

Lawmakers pass bill establishing Macau's first Tax Code

Tony Wong

The Legislative Assembly (AL) yesterday passed a government-initiated bill establishing the Macau Special Administrative Region's (MSAR) first Tax Code, aiming to integrate, aggregate, harmonise and unify the different rules listed in the various current pieces of legislation on taxation.

The Tax Code aims to clearly define the rights and obligations in tax-related legal relationships, establishing the principles and procedures with which tax administrative procedures, tax-related judicial proceedings and tax enforcement must comply.

The code, which will take effect on January 1, 2026 in general but with certain provisions to come into force earlier than that, aims to better ensure the full collection of government tax revenues while fully protecting taxpayers' rights and legitimate interests.

The bill's outline was passed during a plenary session of the legislature in November 2021, after which the bill was reviewed by its 3rd Standing Committee, before it was resubmitted to yesterday's plenary session, which Secretary for Economy and Finance attended, when it was voted on article-by-article in its second and final reading.

The new legislation aims to modernise Macau's taxation system, such as by enhancing its compliance with international



Secretary for Economy and Finance Lei Wai Nong bows to lawmakers in the legislature's hemicycle yesterday expressing his gratitude for their "strong support" for government-initiated legislation concerning his portfolio over the past five years.

— Photo: William Chan

taxation standards, with the objective of enabling Macau to better comply with international tax obligations, which would help attracting more business investments to Macau from elsewhere.

Speaking during yesterday's plenary

session, legislator Vong Hin Fai, who heads the legislature's 3rd Standing Committee, noted that the new legislation extensively covers legal matters concerning Macau's taxation system.

Vong underlined that the Tax Code is a kind of framework legislation that will extensively

regulate the city's various tax-related legal matters, including tax-related administrative procedures, tax-related judicial proceedings and tax enforcement systems.

Vong, a lawyer by profession, noted that the new legislation's final version comprises 29 articles, attaching the new Tax Code with 312 articles.

Vong also described the Tax Code as being of great significance to Macau's legal system.

According to Vong, the new legislation also extensively amends the city's various current pieces of legislation on taxation covering taxes such as salaries tax, net profit tax, stamp duty, vehicle tax, tourism tax, and consumption tax, with the objective of enabling them to comply with the Tax Code.

Lawmakers pass 2025 budget bill

Meanwhile, yesterday's plenary session also passed the government's 2025 budget bill, the second one with a budget surplus after Macau's post-pandemic economic recovery.

According to its 2025 budget bill, the government expects its revenues to reach 121.09 billion patacas next year, while its expenditure next year is expected to amount to 113.38 billion patacas.

Consequently, according to the bill, the government expects to enjoy a budget surplus of 7.7 billion patacas next year. ■

Aiming to stop 'carnage,' Trump vows to talk with Putin, Zelensky



WASHINGTON — US President-elect Donald Trump said yesterday he will speak with the leaders of Russia and Ukraine in an effort to end the war triggered by Moscow's invasion.

"We'll be talking to President Putin, and we'll be talking to the representatives, Zelensky and representatives from Ukraine. We gotta stop it, it's carnage," Trump told a news conference, referring to the leaders of Russia and Ukraine, just over a month before his return to the White House.

Rebellion in Syria an 'unfriendly takeover' by Turkey

Meanwhile, Trump characterized the rebel ouster of Syrian strongman Bashar al-Assad by Ankara-backed rebels as an "unfriendly takeover" by US ally Turkey as he addressed the conflict at yesterday's news conference.

"I think Turkey is very smart... Turkey did an unfriendly takeover, without a lot of lives

being lost. I can say that Assad was a butcher, what he did to children," Trump told reporters at his residence in Florida.

Assad fled to Russia after a lightning offensive spearheaded by the Islamist Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) wrested city after city from his control until the rebels reached the Syrian capital.

The collapse of his rule stunned the world. Rooted in Syria's branch of al-Qaeda, HTS is proscribed by several Western governments as a terrorist organisation, though it has sought to moderate its rhetoric and pledged to protect the country's religious minorities.

Turkey has carried out military strikes inside Syria, and has said it is ready to provide armed support to the country's new Islamist-led government set up by the rebels.

Ankara's top priority in Syria was to rid the country of Kurdish separatist fighters — a goal supported by the new government, it has said. (More on page 12) — AFP



US President-elect Donald Trump looks on as SoftBank CEO Masayoshi Son delivers remarks at Trump's Mar-a-Lago resort yesterday in Palm Beach, Florida. Trump announced that SoftBank will invest over US\$100 billion in projects in the United States including 100,000 AI-related jobs. — AFP

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90 pct of Macau's hotel industry commits to using only cage-free eggs

A report by the international non-governmental organisation (NGO) Lever Foundation has found that over 90 percent of top hotel groups in Macau have set a timeline for ending the use of cage eggs globally, pledging to transition to 100 percent cage-free eggs. — Story on p. 3

'Eyelash viper', leaf-nosed bat among new species found in Mekong

A viper with scales that look like eyelashes and a leaf-nosed bat are among dozens of new species identified in Southeast Asia's Mekong region last year, WWF said yesterday. — Story on p. 10

Scholz loses confidence vote, triggering early elections

Germany's centre-left Chancellor Olaf Scholz lost a confidence vote yesterday after weeks of turmoil, setting Europe's biggest economy on the path to early elections on February 23. — Story on p. 12



Local SMEs suffer post-COVID-19 consumption downturn

Interview by Yuki Lei

In the face of the uncertainty of the global economic environment and a consumption downtrend in the aftermath of the three-year COVID-19 pandemic, the predicament of Macau's small- and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) is even worse than it was during the pandemic – and as the chairman of the Macau Small and Medium Enterprises Development Alliance, Sunny Ip Sio Man, told the *Post* “the physical stores in the local neighbourhoods, be it in the areas of clothing, food, housing and transportation that are connected to the basic necessities of daily life, are going through a depression, which I think can hardly be reversed in the short term”.

Speaking to the *Post* during a recent interview at his office in the Avenida do Almirante Lacerda (鱗些喇提督大馬) neighbourhood, Ip analysed the difficulties faced by local SMEs and their future development in the light of local consumers' “northbound trend”, changes in consumption patterns among tourists and residents and the implementation of various policies by the central authorities.

According to the latest Statistics and Census Bureau (DSEC) data, catering and retail business operators' turnover dropped in September, with the former recording a year-on-year decrease of 5.5 percent and the latter a year-on-year fall of 20.7 percent.

‘Northbound trend’

Ip pointed out that during three years of the COVID-19 pandemic (2020-2022), many locals and even non-resident workers (NRWs) got “stuck” in Macau, so “once immigration clearance returned to normal operations, they were eager to go on a trip outside”, while the so-called “Northbound Travel for Macau and Hong Kong Vehicles” and even the downward adjustment to the yuan's exchange rate were only additional incentives that simulated local consumers' expenditure in the mainland.

