

Xi says Macau is nation's 'pearl in the palm'

President arrives for 3-day inspection tour

Yuki Lei

Two days before the 25th Anniversary of Macau's return to the motherland tomorrow, President Xi Jinping and his wife, Peng Liyuan, arrived in Macau by special aircraft at about 4 p.m. yesterday, marking the beginning of his three-day inspection visit to the city.

This is Xi's first visit to Macau in five years. Apart from inspecting Macau, he will attend today a raft of events celebrating the 25th anniversary of Macau's return to the motherland, including this evening's gala dinner and variety show at the Macao East Asian Dome in Cotai, as well as the inauguration ceremony of Macau's sixth-term government tomorrow morning.

Having been welcomed on board the aircraft by Chief Executive Ho Iat Seng and his wife, Cheng Soo Ching, Xi and his wife stepped off the plane at 4:27 p.m. where they were greeted by Chief Executive-designate Sam Hou Fai, National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC) Vice President Edmund Ho Hau Wah; the director of the Liaison Office of the Central People's Government Macau Special Administrative Region (MSAR), Zheng Xincong; and the commissioner of the Foreign Affairs Ministry Commission in the MSAR, Liu Xianfa.

The airport apron was covered with a red carpet and a podium set up, with about 500 locals, including primary and secondary school and university students and youth representatives from all walks of life, waving national flags and Macau regional flags to warmly welcome the arrival of Xi and his wife.

Xi and Peng accepted flowers from two children, a boy and a girl, and hugged them, and they also waved at residents standing nearby.

Flanked by Ho and Sam, as well as Zeng and the State Council's Hong Kong and Macau Affairs Office Director Xia Baolong, Xi made an arrival statement at the airport, extending his sincere greetings and best wishes to all Macau residents, while also underlining that "Macau is a pearl in the palm of the motherland".

'Very happy to come to beautiful Macau'

In his speech, Xi first expressed his impression of the city, saying that "every time I come to the beautiful city of Macau, I feel very happy", and he also hailed Macau's world-recognised success in the implementation of the "One Country, Two Systems" principle:



President Xi Jinping delivers a brief statement upon his arrival at the local airport yesterday. – Photos: Yuki Lei

"Over the past 25 years, the practice of the 'One Country, Two Systems' principle with Macau's characteristics has achieved a world-recognised success, which has demonstrated vitality and a unique appeal".

In his statement, Xi elaborated on the purpose of his visit, which was not only to "celebrate the 25th anniversary of Macau's return to the motherland together with the Macau compatriots", but also to inspect Macau's new developments and changes over the past few years: "In the next few days, I will go around, have a look around, and have extensive and in-depth exchanges with our friends from all walks of life, and discuss plans for Macau's development".

In his three-minute statement Xi also expressed his expectations for Macau, stressing that "the rejuvenation of the nation is unstoppable, and the prospect of Macau's development is promising...As long as we give full play to the institutional advantages of the 'One Country, Two Systems' principle, and have the courage to work hard and innovate, Macau will certainly create a better tomorrow".

Xi left the airport in a Red Flag limousine.

According to previous news reports, during his tenure as president, Xi has visited

Macau three times, in 2014, 2019 and this year, each time coinciding with the formal start of a new local government, where he attended each time its inauguration and presided over the swearing-in ceremony.

During his visit in December 2019,

Xi, accompanied by then chief executive Fernando Chui Sai On, went to the Government Services Centre in Areia Preta and visited a local school to interact with local residents, teachers and students, among other activities. ■



Xi Jinping (left, front) and his spouse Peng Liyuan (right, front) greet local students, with Chief Executive Ho Iat Seng (left, behind), his wife Cheng Soo Ching (right, behind) and Chief Executive-designate Sam Hou Fai (unseen behind Ho) following the president and his wife.

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The Macau Post Daily

Xi praises Ho for 5 years of accomplishing 'no easy task'

President Xi Jinping met with outgoing Chief Executive Ho Iat Seng yesterday, acknowledging his determination to tackle challenges and the achievements he has made during his five-year term.

– Story on p. 3

Malaysia's foreign minister to be fined for smoking at eatery

Malaysia's foreign minister will be issued a fine for puffing a cigarette in a non-smoking area, the country's health minister said yesterday.

