating a strong recovery in the Chinese market. "I believe that this is partly due to the low-altitude economy and the market's expectations for the development of general aviation," he said.

Airbus is confident in the development of the low-altitude economy. James said he believes that with the continuous development of technology, regulation, and the market and the gradual increase in market acceptance of such transportation solutions, the low-altitude economy will continue to evolve in the coming decades, and the helicopter market will also exhibit tremendous growth potential.

Currently, helicopters are less widely used in China than in Europe or the United States for public services, passenger transportation, search and rescue, disaster relief, emergency medical services, maritime transportation, and public safety. "Therefore, we need to cooperate with the helicopter industry to explore the market and develop infrastructure, and we have tenfold growth potential in China," James added.

*GDToday, The Macau Post Daily*

## Art exhibition held aboard Tiangong space station, and in Beijing, Macau

BEIJING – An art exhibition featuring the works of Chinese teenagers was simultaneously on Saturday about China's orbiting Tiangong ("Sky Palace") space station, as well as in Beijing and Macau.

This exhibition, themed "I love my motherland," is the fourth of its kind to be held aboard the Tiangong space station, while it is the first time that such an event takes place simultaneously in space and on Earth.

This year's exhibition features 75 artworks that were sent to the Chinese space station in mid-November. The paintings were selected from over 20,000 submitted by teenagers across China.

The Shenzhou-19 crew aboard Tiangong space station showcased these works while sending video greetings back to Earth.

Art shows, parts of the event, have also been held today at an exhibition hall in the Palace Museum in Beijing

and at the Macau Science Center in Nape.

The exhibition coincides with the 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Macau's return to the motherland. The Shenzhou-19 crew has wished the motherland prosperity and peace, and Macau a better future.

An aerospace education program organized by the Palace Museum, the China Space Foundation and other institutions has been launched today at the same site of the art show in the Palace Museum. The two events will remain open to the public until January 5.

The Macau Administrative Region (MSAR) celebrates the 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of its establishment on Friday. President Xi Jinping will visit between Wednesday and Friday.

The MSAR's sixth-term government's chief executive, Sam Hou Fai, and other principal officials and the chief public prosecutor will be sworn in on Friday.

– Xinhua, MPD

## Moving beyond gambling: Macau bets on diversified future

*Commentary by Guan Xin\**

When Macau comes to mind, most conjure images of lavish casinos and glittering gaming halls.

For decades, this perception has been well-earned. Gambling has been the lifeblood of Macau's economy, with the industry contributing a remarkable 65.8 percent of GDP in 2019 and over 80 percent of government revenue. More than one in five workers were directly employed in this sector.

In 2019, Macau's per capita GDP ranked seventh globally, surpassing wealthy regions like Switzerland and Singapore. But every jackpot has its risks. The COVID-19 pandemic exposed Macau's over-dependence on a single industry, sending its GDP per capita plummeting and tumbling the city down to 33<sup>rd</sup> in global rankings in 2020. The pandemic was not just a health crisis but a wake-up call.

Macau responded swiftly. The government rolled out its "1+4" strategy, a blueprint to broaden the city's economic horizons. The "1" represents Macau's core strength – its integrated tourism and leisure sector. The "4" stands for four emerging industries: Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) and the health sector, modern financial services,



*Undated file photo of Guan Xin, chief business news editor of CGTN.*

– Photo courtesy of CGTN

high-tech industries, and cultural, sports, and convention services.

The results are promising. Non-gaming sectors are growing robustly, accounting for 61.7 percent of the total economic value-added with an impressive real annual growth of 20.7 percent in 2023. Gaming revenues, while recovering to about 75 percent of their pre-pandemic 2019 levels in 2023, now make up less than 40 percent of Macau's GDP. These shifts signal a pivot towards a more resilient and diversified economic model.

But let's not underestimate the challenges –transforming an

economy is a daunting task for any city, let alone a compact territory of just 33 square kilometres – smaller than Shanghai's Pudong International Airport. Cultivating even one robust pillar industry within such a space is a feat; fostering multiple industries is nothing short of ambitious.

Macau's secret weapon? The dual engines of innovation and market. This concept refers to two complementary forces working together to drive economic growth. Innovation fuels the creation of emerging industries, while market forces ensure these innovations are scalable, aligning with actual consumer and business needs. In Macau's case, innovation drives the growth of high-tech industries, while market integration – supported by the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macau Greater Bay Area (GBA) and the Hengqin cooperation zone – enables these industries to scale by tapping into a vast consumer base of over 1 billion people and also accessing cutting-edge manufacturing and innovation hubs. These connections are critical in transforming Macau into a sustainable and globally competitive economy.