“The phenomenon of over-consumption by locals [in the mainland] has been intensified under the policy of ‘Macau cars moving northward’, that is, when people used to be able to cross the border only on foot, a filled-up shopping

bag brought from the mainland might be used up in three or four days, but now, under the new policy, especially for those families who drive their cars to the mainland for shopping, the bags might contain enough goods for half a month or even more without the need to spend any money in Macau, especially for expenditure on foodstuffs and other consumable goods and daily necessities, or even a season's worth of clothes, shoes and socks,” Ip said. Consumer demand has gone to the mainland, and the demand for goods and services provided by local shops has dropped, among which retail, catering and some service industries such as vehicle maintenance and carwash shops, and even beauty parlours have been particularly hard hit, he added.

Changes in consumption patterns among tourists & residents

Ip underlined the emergence of a consumption downtrend in Macau: “As a matter of fact, both tourists and locals are having a bleak economic outlook, so they have cut spending waste or are very cautious of not spending money casually, even though many shops are offering discounts in the hope of motivating shoppers to make purchases,” leading to the local SMEs' turnover dropping drastically.

On the one hand, the consumption pattern of mainland travellers visiting Macau has changed, from a shopping-orientated mode to an in-depth tour mode with a focus on photo-taking, Ip said: “Although there are more tourists, the market economy is not as active as it used to be”.

On the other hand, in terms of online sales, during the pandemic, “local residents became accustomed to three years of less out-of-home spending, and more often staying at home to do online shopping”, coupled with the fact that the Chinese mainland's e-commerce has been more aggressive in expanding its market to Macau after the pandemic so that the local retail sector is facing new challenges, further exacerbating the difficult business environment, Ip pointed out.

‘Business digitalisation’

When asked whether converting one's business into an online shop is the only way out for brick-and-



Macau Small and Medium Enterprises Development Alliance Chairman Sunny Ip Sio Man poses after last Monday's interview with the *Post* at his office in the Avenida do Almirante Lacerda (鱗些喇提督大馬) neighbourhood.

– Photos: Yuki Lei

mortar shops, Ip categorised local SMEs into two main segments, one being the “old” shops that have been in business for over 20 years, while the other consists of the new SMEs established in the last decade or so, pointing out the difficulties faced by shop owners in digitalising their business operations: “Firstly, as some of the owners of old shops are already middle-aged or even elderly, it is difficult for them to make any changes; furthermore, although the government has provided financial assistance to help SMEs in their transformation, there are still certain risks for the SME operators as they still have to maintain their previous business operations even after the transformation”.

He admitted that he was also worried about the post-pandemic business environment as it is now even worse than during the pandemic, with both old shops and even some of those set up in recent years chose to close down after the expiry of their leases, and in some



This photo taken on Friday shows two vacant shops in Nam Van district available for rent.

cases, “the new generation of the old shops is unwilling to take over the shops, as they have to take up an extra job due to the decline in business and the pressure of running a business”.

Measures to stimulate overall consumption atmosphere

Concerning the government's recent announcement to extend the repayment period of the SME Aid Scheme for two years in order to support the sustainable operation of SMEs, Ip said that “the feasibility of this is not high”. He quoted the appendix to the regulation as noting that “it depends on the bank's assessment of the SMEs and their ability to repay”, pointing out that no matter whether it is the bank or the government, applicants applying for a loan extension or restructuring of their debts are required to show the past three years' performance and recent years' bank account records, but “how could their business have

been good in the past three years when there was the pandemic”.

Even though the changes in people's consumption patterns, habits and the market “have disrupted the hopes of many SME operators that they could start afresh after the pandemic”, Ip said, he still hoped that the government would extend the ongoing citywide “Consumption Carnival” to continue to stimulate Macau's overall consumption atmosphere, even though, he bewailed, “it does only benefit a small number of shops in the local community, especially during weekends”.

Meanwhile, Ip also said he expected the upcoming “one-trip-per-week permit” for Zhuhai permanent residents entering Macau to trigger a “small sales peak” for the local SME market even though they might not spend a lot during their stay here, but, anyhow, “those who have friends or relatives here would naturally go to local neighbourhoods during their visit”. ■

Tickets for trial gig at Cotai outdoor venue go on sale

William Chan

Registration is now open for the 50-pataca tickets exclusively reserved for local residents at the upcoming “Macao Outdoor Performance Venue: Warm-up Party”, which is scheduled for next Saturday night (December 28), according to a statement by the Cultural Affairs Bureau (IC).

The event, expected by the bureau to attract an audience of 15,000, will be held at a newly constructed open-air venue in Cotai and hosted by a still unnamed Hong Kong TV Station, the statement said.

Macau residents can register for up to two tickets each until midnight tomorrow. In the event of registrations surpassing the limit, tickets will be allocated through a lucky draw, the results of which will be disclosed on Friday. Those selected for purchase must complete their transactions by

next Tuesday (December 24).

Regular ticket prices are set at 480, 780, and 1,080 patacas and are currently on sale, the statement said, adding that the concert will feature artistes from Hong Kong, Macau, mainland China, and South Korea, with a lineup of singers and performers, including Hins Cheung (張敬軒),

Julian Cheung (張智霖), Pakho Chau (周柏豪), and Janice M. Vidal (衛蘭).

The venue, which began construction in August, spans 94,000 square metres and can accommodate over 50,000 attendees.

For ticket purchases, visit: www.macaoticket.com/Macao-OutdoorParty. ■



This photo taken earlier this month shows the newly constructed open-air venue in Cotai.

– Photo: William Chan

Published since Aug 2004

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- Wire services – AFP, Xinhua

Macau POST

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12°C~21°C

Source: SMG



LRT & public buses to provide free rides for all on Dec 20

Ginnie Liang

The government announced yesterday that members of the public can take the city's public buses and the Light Rapid Transit (LRT) trains for free on Friday, in celebration of the 25th Anniversary of Macau's return to the motherland on December 20, according to an executive order published in the Official Gazette (BO) yesterday.

One of the city's public bus operators, Transmac, reminded members of the public in a statement yesterday that passengers do not need to tap a bus card, scan or pay on any Transmac buses from the first to the last buses on December 20.

The statement also urged passengers to wait for the buses in an orderly manner during the day, follow the instructions of the staff if there is a rush, and consult the frontline staff if they need any assistance.

The government-owned LRT operator, Macau Light Rapid Transit Corporation Limited (MLM), said yesterday in a separate statement that during the free ride period, passengers do not need to buy a ticket when they arrive at the LRT stations, as they just need to follow the instructions of the staff there to enter and exit the gates.

To ensure operation and

passenger safety, passengers are advised to follow the on-site arrangements to ride the train in an orderly manner when there is a large number of people and to avoid staying in the restricted area of the LRT for a long period of time, so as not to hinder other passengers from travelling on the train, the statement said.

In addition, passengers are advised to pay attention to station announcements, follow station signs and the instructions of station staff to travel in an orderly manner during holiday periods when passenger traffic is heavy, the statement said. ■



This undated handout photo provided by the Macau Light Rapid Transit Corporation Limited (MLM) yesterday shows one of its trains in operation.

90 pct of Macau's hotel industry commits to using only cage-free eggs

Rui Pastorin

A report by the international non-governmental organisation (NGO) Lever Foundation has found that over 90 percent of top hotel groups in Macau have set a timeline for ending the use of cage eggs globally, pledging to transition to 100 percent cage-free eggs, according to a recent statement by the foundation.