– Story on p. 14

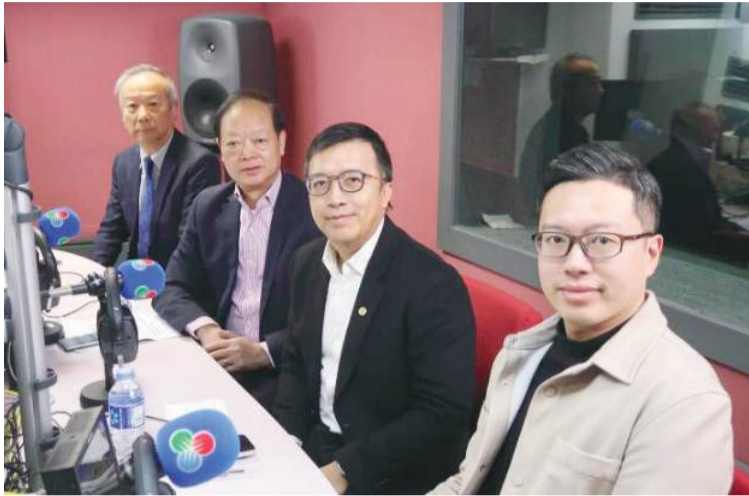
Trump jokes Canada becoming 51st US state 'a great idea'

US President-elect Donald Trump said yesterday it would be "a great idea" for Canada to become the 51st US state, teasing on social media that "many Canadians" welcome the idea, as Ottawa is wracked by a political crisis.

– Story on p. 16



'Macau Consumer Grand Prix' generates 940 million patacas in spending: ACM



Macau Chamber of Commerce (ACM) President Frederico Ma Chi Ngai (second from right), Industry and Commerce Federation of the Macau Central and Southern District Chairman Lei Cheok Kuan (left), Industry and Commerce Association of Macau Northern District (AICZNM) Director General Ma Kin Cheong (second from left), and Macau General Union of Neighbourhood Associations (commonly known as Kai Fong in Cantonese) representative Chan Meng Kei, pose yesterday during the current affairs phone-in programme, Ou Mun Gwong Cheung, hosted by Ou Mun Tin Toi – the Chinese-language radio channel of public broadcaster TDM. – Photo courtesy of TDM

Ginnie Liang

Macau Chamber of Commerce (ACM) President Frederico Ma Chi Ngai said yesterday that the ongoing three-month "Macau Consumer Grand Prix" campaign has achieved the expected target, with 22,000 local businesses participating, noting that 190 million patacas in e-vouchers have been redeemed so far, generating 940 million patacas in expenditure.

Ma made the remarks during yesterday's discussion on the current affairs phone-in programme "Ou Mun Gwong Cheung" hosted by the radio station of Macau's public broadcaster TDM.

The large-scale consumer sales promotion, which is taking place between September 20 and December 29, aims to boost different districts' economies and encourage local residents to stay and spend

money during the weekend, Ma said.

Meanwhile, the chairman of the Industry and Commerce Federation of the Macau Central and Southern District, Lei Cheok Kuan, said that the promotion campaign has been of great help to small- and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), but the increase in turnover of local district businesses has been a mixed bag, and some of them have failed to meet their expectations.

Lei said he believes that as people's consumption pattern nowadays has changed, local businesses should think about how to make good use of online platforms for promoting their goods and services, while improving their quality.

Industry and Commerce Association of Macau Northern District (AICZNM) Director General Ma Kin Cheong told the phone-in programme that the campaign has

had a positive impact on spending in the community, boosting the businesses of different sectors in the city's various communities by two to four times by alleviating the impact of residents' expenditure in the mainland during weekends.

Ma Kin Cheong also said he believes that the event has met its expectations, adding that the participating businesses have also launched more promotions during the event to increase business growth.

However, a Macau General Union of Neighbourhood Associations (commonly known as Kai Fong in Cantonese) representative said that some elderly had told him that they could not participate in the campaign because they did not know how to use e-payment, suggesting that conventional consumption cards should be distributed to senior citizens. ■

38th edition of Books and the City now available

Rui Pastorin

The latest edition of the trilingual (Chinese, Portuguese and English) *Books and the City* magazine is now available, this time taking on the theme "The Era of E-Reading".