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# Thriving Macau dispels doubts about 'One Country, Two Systems'

*Analysis by Xinhua writers Wang Aihua and Xu Lingui*

For centuries, the quiet city of Macau, nestled next to Hong Kong, has rarely captured as much attention as it does today.

In less than a week, this wealthy and culturally vibrant Chinese territory will celebrate the 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of its return to the motherland, which ended centuries of Portuguese occupation.

Since 1999, Macau has been governed under the "One Country, Two Systems" policy – a unique arrangement that allows it to maintain its capitalist system and way of life within socialist China.

The concept was first proposed by late Chinese leader Deng Xiaoping in the 1980s to reunify the country, initially with Taiwan in mind. It was later implemented in China's two special administrative regions (SARs) of Hong Kong and Macau following their handovers from their colonial powers in the late 1990s.

Despite early skepticism, Macau has disappointed naysayers, emerging as a model of the policy's success.

Once known as a "casino city" and a frequent backdrop for gangster films, it has transformed into a bustling hub, celebrated for its economic vitality, low crime rates, and exceptional public welfare. This year, Forbes magazine ranked Macau the second-richest place on Earth, trailing only Luxembourg.

Luo Weijian, a law professor at the University of Macau (UM), attributes the city's success to its strong relationship with the central authorities in Beijing, efficient political system, rapid economic growth, significant improvements in living standards, and the harmonious coexistence of diverse ethnic groups.

## PATRIOTISM AND DEMOCRACY

According to Luo and other observers, Macau has developed a strong relationship with the central authorities and has benefited extensively from the vast resources and strategic opportunities provided under the "one country" framework.

"Over the past 25 years, the country has regarded Macau as a jewel in its palm, always serving as the strongest backing for Macau's prosperity and stability, and consistently providing the greatest opportunities for its development," said Macau SAR Chief Executive Ho Iat Seng.

Support can take the form of essential resources, such as a steady supply of freshwater, or something Macau, with a size merely over 20 square kilometers at the time of its return to the motherland, needs most for development – space.

The central government approved Macau's land reclamation plans and granted it administration over 85 square kilometers of surrounding waters. In 2021, an in-depth cooperation zone was

established to deepen collaboration between Macau and Guangdong Province. The zone, on the island of Hengqin, spans more than three times the land area of Macau.

Ieong Tou Hong, a member of the Executive Council for the fifth-term government of the Macau SAR, said the drastic changes in Macau's coastline and skyline are a vivid embodiment of the central government's staunch support.

On the other hand, Macau has faithfully upheld the central government's overall jurisdiction, safeguarding the very foundation of "One Country."

It completed legislation on safeguarding national security in as early as 2009. Putting in place a new principle required by the central authorities that only patriots were allowed to stand as candidates, it successfully held the election of the 7th Legislative Assembly in 2021. The chief executive election two months ago offered yet another example.

Kou Hoi In, president of the Legislative Assembly, recalled an almost unanimous agreement among legislators regarding the national security law. "While differing opinions may exist on certain livelihood issues, there is a consensus that the prosperity of the country comes first," Kou said.

Observers said Macau has built an efficient political system over the years, where the chief executive plays the leading role while the administrative, legislative and judiciary powers operate as mutual checks and balances, yet in a cooperative way.

The legislature, for example, is by no means a "rubber stamp" as unfairly portrayed by some in the West. The majority of legislators win their seats through competitive elections. People who observed the elections said they are no less lively than those in Western countries – campaigns feature parading vehicles with loudspeakers, and polling stations witness long queues starting from early mornings.

During questioning sessions, legislators may confront the chief executive directly or submit their inquiries in writing, to which the government is obliged to respond. Face-to-face questioning sessions are streamed live by local media.

"The practice of 'One Country, Two Systems' in Macau is based on the city's own situation, which is different from Hong Kong, let alone the West, either in economic or in political terms," said Luo, the university professor.

## GROWTH OF ECONOMY AND PUBLIC APPROVAL

Chinese political philosophy has long highlighted the importance of public approval. Lin Guangzhi, a local cultural researcher, said "Macau did it."

He said attaining a high level of public satisfaction has been a



**Tourists visit Macau's main square, Largo do Senado ("Senate Square"), on Saturday. The Historic Center of Macau, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, bears witness to one of the earliest and longest-lasting encounters between China and the West. The Historic Center is dotted with World Heritage-listed buildings and sites, from the A-Ma Temple dedicated to the sea-goddess Mazu, to the Mandarin's House – the former residence of a prominent Chinese historical figure, and the landmark Ruins of St. Paul's, once among the largest Catholic churches in the Far East.** – Xinhua

key factor in Macau's smooth governance.