Cage-free eggs, according to the 2024 Macau Hospitality Industry Cage-Free Scorecard compiled by the foundation, refer to those laid by hens living in cage-free environments where laying hens can move around freely and engage in natural behaviours. The scorecard notes that dozens of peer-reviewed scientific studies show that these hens produce eggs with "far greater food safety, higher nutritional value and quality".

The recent report and statement define the top hotel groups as those operating "at least two 4- or 5-star hotels globally and operating in Macau", with the local groups that have made the pledge being China Travel Service (Macao), Galaxy Entertainment Group, Macau Legend Development, Melco Resorts & Entertainment, and SJM Holdings.

The international hotel groups include Accor, The Ascott, Four Seasons Hotels, GCP Hospitality, Harilela Group, Hilton Worldwide Holdings, Hyatt Hotels

Corporation, InterContinental Hotels Group, Mandarin Oriental Hotel Group, Marriott International, MGM Resorts International, Las Vegas Sands Corp., Wynn Resorts and Artyzen Hospitality Group (Macau), according to the statement.

Meanwhile, the statement said that Global International Hotel Management and Kingston Financial Group have not yet set up a timeline to end the use of caged eggs.

Lever Foundation Sustainability Programme Director Lily Tse was quoted by the statement as saying: "This widespread industry shift to cage-free eggs in Macau, which matches a similar trend in the Hong Kong market where over 90 percent of hotel groups have also pledged to go cage-free, reflects great leadership among the region's hospitality sector in promoting sustainable sourcing practices that benefit animals and provide higher quality food for consumers."

The statement also went on to note that the volume of cage-free eggs sourced and sold in Macau has also "increased significantly" with the continued rise in demand among hospitality groups and other food companies, while adding that "an increasing number of consumers are also reducing or eliminating eggs from their meals entirely as the most effective way to protect the welfare of hens". ■



This undated handout photo provided by the international non-governmental organisation (NGO) Lever Foundation shows a cage-free egg.

Elderly man critical with Legionnaires' disease, 11th case this year

William Chan

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

According to the statement, the patient is a 70-year-old local man suffering from chronic illnesses. He developed a fever, cough, and shortness of breath on Thursday but did not seek medical attention.

The man's fever subsided on Sunday, but the cough persisted, and he experienced dizziness the same day. He was subsequently taken by ambulance to the public Conde de São Januário Hospital Centre where he was diagnosed with pneumonia and Legionnaires' disease.

The statement said that the patient remains hospitalised for treatment, and his condition is critical.

The statement pointed out that Legionellosis, with an incubation period of between two and 10 days, is an infectious disease caused by Legionella bacteria thriving in warm water between 20 and 45 degrees Celsius and in warm and moist places, such as artificial water systems including jacuzzis, fountains, and household

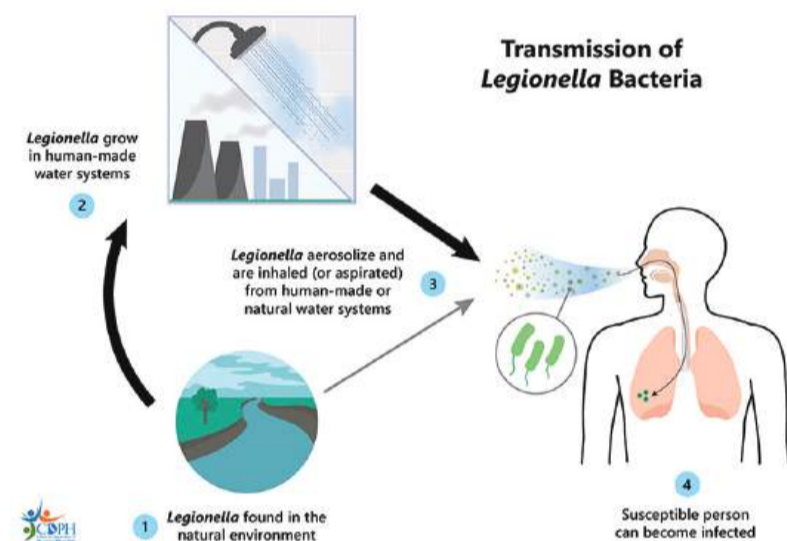


Image courtesy of California Department of Public Health

respiratory medical equipment.

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

The statement underlined that males, senior citizens, smokers, drinkers and those with weakened

immune systems, especially those with chronic medical conditions, such as cancer, diabetes, chronic lung or kidney disease, and patients receiving steroids or other immunosuppressive drugs are at increased risk of catching the disease.

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

Christmas Market opens in Tap Seac

Rui Pastorin

The annual Christmas Market in Praça do Tap Seac (塔石廣場) made its return yesterday, until January 1, New Year's Day.

The 17-day market is open daily from 2 p.m. to 11 p.m., while it will be open till midnight on December 24, 25 and 31, according to a Municipal Affairs Bureau (IAM) statement yesterday. It sees the return of Christmas-themed booths selling snacks and gifts, as well as on-site performances such as juggling clowns and magic shows. Popular rides such as the merry-go-round, a little Christmas train as well as a large inflatable slide, have also been set up, and are open daily from 3 p.m. to 10 p.m.

The statement noted that the rides and slide are free of charge and members of the public can obtain a number online to reduce their waiting time.

A temporary loading and unloading area for members of the public and authorised vehicles is also available on Rua de Afonso de Albuquerque (亞豐素雅布基街), according to the statement.

For more information, one can visit the bureau's official website on www.iam.gov.mo ■



This undated handout photo provided by the Municipal Affairs Bureau (IAM) yesterday shows a Christmas Tree displayed at the Christmas Market in Praça do Tap Seac.



Artists and guests including CREATIVE MACAU – Centre for Creative Industries Coordinator Margarida Cheung Vieira (6th from left) and Institute of European Studies of Macau (IEEM) President Paulo Canelas de Castro (7th from left) pose for a group photo during last week's opening ceremony. – Photos taken last week by Rui Pastorin

Creative Macau showcases 100 works by 25 artists

Rui Pastorin

The “Collective Journey” exhibition is being held at Creative Macau in Nape until January 4, presenting a total of 100 canvases and celebrating the upcoming “double happiness” anniversaries: 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.

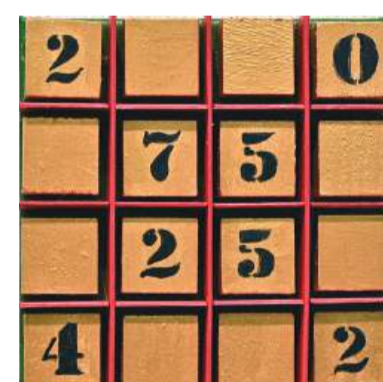
The 100 canvases, which symbolise 75+25, were created by 25 of Creative Macau – Centre for Creative Industries’ members, with exhibitiongoers able to view works created through different mediums such as painting, drawing, sculpture, photography, and poetry. The exhibition kicked-off with an opening ceremony

last week, with the event attended by several of the exhibiting artists.

The artists, according to a statement from the centre provided last week, were invited to present works that “convey their gratitude and joy, as well as their love for the country and Macau” at the exhibition.