Now in its 38th edition, yesterday's Cultural Affairs Bureau (IC) statement said that it introduces the public library's e-resources, while user experiences and expert insights on current e-reading trends are also tackled. Its "Library Handbook" section meanwhile features lectures and training courses on antique book restoration, while the "Reading Landscape" spotlights the recently inaugurated Bairro da Ilha Verde Library, according to the statement, while *The Little Fish Swims into the Moon* by student poet Chen Junzhe is introduced in the "Author's Say" section.

Moreover, 10 brief book reviews and the "New Launch" section also make their return. The statement said that 3,000 copies are available



This image provided by the Cultural Affairs Bureau (IC) yesterday shows the cover of the 38th edition of its *Books and the City* magazine themed "The Era of E-Reading".

across public libraries, various bookstores, higher education institutions, the Tap Seac Gallery and other local cultural and art facilities, while an online version is available on www.library.gov.mo. ■

Filipina maid & boyfriend steal from employer: police



Judiciary Police (PJ) officers escort the two hooded suspects from the Philippines to a PJ vehicle outside the PJ headquarters in Zape yesterday. – Photo: William Chan

William Chan

A Filipina domestic helper and her boyfriend, who is also a locally employed domestic helper from the Philippines, have been arrested for stealing cash and jewellery from her employer, Judiciary Police (PJ) spokesman Chong Kam Leong said during a special press conference yesterday.

The maid is a 39-year-old woman surnamed Cruzado, while the 47-year-old male suspect is surnamed Leyza.

According to Wong, Cruzado's employer, a mainland woman, reported to the police the theft of cash and jewellery worth a total of 322,000 patacas from her bedroom drawer back in October. Last week, when the victim's father briefly

stayed at her Taipa flat, 1,500 yuan from his backpack also went missing, prompting another report to the authorities.

With no sign of forced entry and Cruzado being the sole person present at home, suspicion fell on her, Chong said, adding that further investigations unveiled that Leyza had pawned the stolen jewellery for 15,000 patacas at a shop in the Rua da Emenda (義字街) neighbourhood where the suspects lived. The police later recovered the stolen items.

The duo were arrested on Tuesday. They refused to cooperate.

The duo were transferred to the Public Prosecutions Office (MP) yesterday. Cruzado faces an aggravated theft charge, while Leyza faces charges of fencing and fraud. ■

US sales manager nabbed for drunk driving

William Chan

A male non-resident worker (NRW) from the United States has been arrested for drunk driving, Public Security Police (PSP) spokesman Wong Chi Weng said at a press conference yesterday.

The offender surnamed Jesse is in his thirties. He is a sales manager.

According to Wong, a local resident reported the case to the police on Tuesday afternoon after witnessing Jesse's vehicle colliding with the victim's car in a carpark in the city centre. Upon arrival, the police discovered that

Jesse was reeking of alcohol.

A breathalyser test showed that his alcohol concentration was 2.17 grams of alcohol per litre of blood.

Under questioning, Jesse said that his wife initially drove them to the carpark. Subsequently, she exited the vehicle for a brief errand. When a car approached from behind, he made the decision to move the car into a parking bay, causing the collision with the other vehicle.

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



This undated handout photo provided by the Public Security Police (PSP) yesterday shows a PSP officer escorting the drunk-driving suspect to a police station.

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Macau POST

Macau Weather

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COLD AND VERY DRY.
MAINLY FINE.
FORCE 3 TO 4 NORTH TO NORTHEASTERLY WINDS,
OCCASIONALLY
FORCE 5 WITH GUSTS.
RELATIVE HUMIDITY
WILL RANGE
BETWEEN 30%
AND 70%.

12°C~19°C

Source: SMG

US delays consular service in Macau

Yuki Lei

The US Consulate General Hong Kong and Macau said in a statement it postponed its consular service in Macau scheduled for yesterday because the Office of the Commissioner of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China (PRC) in the Macau Special Administrative Region (MSAR) failed to issue

the required visas in time, making it impossible for consuls of the Consulate General to travel to Macau to provide its services as planned.

"Consular services for today in Macau have been postponed due to the Office of the Commissioner of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China refusing to issue the required visas in time for our Consuls to travel to assist

US citizens resident in Macau," according to yesterday's message by the US Consulate General Hong Kong and Macau for US citizens in Macau on its Facebook Page.