Lin noted that before 1999, the people of Macau loathed Portuguese colonial rule marked by bureaucracy, economic stagnation, and poor public safety.

Under the "One Country, Two Systems" policy, Macau has secured strong support from its motherland, China, and the right to govern by the people of Macau themselves. Both are key to addressing Macau's ills of the past.

But the success recipe under the policy is more than what the "One Country" can offer. Macau has leveraged the advantages of the "Two Systems," retaining the benefits of its capitalist system, including a more open economic model and thriving entertainment and leisure industries, particularly the gaming sector.

It is in striking comparison to the situation on the mainland where the Criminal Law punishes whoever gathers people to engage in gambling, runs a gambling house or makes gambling his profession for the purpose of profit.

Over the past quarter-century, the "One Country, Two Systems" policy has driven Macau's rapid economic growth. Compared with 1999, its per capita GDP more than quadrupled to around US\$70,000 in 2023. That took place generally in parallel with the mainland's economic take-off, but on a different path.

And the economic boom has trickled down to benefit the majority of the local population. The government has spent generously to improve accessibility and affordability of high-quality housing, healthcare and education. It is a much safer place as well, with violent crimes such as kidnapping, murder, and aggravated assault being either non-existent or extremely rare.

Zhang Jie, who moved to Macau from the mainland six years ago, said she feels confident enough to let her six-year-old daughter walk to school by herself. "Macau is extremely safe."

With concerns about maintaining their capitalist lifestyles and interests dispelled, Macau is now a kaleidoscopic city, with both opulent luxury hotels and commercial complexes that claim the world's top spots, and residential neighborhoods with older buildings giving locals the kind of common touch they desire.

Pansy Ho Chiu-king, a billionaire businesswoman from Macau, said in a recent interview that Macau people have a genuine sense of gaining from the city's socio-economic and cultural boom.

José Chan Rodrigues, a Macau-born Portuguese, said Portuguese cultural elements such as the language and architecture have mostly been preserved in Macau.

"In 1999, I was still a child. My father told me not to worry. He said things will turn better. And they did," Rodrigues told Xinhua.

Chief Executive Ho Iat Seng said Macau during his five-year term has made new progress in diversifying its economy to reduce heavy reliance on the gaming industry, aiming to build itself into a world tourism and leisure center. Sectors like traditional Chinese medicine, modern finance, sci-tech, exhibitions and conventions, and culture and sports are booming.

"Macau's development over the past 25 years has demonstrated that the 'One Country, Two Systems' policy is fully applicable, achievable, and popular," Ho said.

Looking ahead, Sam Hou Fai, Macau's incoming top official, said Macau will take an even more active role in the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macau Greater Bay Area (GBA) development, and advance the building of Hengqin.

He said Macau will also consolidate its position as a key platform for China to cooperate with Portuguese-speaking countries, home to some 250 million people across Europe, Latin America, Asia and Africa.

In July, the central authorities unveiled a new reform package, highlighting the need to harness

the institutional strengths of the "One Country, Two Systems" and facilitate the active roles of Hong Kong and Macau in the opening up of the whole country.

"This creates extensive space and opportunities for the future development of Macau," Sam said.

## DIVERSITY AND INCLUSIVENESS

Few places in the world are as multifaceted as Macau, where diverse cultural and ethnic groups live in concentrated communities on a land area of slightly over 30 square kilometers.

The historic center of Macau, a UNESCO world heritage site, offers a convincing testimony – it bears witness to one of the earliest and longest-lasting encounters between China and the West.

The narrow and elongated area is dotted with historic buildings, from the A-Ma Temple dedicated to the sea-goddess Mazu, to the Mandarin's House – the former residence of a prominent Chinese historical figure, and the landmark Ruins of St. Paul's, once among the largest Catholic churches in the Far East.

From Mazu and Jesus to the Buddha, their disciples may live next door to each other, and their sacred worshipping spaces may be visible within sight.

Wu Zhiliang, president of the Macau Federation of Cultural Circles, hailed the city as a "laboratory for human civilizations."

"From capitalism to Confucianism and socialism, from Macau-born Portuguese to mainlanders and expats from Southeast Asian countries, Macau has always been at the forefront of cross-cultural exchanges, but rarely with clashes," Wu said.