The exhibition also aims to showcase the city’s “distinctive artistic style” and reflects on its creative industries’ development over the past quarter of a century.

The free-admission gallery is located on the ground floor of the Macau Cultural Centre (CCM). It is open from 2 p.m. to 7 p.m. from Mondays to Saturdays and closed on public holidays.





Rent discount for Plot P seniors' rental housing to last 6 years: govt

Tony Wong

The government announced yesterday that eligible tenants in the government's high-rise rental residential building for senior citizens on Plot P in Areia Preta will continue to enjoy a 20-percent discount on their rent for another three years after renewing their first three-year lease which offers them a 20-percent rent discount.

Tenants have gradually moved into their flats in batches since mid-October after the housing estate, the first of its kind in the government's housing programme, was inaugurated in late September.

The new measure was announced in an executive order published in the Official Gazette (BO) yesterday when the Social Welfare Bureau (IAS), the public entity running the government's programme on the estate, also issued a statement elaborating the matter.

The order, which takes effect today, was signed by Secretary for Social Affairs and Culture Elsie Ao Ieong U on Thursday last week.

The housing estate's first-phase application period ran between November 6 and December 31 last



This photo taken during a media tour in late September shows a flat in the Plot P seniors' rental housing estate. — Photo: Tony Wong

year, during which around 1,500 applications were submitted.

The high-rise has a total of 1,815 studio-style units. Its podium levels are now equipped with various facilities such as a clubhouse, a health facility and a restaurant.

Previously, only those who submitted their applications between November 6 and December 31 last year were to enjoy a 20-percent discount on their rent, while the rent discount was to only cover their first

three-year lease. Moreover, only the tenants of the first 1,518 flats were to enjoy the discount.

According to the government's administration regulation (by-law) on the use and management of the housing estate, a lease is valid for three years, which can be renewed for another three years or a shorter length of time.

According to the order published yesterday, those submitting their applications between November 6

last year and December 31 next year will now be offered a 20-percent discount on their rent during their first three-year lease. In addition, according to the order, the tenants will continue to enjoy the 20-percent rent discount for up to three more years after renewing their first three-year lease.

Moreover, the 20-percent rent discount now covers all the flats on the estate, according to yesterday's order.

Yesterday's IAS statement noted

that thanks to the new measure, tenants in the housing estate will now enjoy a 20-percent discount on their rent for up to six years.

According to the statement, eligible senior citizens can now file an application to rent a flat in the housing estate any time, i.e., its application process is now carried out on a permanent basis.

The statement also reminded that those intending to submit their applications online must be a holder of the government's Macao One Account.

The statement underlined that the government has decided to enlarge the length and eligibility for the 20-percent rent discount after considering the opinions from various segments of civil society, particularly those from the housing estate's tenants.

The government's new measure aims to give the housing estate's tenants greater care and encourage other eligible senior citizens in need to apply to rent a flat there, the statement said.

With the 20-percent discount, the rents range between 4,328 patacas and 5,344 patacas. ■

Woman arrested for theft at Cotai hotel after gambling loss

Ginnie Liang

A mainland woman in her thirties was arrested on Thursday for stealing a handbag and a bottle of perfume, worth a total of 9,300 patacas, from two shops in a shopping mall in Cotai after losing money on the tables, a Public Security Police (PSP) spokesperson said in a press conference yesterday.

According to the spokesperson, PSP officers received a report on Thursday that a staff member of a shop in a Cotai hotel said that a handbag worth 7,500 patacas had gone missing during stock-taking.

Upon reviewing security footage, PSP officers discovered that a woman had entered the shop around 10 a.m. and stolen the handbag, the spokesperson said.

After scrutinising CCTV footage, PSP officers identified the woman and intercepted her at 2 p.m. the same day, on Avenida Dr Rodrigo Rodrigues (羅理基博士大馬路), the spokesperson said.

During the search, officers recovered the stolen handbag containing a bottle of perfume, the spokesperson said.

The spokesperson said that the woman admitted to stealing from



This photo provided by the Public Security Police (PSP) yesterday shows PSP officers escorting the female mainland theft suspect to a police station in Taipa.

two shops after losing money at a casino, adding that she also told PSP officers that she had entered Macau on December 8 and decided to steal after her gambling losses, in the hope of selling the handbag to local shops, but her attempts were unsuccessful.

The police contacted the shop from which the perfume was taken,

revealing that it had also been a victim of theft, with the perfume valued at about 1,830 patacas, the spokesperson said.

In total, the two shops reported losses amounting to 9,330 patacas, the spokesperson said.

The woman has been transferred to the Public Precautions Office (MP), facing a theft charge. ■

Dealer, gambler cheat casino out of over HK\$200,000

Ginnie Liang

A casino dealer and a local gambler were arrested for scamming a casino out of over HK\$200,000, Judiciary Police (PJ) spokesman Chong Kam Leong said during a regular press conference yesterday.

The female 42-year-old casino dealer is surnamed Ng. The local male gambler, aged 72, is surnamed Lao.

According to Chong, the police received a report from the casino on Thursday that one of their casino dealers, Ng, had intentionally given extra casino chips to a gambler, and was discovered by a casino staff member.

After scrutinising CCTV footage, the police apprehended the duo the same day.

Under questioning, Ng confessed that she had colluded with the gambler since last month to defraud the casino out of over HK\$200,000.

Chong noted that the suspects strategically chose busy times in the casino when Ng was on duty. At one of these times, Ng exchanged seven HK\$10,000 chips for HK\$10,000 cash from the gambler, disguising it as a valid exchange.

Upon investigation, PJ officers discovered that the duo had been committing fraud by giving and receiving extra chips since November, in which at least



Judiciary Police (PJ) spokesman Chong Kam Leong looks on during yesterday's regular press conference. — Photo: Ginnie Liang

four crimes were committed on December 1, 9 and 10, as well as the day they were arrested, and the casino reported a loss of at least HK\$202,000, Chong said.

During the investigation, police found HK\$12,000 in cash in a locker at Ng's workplace, as well as 10,500 patacas and HK\$4,000 in her flat, Chong said, adding that HK\$74,000 in cash and HK\$350 in chips were found on Lao, while HK\$175,000 in cash was found in his flat, all of which were suspected to be illegally obtained from the fraud.

The duo have been transferred to the Public Prosecutions Office (MP), facing charges of fraud involving a considerably large amount of money. ■

STOCK MARKETS

Hang Seng Index closes 0.88 pct lower

HONG KONG — Hong Kong stock market ended lower yesterday with the benchmark Hang Seng Index down 0.88

percent to close at 19,795.49 points. While The Hang Seng China Enterprises Index fell 0.75 percent to end at 7,132.69

points, the Hang Seng Tech Index dipped 1.45 percent to close at 4,414.70 points.

—Xinhua



Macau: magnetic Chinese hub with multiple charms

MACAU – Fang Fan, a resident of Guangzhou, had a clear goal for her recent trip to Macau: to enjoy a front-row seat at a performance by US musical icon Herbie Hancock.

For showgoers like Fang, Macau – just a two-hour drive south of Guangzhou – has emerged as a vibrant destination where star-chasing dreams can come true. With an expanding array of high-quality performances and easier access to tickets compared to mainland metropolises, the city is rapidly growing in cultural appeal.