The statement also reminded US citizens to refer to the consulate general's travel advisory for more specific information about the Consulate's ability to offer its services in Macau. ■



Xi praises Ho for 5 years of accomplishing 'no easy task'

Tony Wong

President Xi Jinping met with outgoing Chief Executive Ho Iat Seng yesterday, acknowledging his determination to tackle challenges and the achievements he has made during his five-year term including his government's victory in its battle against the three-year COVID-19 pandemic, which the president described as "no easy task", Xinhua reported yesterday.

The meeting was held at the San Chok Un Guesthouse ("New Bamboo Mansion") on Penha Hill yesterday afternoon, after Xi's arrival in Macau for a three-day inspection visit.

According to the Xinhua report, Xi also said he hopes that Ho will support Macau's new chief executive in his governance in accordance with the law.

Ho will be succeeded by Sam Hou Fai tomorrow who alongside his principal officials and chief public prosecutor will then be sworn in by Xi.

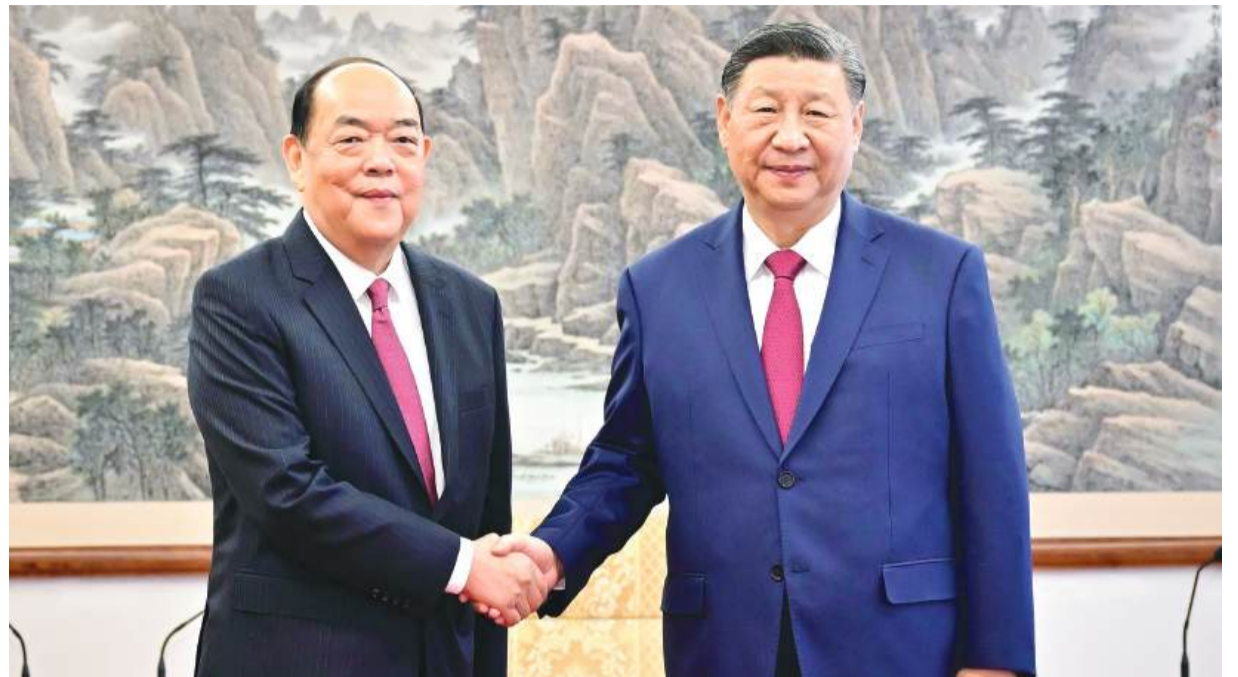
Sam will become the Macau Special Administrative Region's

(MSAR) sixth-term and fourth chief executive on Friday, the 25th Anniversary of Macau's return to the motherland.

During yesterday's meeting, according to Xinhua, Xi noted that Ho has risen to challenges in a pragmatic and productive manner during his five-year term as chief executive, saying that "this was no easy task, yet you have achieved high accomplishments".