Macau people also demonstrate a more balanced attitude toward work and life than Hong Kong or the mainland's top-tier cities, attracting an increasing number of visitors. "This perhaps is why the city has remained so inclusive and newcomers generally feel more welcomed than they had expected," said Zhang Jie.

When the idea of "One Country, Two Systems" was first proposed, few likely expected it to succeed so well in Macau, which was, at that time, the most inconspicuous compared with Hong Kong and Taiwan.

As Deng Xiaoping once famously stated, "It doesn't matter if a cat is black or white, as long as it catches mice." The "One Country, Two Systems" policy is an ongoing experiment that continues to evolve. When implementing it, efforts should always suit local conditions. In this regard, Macau has undoubtedly emerged as a successful pioneer.

Zheng Yongnian, a renowned political scientist, said Macau's current success under "One Country, Two Systems" is not its ceiling, but rather "a new beginning and starting point." – Xinhua





# 25 years on, Macau prospers amid deeper integration into national development

In the Macau-Hengqin Youth Entrepreneurship Valley, a space where many young entrepreneurs from Macau chase their dreams, the aroma of coffee mingles with the smell of rain-kissed grass.

From Lei Zhen's office at Nanometals Technology, the view stretches from Hengqin's landmarks to Macau's glittering skyline. Lei founded Nanometals in Zhuhai in 2014, focusing on innovative applications of new materials, with nano silver wire as the core product.

Hengqin, located just across the river from Macau, is home to the Guangdong-Macau In-depth Cooperation Zone, which was established in 2021 by the Chinese central government to foster closer integration between the two regions. The zone has become a hub for innovation and entrepreneurship, hosting nearly 6,500 Macau-invested enterprises and providing a platform for new industries.

In 2018, Lei's project won global acclaim, taking first place in a prestigious startup contest. Three years later, Nanometals relocated to Hengqin, seizing opportunities in the cooperation zone.

"Moving our headquarters to Hengqin made connecting with Macau much easier and significantly improved our operational efficiency," Lei said. With support from the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macau Greater Bay Area's manufacturing ecosystem, his company scaled up the production of flexible touch-screen materials – breaking foreign monopolies in this field.

Macau will mark the 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of its return to the motherland on Friday. Since its return, the central government's strong support, coupled with active integration into the Chinese mainland, has transformed Macau into a modern, international metropolis, achieving remarkable progress in both economic development and people's livelihoods.

In tandem with this transformation, Macau has deepened its exchanges and cooperation with the mainland, becoming an integral part of China's broader development agenda and contributing to the cause of Chinese modernization.

Just over two months ago, the Macau Bridge, a new eight-lane bridge connecting the Macau Peninsula to Taipa, officially opened to traffic. This is the fourth cross-sea bridge to connect the two areas and it has greatly improved the flow of people and goods, enhancing the region's economic vitality.



**Wong Chi Choi, who is from Macau, looks on at the exhibition hall of Authenmole (Hengqin Zhuhai) Traditional Chinese Medicine Health Industry Development Co., Ltd., where he works, in Hengqin on Wednesday last week. At 8 o'clock every morning on weekdays, Wong drives his wife to the Hengqin Campus of the University of Macau (UM) from Fai Chi Kei on the Macau Peninsula and then either goes to work at his company based in the Guangdong-Macau In-depth Cooperation Zone in Hengqin, or dives back to his office in Macau. After finishing work in the evening, he will pick up his wife and return to their home in Macau. "When I first came to Hengqin in 2016, the commuting time between Macau and Hengqin was nearly two hours. Thanks to the measures to simplify the procedures for Macau-registered vehicles to enter Hengqin under certain conditions, the commuting time has been shortened to less than an hour, which has greatly enhanced my sense of happiness," Wong said. As one of the first batch of twin city life explorers, Wong and his wife have assumed their new identities as Hengqin and Macau "exchange messenger". Last week, Wong welcomed a group of students from Lou Hau High School of Macau and invited them to visit the automated and intelligent production line of traditional Chinese medicine (TCM) of his company. Wong told the students that the cooperation model of "Macau registration plus Hengqin production" not only expands new channels for the development of TCM in Macau, but also promotes the internationalization of traditional Chinese medicine.**

**In addition to having a bigger stage for his career, Wong also desires to live a more comfortable life in Hengqin. He has bought a property at Hengqin's Macau New Neighborhood (MNN). "My baby was born this year, and the whole family is embracing a new life in our new home in Hengqin. Hengqin is a thriving and vibrant place," Wong said.**

– Xinhua

Before its return to China, Macau's infrastructure was relatively underdeveloped. However, iconic city landmarks such as a Light Rapid Transit system and cross-sea bridges have since become symbols of its modernization. In 1999, Macau's GDP stood at 51.9 billion patacas. By 2023, it had skyrocketed to nearly 379.5 billion patacas. Meanwhile, by the end of last year, the total savings of Macau residents had surpassed 700 billion patacas – an eightfold increase compared to 1999. Over the past 25 years, Macau has become one of Asia's wealthiest cities.