As a major trade port under Portuguese occupation for centuries, Macau returned to the motherland on December 20, 1999, when the Macau Special Administrative Region (SAR) was established.

Over the past 25 years, Macau has transformed itself into a multifaceted hub, evolving beyond its moniker as the “Las Vegas of the East.” It now seeks to establish itself as a global center for tourism and leisure, while also diversifying into industries such as culture and sport.

CITY OF PERFORMING ARTS

Years ago, Macau’s cultural landscape was vastly different. Few people considered traveling there for live concerts. Wu Zhiliang, president of the Board of Directors of the Macau Foundation (FM) and a resident of the city for nearly 40 years, recalled a time when even free performances failed to draw local audiences.

Since its return to the motherland, however, Macau has developed into a destination capable of attracting world-class artists such as Spanish tenor Plácido Domingo and Herbie Hancock.

This transformation has been fueled by the SAR’s growing prosperity 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. By 2023, Macau’s per capita GDP had more than quadrupled compared to 1999, reaching nearly US\$70,000.

Modern venues like the Macau Cultural Center have played a pivotal role in hosting performances, while the SAR has also leveraged its rich cultural heritage. In October 2024, renowned Chinese-American pipa virtuoso Wu Man performed at the Dom Pedro V Theater, the first Western-style theater built in China in 1860.

“The historic venue blends beautifully with the pipa, a traditional Chinese instrument,” Wu Man told Xinhua. “The atmosphere was excellent, and I could feel the audience’s enthusiasm for the captivating sounds and melodies.”

Major entertainment companies are also recognizing Macau’s potential. On December 7, 2024, the Galaxy Arena hosted the iQIYI Scream Night, a star-studded event celebrating top entertainment achievements. This marked the second consecutive year the leading online entertainment platform chose Macau for its annual extravaganza. According to iQIYI, the event drew hundreds of industry stars, thousands of live spectators, and hundreds of millions of online viewers.

The city’s growing reputation as a cultural hub is evident in its statistics. The SAR’s 2023 Yearbook of Statistics reported over 55,000 public performances and cultural exhibitions held that year, a significant increase from approximately 38,000 in 2013.

Generation Z artist Kun Wangtou, an emerging figure in the local art scene, said exhibitions are now a constant presence in the city.

Despite his youth, Kun’s reputation has



Tourists visit Macau’s UNESCO World Heritage-listed Ruins of St. Paul’s last week.

– Xinhua

kept him busy traveling between Macau and the Guangdong-Macau In-Depth Cooperation Zone in Hengqin, Zhuhai. His works are currently being showcased in both locations, where he often provides personal introductions for visitors.

Kun, who initially worked as a photographer after earning his bachelor’s degree in Boston, decided to return to his hometown to focus on his art. “I am deeply indebted to my hometown for the unwavering support it has given me,” he said.

APPEAL OF HIGHER LEARNING

Yanick de Almeida, a freshman at the University of Macau (UM), chose this city for its reputation as a calm and secure place to live. When the young Angolan arrived, he was pleasantly surprised by what he found.

“I initially thought Macau would be like the Chinese mainland, where everyone speaks Putonghua,” Almeida said. “But I quickly discovered that many of my fellow students here also speak Portuguese or English.”

For Sofia Costa, an exchange student from the University of Porto in Portugal, studying in Macau has been a transformative journey of personal and professional growth. Currently studying supramolecular chemistry and traditional Chinese medicine (TCM) at UM, she described learning TCM as “a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity.”

“Immersing myself in Chinese medicine has been a fascinating experience,” Sofia said. “I’m confident that the knowledge I gain here will be invaluable throughout my career.”

Data from UM shows that the university currently hosts more than 350 international students from about 50 countries and regions, including the United States and Japan, marking a 360 percent increase compared to a decade ago.

UM is one of 10 higher education institutions in Macau, a city with a population of about 690,000. Among them, the Macau University of Science and Technology (MUST) stands out as a prime example of the SAR’s growing appeal as an academic destination.

Founded in 2000, MUST has rapidly developed into the largest multi-disciplinary university in Macau, enrolling approximately 23,000 students, 94 percent of whom come from outside the SAR.

Over the past 25 years, Macau’s academic reputation has grown significantly. As the historical site of St. Paul’s College – the first Western-style university in the Far East – Macau continues to build on its legacy of higher education. Today, UM ranks among the top 250 universities globally, underscoring the

SAR’s commitment to academic excellence.

ALLURE OF DIVERSE CULTURES

Both Almeida and Costa were impressed by Macau’s cultural diversity. “I’ve met people from various cultural backgrounds, which was a delightful surprise,” Almeida said. “There’s always someone ready to help, which has made my time here truly enjoyable.”

As a historical city where Chinese and Western cultures meet, Macau displays a unique charm that belongs to a culture typical of southern China, yet with a distinctive European touch.

Since the mid-16th century, Macau has served as a vital bridge that has facilitated the exchange of knowledge between East and West, said Wu Zhiliang, who has spent decades studying the city’s history and culture.

The Historic Center of Macau, designated a UNESCO World Heritage Site, stands as a testament to one of the earliest and most enduring encounters between China and the West.

This rich cultural synthesis is embodied by landmarks like the Ruins of St. Paul’s, whose façade integrates Eastern elements, such as Chinese inscriptions and lion motifs, into its design. Nearby, the Na Tcha Temple – a tribute to the legendary figure Ne Zha (known in Cantonese as Na Tcha), a demon-slaying hero depicted in the 16th-century Chinese classic “Journey to the West” – underscores the harmonious coexistence of Eastern and Western traditions.



A tourist takes a photo of Macau’s UNESCO World Heritage-listed A-Ma Temple, aka Ma Kok Temple, last week.

– Xinhua

Macau’s cultural allure extends beyond its iconic churches and temples. “Here, civilizations and cultures don’t clash but coexist and understand one another, reflecting the traditional Chinese ideal of harmony in diversity,” Wu explained.

This blend is perhaps most evident in Macau’s culinary tapestry. Over the centuries, the city has preserved the cuisines of different nations while crafting new flavors through creative fusion. Macanese cuisine, one of the world’s first fusion cuisines, marries Chinese and Portuguese cooking techniques and ingredients. It also incorporates spices and seasonings from regions along the ancient Maritime Silk Road, such as curry and coconut milk, creating dishes with a rich historical and cultural depth.

Pedro Miguel Manhão Sou, a local resident whose mother runs a restaurant specializing in Macanese cuisine, recalled his childhood as being filled with a colorful mix of cultures and flavors.

“My grandfather used to run a noodle stall, and after school, we’d pick our favorite side dishes there. In the evenings, we’d enjoy the Macanese dishes my mother cooked at home. This was our life,” he said. “My family celebrates both the Spring Festival [Chinese Lunar New Year] and Christmas.”

Today, Macau is one of the safest and wealthiest places in the world, renowned for its Michelin-starred restaurants, famous Portuguese egg tarts, and vibrant street food stalls. Its rich culinary heritage has not only attracted food lovers from around the globe but also earned international recognition.

In 2017, Macau was named a UNESCO Creative City of Gastronomy. More recently, in June 2024, the city was designated a Culture City of East Asia as part of a program initiated by China, Japan and the Republic of Korea to promote cultural exchange and collaboration.

With its growing global reputation, Macau has seen a surge in visitors. By December 7, 2024, the city had welcomed over 32 million tourists this year – a 26 percent increase compared to the same period last year, according to official data.

José Chan Rodrigues, a Macau resident with Portuguese ancestry, views the city as a bridge that fosters a deeper understanding of China. As one of Macau’s cultural ambassadors, Rodrigues highlights the city’s unique appeal: Macau offers travelers nearly everything they seek, from cultural blend to culinary experience, all wrapped in a coastal city of 33 square kilometers.

“That,” he added, “is the allure of Macau for the world.”

– Xinhua



Certificate-of-Merit-winning Macau students dedicated to research innovation for motherland's progress

Chen Jinxia

"Look, it's very smooth, no lagging in movements!" In a corner of the FABLAB Innovation and Science Education Centre at Pui Ching Middle School Macau, a group of students is debuting an underwater robot. They carefully place the robot into a water tank and nervously observe its operation. Whenever the robot successfully completes an action, they excitedly cheer and celebrate by high-fiving each other.

On the other side, a student tightly holds a pen, swiftly sketching the movement trajectory of a robot on a piece of paper, while another student is mimicking the robot's obstacle avoidance movements in the air. They are studying how to improve their home service robot, exploring ways to make it smarter and more efficient.

In this innovative and vibrant non-traditional classroom, students are no longer passive recipients of knowledge. Instead, they are proactive scientific explorers and creators. Here, a group of young tech stars is emerging on the international stage and is determined to contribute their own strength to the development of the motherland.

Leong Pok Hei: Aspire to attend Tsinghua University and solve energy challenges

In May this year, Leong Pok Hei won the fourth prize in the "Energy: Sustainable Materials and Design" category at the 2024 Regeneron International Science and Engineering Fair (ISEF). With this achievement,



he also became a recipient of the Honorable Title-Merit from the Macau SAR government this year.

Leong's project for the competition was "One-Step Synthesis of Amorphous ZnP₂ Composite Anode Promoting Fast-Charging Performance in Li-Ion Batteries." In this project, he innovatively used high-energy ball milling to effectively convert ZnP₂ into an amorphous state. Compared to traditional synthesis methods, this new approach is simpler and more efficient, while also reducing environmental impact. Additionally, the amorphous material synthesized through this research method exhibits excellent chemical performance, reaching one of the highest levels known currently.

"This competition can be described as the Olympics of scientific research. I feel very honored to stand on such an international stage. The Honorable Title-Merit is the recognition of my entire middle school career's scientific research." Leong reminisced about his feelings upon receiving these awards.

Leong is deeply grateful for the

scientific research resources and educational opportunities provided to Macau students by the central government. "As Macau integrates itself into the overall development of the motherland, we have the opportunity to integrate and develop with the mainland's well-developed industries or emerging industries. Now it's unlike 25 years ago, when opportunities were very limited," he added, noting that job opportunities for young people have also increased significantly. "Nowadays, no matter which major you choose, you can carve out your own niche."

As a high-school senior, Leong aspires to attend Tsinghua University, and the main reason mainland universities attract him is their close integration with the industrial sector. "The teaching mode in the mainland not only focuses on the breadth of knowledge but also emphasizes depth, covering almost the most basic and core knowledge required for future jobs," said Leong.

Talking about the future, Leong has ambitious aspirations: "Energy issues are one of the major challenges

facing the world today. The world today needs high-capacity, low-cost, sustainable, and environmentally friendly energy sources. I hope to devote myself to researching and developing such energy sources, making a small contribution to our motherland and the world."

Xu Ziheng: GBA can realize technological commercialization dreams

Xu Ziheng's scientific dreams began in his fifth-grade year of primary school. At that time, he was full of curiosity about the world and often pondered how to use technology to improve people's lives. He remembers that Macau frequently suffered from typhoons, which caused power outages and brought many inconveniences to people's life. Therefore, he came up with an idea: to create a smart streetlight that could provide power for mobile phones and electronic devices during typhoons.

Since then, Xu has actively participated in various scientific competitions. This year, Xu won the fourth prize in the "Robots and Intelligent Machines" category at the ISEF with his innovative project, a microTrojan robot for digestive tract treatment, and also received Macau's 2024 Honorable Title-Merit.

The inspiration for this project came from his grandmother, who suffers from heart disease and other illnesses and needs to take a large number of medications regularly. However, these medications also cause severe side effects such as loss of appetite, vomiting, and hair loss. "So I started thinking about whether it

is possible to use micro robots to solve this problem, reducing the side effects of medications while decreasing their intake and improving their utilization rate," Xu said.

Xu has conducted in-depth research on existing micro robot technologies on the market and found that they were susceptible to environmental factors, leading to unsatisfactory medication effects. To solve this problem, he adopted a double-layer structural design, protecting the robot during operation and enabling it to accurately release medications upon the lesion site and complete targeted therapy.

Regarding his future development, Xu is full of anticipation and confidence. "I hope to attend top universities at home and abroad for further studies and, through my own efforts and innovation, promote the application of technologies such as micro robots to a wider range of medical fields, making greater contributions to human health."

Xu emphasized that the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area (GBA) provides endless opportunities for the career development of Macao youth. He believes that this region encompasses multiple cities with unique advantages and industrial characteristics, providing abundant resources and platforms for innovative projects by young students. "If we have relevant ideas for technological innovation and want to materialize our works or ideas, such as actually creating physical prototypes or products, it can all be achieved here."

— Courtesy of GD Today

Macau SAR at 25: Balancing challenges and opportunities

Commentary by Dominic Lee

The Macau Special Administrative Region celebrates its silver jubilee this year – a milestone marking a quarter-century of transformation. Since its return to the motherland in 1999, the city has reshaped itself politically, economically and socially. With a new chief executive and a revamped team of accountability officials due to take office on December 20, the Macau SAR is at a crossroads – facing challenges and opportunities as it continues to uphold the principle of "One Country, Two Systems", improve livelihoods and foster prosperity.

Macau's political landscape has undergone significant changes in the past 25 years. The appointment of a new chief executive this year signals yet another adjustment in governance. The central government's expectations are clear – prioritize political stability and social harmony. For the new administration, this means not only strengthening communication with the public, but increasing transparency and trustworthiness to address the diverse needs of Macau's residents.

This political shift reflects a dual purpose – reassessing

past policies and recalibrating for the future. The new team of accountability officials embodies this balance. While some of them have been promoted from within, others have been shifted to new roles. This mix of experience and teamwork is expected to enable the SAR government to tackle Macau's challenges more effectively.

Macau's economy has long been defined by its tourism and casino industries, which flourished in the years following the handover. However, the COVID-19 pandemic revealed the vulnerabilities of this reliance. The city reopened more than 1,000 shops and service facilities last year in an effort to bring tourists back, highlighting the urgency to diversify the local economy.

Diversified development

Reducing dependence on gaming revenue is no longer an option – it's a necessity. While the gaming business remains Macau's economic backbone, competition from regional players like Singapore and Vietnam is intensifying. The Macau SAR government must now focus on developing non-gaming sectors, such as conventions,

exhibitions and cultural events. These initiatives not only diversify revenue streams, but also add resilience to the economy and foster holistic social development.