While its economy has grown steadily, Macau has also gradually diversified its industries, moving beyond its reliance

on the casino sector. With the central government's support, Macau has embraced a more diversified, balanced and sustainable economic structure.

"During the past 25 years, Macau has made remarkable strides under the 'One Country, Two Systems' framework," said Ho Iat Seng, chief executive of the Macau Special Administrative Region (MSAR), noting that the proportion of key industries contributing to economic diversification has steadily increased – making the economy more resilient and diversified.

Notably, Macau's tourism sector has played a considerable role in its economic transformation. With its rich blend of Chinese and Western cultures, a diverse culinary scene, and unique architectural styles, tourism has become a vital part of Macau's economic diversification. The MSAR government has been working to showcase Macau's appeal, attracting tourists from around the world to experience the city's significant cultural heritage.

In 1999, Macau received only 7 million visitors. Early this month, this year's visitor arrivals had surged to 32.5 million. Macau is now one of the cities with the highest concentration of UNESCO World Heritage Sites globally and is working to establish itself as a world tourism and leisure center. According to a survey by China Tourism Academy, Macau was ranked as the most satisfactory outbound destination for mainland tourists in the first quarter of 2024.

The city has also witnessed a boom in its entertainment industry over the years, with many performance events being held including large-scale concerts.

"Whether in terms of cultural events or

infrastructure, Macau is an ideal venue for shows," said Macau tenor Liu Naiqi. "Now, many mainland and overseas tourists come to Macau specifically to attend concerts."

In 2023, cultural and artistic events attracted nearly 20 million participants, with large-scale concerts drawing around 1 million attendees and generating approximately 1.1 billion patacas in box office sales. Non-gaming sectors now contribute to more than 60 percent of Macau's GDP, a steady increase from previous years.

"Macau's efforts to accelerate the diversification of its economy not only strengthen its economic power and competitiveness but also enable it to play a more significant role in supporting the national strategy and the country's high-level opening up to the outside world," said Ip Kuai Peng, vice rector of City University of Macau.

Macau's participation in Greater Bay Area (GBA) development and its active contribution to the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) have provided new opportunities for the city's growth. To further integrate into national development, Macau has established a Working Committee for Integrating into National Development, which promotes deeper economic, cultural and social cooperation with the mainland.

Macau is also collaborating with Hong Kong and the mainland to develop "one trip, multiple destinations" premium tourism routes, promoting business cooperation with Portuguese-speaking countries, and fostering cultural exchanges with nations around the world.

For many Macau residents, integrating their personal development with national growth has become a common goal. Huang Yin, founder of Macau-based Trendyi Health Technology, recalled how aligning her business objectives with China's national development plan had prompted her to expand her business to Hengqin.

"We've built a bridge to connect Macau with excellent pharmaceutical resources from the mainland. Using Macau's platform for trade between China and Portuguese-speaking countries, we're promoting traditional Chinese medicine and culture to Portuguese-speaking countries," Huang said, noting that her business has rapidly grown by seizing such opportunities.

Macau has become an ideal place for entrepreneurs – via its open business environment and the unprecedented opportunities provided by the Guangdong-Macau In-depth Cooperation Zone.

Cheong Chok Man, director of the Policy Research and Regional Development Bureau under the MSAR government, highlighted that the third plenary session of the 20<sup>th</sup> Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Committee had outlined plans to deepen cooperation within the Greater Bay Area and strengthen rules and mechanisms for greater synergy. "We believe that Macau's cooperation with other cities in the Greater Bay Area will become even closer, and its integration with the region will deepen," Cheong said.

Luo Weijian, a law professor at the University of Macau (UM), emphasized that the development of the Greater Bay Area provides a platform for all cities to leverage their strengths. "For Macau, it's crucial to further capitalize on the advantages of 'One Country, Two Systems' to better serve national modernization and regional cooperation," he said.

– Xinhua, MPD



Passengers pass through the immigration e-channels at the Macau-Hengqin joint border checkpoint last month. – Xinhua