Recent developments underscore this potential. Macau's revenue from concerts reached an impressive 1.1 billion patacas last year, surpassing even Hong Kong's. The city hosted more international music icons than ever before, thanks to world-class venues that meet global standards. These activities have proven to be more than just entertainment – they are catalysts for boosting tourism and rebranding Macau as a vibrant cultural hub.

Economic growth alone can't define Macau's success. Social and cultural development must go hand in hand. Public concerns over social equity, environmental protection and cultural preservation have gained momentum in recent years. The new SAR government must strike a delicate balance between economic expansion and sustainable development, ensuring that progress does not come at the expense of Macau's unique identity.

Macau's efforts in heritage conservation have been widely

recognized. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) has praised the city's dedication to preserving its architectural and cultural landmarks, earning Macau international acclaim. Protecting this rich heritage isn't just about honoring the past, it's also about shaping a future where culture remains a cornerstone of Macau's identity. For the SAR administration, this represents both a challenge and an opportunity in sustaining the momentum while addressing the evolving needs of its people.

Looking back on the past quarter of a century of Macau's journey, it's clear the city has grown and transformed in profound ways. Yet, the road ahead remains uncertain. Macau must navigate a complex landscape of political, economic and social challenges while seizing the opportunities that come its way.

The new administration brings renewed hope and potential. By fostering transparency, embracing economic diversification, and prioritizing sustainable development, Macau has the chance to achieve even greater success in the years to come. This isn't just a reflection on



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the past, it's a promise for the future – a commitment to building a better life for its people and a brighter chapter in the city's history.

Macau stands at a pivotal moment – it has an opportunity to redefine itself, not only as a global tourism destination, but also as a model of resilience, inclusivity, and innovation. The next 25 years will test the SAR's ability to adapt and thrive in an ever-changing world. The question is not whether Macau will rise to the occasion, but how it'll shape its destiny.

— Courtesy of China Daily (HK Edition)



Macao Advances in Healthcare to Become a Global Medical Powerhouse

Feug Yilei

Macao is rewriting the narrative of its healthcare sector, blending precision, accessibility, and innovation to ensure the well-being of its residents while positioning itself as a global medical hub. Some landmark initiatives have recently garnered attention.

Where patient-centered care meets cutting-edge treatment

Spanning over a vast 76,000 square meters and situated in a scenic area easily accessible by light rail, the Macao Medical Center of Peking Union Medical College Hospital is the first large-scale public general hospital constructed by the Macao Special Administrative Region (SAR) government since the city's return to China. The facility recently conducted its inaugural multidisciplinary joint consultation – a groundbreaking service model that combines the expertise of specialists across departments.

For an elderly patient who suffered multiple complications after a fall, Beijing Union Medical College Hospital's expert team collaborated with local specialists to create a tailored, holistic treatment plan. This integrated approach eliminates the need for patients to visit multiple specialists, delivering seamless, comprehensive care.

"I heard that the doctors from Beijing are highly experienced, so I came here for a consultation about my bronchiectasis," said respiratory patient, Ou Yuai. "The doctors are very attentive, which makes me feel more at ease."

"Beijing Union Medical College Hospital has sent a strong team of experts, and the SAR government has provided robust support. Locally, we've recruited highly skilled professionals to form a capable medical team," said Wu Wenming, the director of the hospital.

Wu says that the institution aims to enhance specialized medical services in Macao under the SAR government's '1+4' economic diversification strategy. The focus is twofold: ensuring medical security for Macao residents and aligning



Macao Medical Center of Peking Union Medical College Hospital

healthcare with development goals – that is, establishing a regional medical center that serves the Greater Bay Area, Southeast Asia, and beyond.

"We have top-notch doctors and state-of-the-art facilities. Meanwhile, Macao's Pharmaceutical Supervision Bureau enables swift approval of new medications, offering patients more and updated treatment options," said Ao Ieong, Secretary for Social Affairs and Culture, who called Macao's medical sector a beacon of precision and progress. "This, combined with Macao's rich tourism resources, creates unparalleled opportunities for integrating healthcare and leisure."

Traditional Chinese Medicine innovates treatment options

Macao's seamless integration of advanced medical services and efficient regulatory support is also embodied in initiatives in developing traditional medicine. The recent launch of the Macao University Chinese Medicine Testing Center marks a significant milestone. Serving as a vital link in the health industry chain, the center enhances drug testing, regulation, and innovation, boosting Macao's global competitiveness. Last year, the university also established the Center for Pharmaceutical Regulatory Sciences to develop innovative

tools and standards that streamline the evaluation and approval of pharmaceutical products.

"So, in a way that we have these centers now, scientific research can be more adopted in practical settings," said Dr. Carolina Ung, Deputy Director of the Macao University Pharmaceutical Regulatory Science Research Center. She also highlighted the institute's commitment to demonstrating the safety, quality, and efficacy of traditional Chinese medicine (TCM), thereby advancing TCM development in Macao, the Greater Bay Area, and beyond.

The establishment of the Pharmaceutical Supervision Bureau in 2022 and the Traditional Chinese Medicine Pharmaceutical Law have facilitated streamlined drug approvals, with 94 products approved by October 2024.

Cross-border collaboration further propels development, allowing Macao-based companies like Macao-Union Pharmaceutical to scale production and diversify offerings. The company managed to produce Macao's first cross-border commissioned TCM product for sale within the mode of production in Guangdong Province and supervision in Macao.

"Our production capacity is expected to increase tenfold if this model can be further applied," noted

Lao Tai Hang, technical director of Macao-Union Pharmaceutical. He regarded the approval of Macao-manufactured Chinese medicine in the Greater Bay Area and overseas markets, especially Portuguese-speaking countries, as a key achievement, while noting increasing demand from the US since late this year.

Advancing well-being in the Greater Bay Area and beyond

The SAR government highlighted international recognition of Macao's healthcare achievements since its return to China, by quoting the World Health Organization, which praised its primary healthcare system as a model in the Pacific Region.

Data suggests that by 2023, Macao's healthcare infrastructure had significantly improved, with the number of doctors, nurses, and hospital beds per 1,000 residents more than doubling since 1999. For seniors particularly, free medical services have been available to residents aged 65 and above. The city's life expectancy also rose from 77.9 years in 1999 to 83.1 years in 2023, ranking among the highest globally.

Benefits have expanded for cross-border healthcare. At Macao New Neighborhood Health Station

in the Guangdong-Macao In-Depth Cooperation Zone in Hengqin, which commenced operations early this November, Macao residents can now enjoy complimentary medical consultations and medications.

Staffed by physicians and pharmacists from Macao, the facility mirrors the operational model of Macao's health centers, providing services such as adult, women's, and children's health care, as well as non-appointment outpatient services addressing common chronic conditions. According to staff at the health station, a pioneering step is that to access these accessible and familiar medical services within the mainland, Macao residents need only present their Resident Identity Card along with proof of residence or employment in Hengqin.

Furthermore, Hengqin Hospital has integrated Macao physicians into its medical team, offering diverse services to residents of both Hengqin and Macao. The "Hong Kong and Macao Medicine and Equipment Connect" policy facilitates the use of Hong Kong-registered drugs and medical devices in designated healthcare institutions within the Greater Bay Area.

Complementing these efforts is the SAR government's Health Macao Blueprint, introduced in July 2024, which sets ambitious goals for 2030. The plan aims to improve public health literacy, promote healthy lifestyles, and control chronic diseases through policies emphasizing prevention, community healthcare, and active health management. This strategic vision aligns with Macao's push to integrate health elements into all public policies, ensuring a healthier, more resilient future for its residents.

With its cutting-edge facilities, integration of traditional and modern medicine, and innovative policies, Macao is redefining health and wellness for its residents and beyond, not just ensuring its population's well-being but also stepping onto the global stage as a leader in medical excellence and innovation.

– Courtesy of CGTN



Macao New Neighborhood Health Station



Traditional Chinese Medicine products sold at a pharmacy in Macao



Macau bridges China, Portuguese-speaking countries

Lu Winqin

Ahead of the 25th anniversary of Macau's return to the motherland, which falls on Friday, national and regional flags fluttered high along a Macau street that houses the China-Portuguese-speaking Countries Commercial and Trade Service Platform Complex, a pivotal hub for activities boosting collaboration between the two sides.

Initiated as a way to cement Macau's role as a commercial and trade service platform for China and Portuguese-speaking countries, the complex's launch was announced in Macau in 2016 on the sidelines of the 5th Ministerial Conference of the Forum for Economic and Trade Cooperation between China and Portuguese-speaking Countries, also known as Forum Macao.

The first phase of the complex was completed in 2019, which marked the 20th anniversary of Macau's return to the motherland.

The complex was one part of President Xi Jinping's inspection tour to Macau that year to celebrate the anniversary.

While visiting it, Xi recognized the complex as giving a fresh boost to the development of the service platform.

The subsequent five-year evolution saw major scale-ups of the complex as the regular meeting venue for Forum Macao

and as a multifunctional facility that houses the SAR government-run Commerce and Investment Promotion Institute (IPIM) and the Supporting Office to the Permanent Secretariat of Forum Macao.

"It provides excellent venues for institutes based in the city dedicated to propelling commercial and trade cooperation between China and Portuguese-speaking countries, having greatly facilitated their daily operations and event hosting," said Ji Xianzheng, secretary-general of the Permanent Secretariat of Forum Macao.

Data released by the General Administration of Customs (GAC) shows that China's trade in merchandise with Portuguese-speaking countries in the first 10 months of 2024 reached US\$191.2 billion, a 6 percent year-on-year increase.

The latest slate of high-profile events hosted in the complex included the sixth edition of the Ministerial Conference of Forum Macau in April.

Ji hailed the forum as among the most pronounced accomplishments in advancing cooperation between China and Portuguese-speaking countries, as it enables high-level intergovernmental exchanges between China and these countries.

Ji highlighted the Strategic Plan for Economic and Trade Cooperation (2024-27) hammered

out at the ministerial conference in April as a blueprint for future actions to drive more multilateral partnerships.

The plan clarified key fronts for collaboration, encompassing trade and investment, industry, human resources, medical care and healthcare, as well as education and cultural affairs.

Asked about the secretariat's future priorities, Ji emphasized its resolve to enhance financial services, promote technological exchanges and build a joint mechanism to give full play to Macau's role as a cooperation platform for China and Portuguese-speaking countries.

"The platform role that Macau aims to play is multidimensional in nature, requiring support from many relevant parties, not just the central and regional governments, industry associations and even private think tanks," said Ji, who attended the 6th Meeting of the Forum Macau China Follow-up Action Committee, which was held on December 3 in Beijing.

"Our next step will be briefing Portuguese-speaking countries on the work we have been carrying out, gathering pace for more solid implementation of the strategic plan that was charted," he said.

The complex, whose Pavilion of China-Portuguese-speaking Countries Commercial and Trade Service Platform was unveiled in



Permanent Secretariat of Forum for
Economic and Trade Co-operation between
China and Portuguese-speaking Countries (Macao)

2022, and which features several meeting and activity facilities, is also conducive to deepening trade cooperation and people-to-people exchanges.

The pavilion, covering an estimated 1,800 square meters, is one of the Commerce and Investment Promotion Institute's major recent endeavors to create more commercial and business ties between China and Portuguese-speaking countries.

Kathy Lam, a Permanent Secretariat staff member who works as a tour guide in the pavilion, said she always likes to introduce visitors at the onset to the pavilion's logo, which she described as epitomizing the pavilion's core vision.

According to Lam, the logo is inspired by the first two strokes of the Chinese character "he", meaning "joint", which is also the first character of the Chinese term for "collaboration" and resembles two clasped hands.

Seven areas of the pavilion present a panorama of the concerted work of China and Portuguese-speaking countries, starting with multimedia displays of relevant

preferential policies, supportive programs and collaboration milestones, and topped off with an exhibition of more than 2,000 products from Portuguese-speaking countries. Each item has a QR code for accessing information about the supplier.

Lam said the pavilion, which is open to the public, was warmly received by companies on the Chinese mainland that seek to expand operations to Portuguese-speaking countries.

Ji, the secretary-general of the Permanent Secretariat of Forum Macau, said the complex also hosts themed workshops for government officials from Portuguese-speaking countries as well as experts. The workshops touch upon many areas of collaboration, including traditional Chinese medicine, and more are planned in fields such as the digital economy, green development and the blue, or ocean, economy.

More people have begun to hear about the complex, which "has become one of Macau's new landmarks", Ji added.

— Courtesy of China Daily

A 20-year romance bridges Beijing and Macau



Poster for the film "Promise of Decades". — Photo provided to chinadaily.com.cn



Cast and crew members of "Promise of Decades" promote the film in a downtown Beijing cinema last Wednesday.

— Photo provided to chinadaily.com.cn

Xu Fan

The upcoming film "Promise of Decades", which pays tribute to the 25th Anniversary of Macau's return to the motherland, was released simultaneously on the Chinese mainland, Hong Kong and Macau on Saturday.

Spanning 20 years, beginning with the return in 1999, this bittersweet romance follows the journey of a young couple — the daughter of a small restaurant owner and a college student in Beijing. They meet by chance while purchasing

movie DVDs and fall for each other. Throughout the film, they navigate life's challenges and eventually find solace in a joyous reunion at Guia Lighthouse, a landmark in Macau.

Directed by Macau filmmaker Tracy Choi Ian Sin, the film stars Sichuan province-born actor Ci Sha as the student, Laurinda Ho Chiu-lin — daughter of the late casino tycoon Stanley Ho Hung-sun — as the female protagonist, and Hong Kong veteran actor Eric Tsang Chi-wai as the restaurant owner.

The film premiered at a downtown Beijing cinema last Wednesday. Producer Cheung Ka-fai said the film's two-decade span is intentionally crafted to evoke shared memories among a generation of Chinese audiences.

Ci recalled that filming the movie marked his first trip to Macau where he was drawn to the local scenery. Ho expressed her hope that the film would help more Chinese mainland audiences learn about the culture and delicacies of Macau.

— Courtesy of China Daily