Xi said that Ho has led the MSAR government to unite all sectors of Macau's civil society in comprehensively, accurately and unwaveringly implementing the "One Country, Two Systems" principle, resolutely safeguarding the nation's sovereignty, security and development interests, overcoming the severe impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, and pushing ahead with its plan to appropriately diversify the city's economy.

According to the report, the president praised Ho and his government for having made new progress in various undertakings



President Xi Jinping (right) shakes hands with Chief Executive Ho Iat Seng during a meeting at the San Chok Un Guesthouse on Penha Hill yesterday. — Photo: Xinhua

in Macau, which he said has consolidated Macau's favourable situation of prosperity and stability, telling Ho that "the central authorities fully acknowledge the work of you and the current SAR government".

Xi also said he hopes that Ho will actively support the new chief executive and his team to administer the city in accordance with the law, as well as continuing to contribute to the cause of "One Country, Two Systems" and the development of Macau and the nation.

During the meeting, according to Xinhua, Ho, on behalf of the MSAR government and Macau residents, warmly welcomed President Xi and his wife, Peng Liyuan, to Macau where they will attend a gathering celebrating the 25th Anniversary of Macau's return to the motherland and the inauguration ceremony of the sixth-term MSAR government.

Ho said that he is sincerely grateful to Xi and the central government for trusting in and supporting him.

Ho said that with the strong

support of the central authorities, over the past five years the MSAR government has united and led all sectors of Macau's civil society to tackle the impact of the three-year COVID-19 pandemic and to make new progress in various undertakings in Macau.

According to the report, Ho pledged to support the new-term MSAR government in exercising law-based governance as well as continuing to make his own contributions to the development of Macau and the nation. ■

Xi lauds Macau's success ahead of silver jubilee

President Xi Jinping arrived in Macau yesterday afternoon, describing Macao as "a pearl in the palm" of the motherland and expressing confidence in its promising future.

Xi, also general secretary of the Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Committee and chairman of the Central Military Commission, will attend a gathering celebrating the 25th anniversary of Macau's return to the motherland and the inauguration ceremony of the sixth-term government of the Macau Special Administrative Region (MSAR) yesterday. He will also inspect the MSAR.

At Macau International Airport, the local police force band played lively welcome tunes. Dragon and lion dancers filled the air with joy. Hundreds of people including children and representatives from various sectors waved the national flag, the flag of the MSAR and flowers, expressing their warm welcome.

At around 4 p.m., Xi and his wife, Peng Liyuan, stepped out of the cabin of the special plane and waved to the cheering crowd.

"Every visit to this beautiful place has been very delightful for me," Xi said in a brief speech at the airport.

Over the past 25 years, the practice of "One Country, Two Systems" with Macau characteristics has achieved success widely recognized by the world, showcasing great vitality and unique charm, Xi said.

"This is the glory of Macau residents and the pride of all Chinese people," he said.

On behalf of the central government and Chinese people

of all ethnic groups, he extended sincere greetings and best wishes to all Macau residents, adding that Macau's development and the well-being of Macau residents have always been on his mind.

Xi said he will have extensive and in-depth exchanges with friends in Macau on the region's development during the visit.

He expressed the belief that Macau will create an even brighter future by fully leveraging the institutional advantages of "One Country, Two Systems," working hard and actively promoting innovation.

The MSAR is brimming with cheerful vibes in the days leading up to the 25th Anniversary of its return to the motherland. Anniversary-themed posters and floral decorations adorn popular sites such as the Ruins of St. Paul's, while the national flag and the MSAR flag flutter along the streets.

"Meeting President Xi again up close, I was extremely excited," said Jiang Lai Peng, a student from Kao Yip Middle School who also participated in the welcoming ceremony for President Xi's Macau visit five years ago. "His attention to and care for Macau have deeply touched and inspired me and my classmates."

Ho Kuok Tou, founder and CEO of an artificial intelligence (AI) firm present in both Macau and the mainland, said he is full of expectations for the future development of Macau.

"I hope the people of Macau will continue to work hard and actively integrate into the overall national development," he said.

— Xinhua, MPD

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Photos: Rui Pastorin

Over 200 works showcased at AFA Autumn Salon

Rui Pastorin

The AFA Autumn Salon 2024 kicked off on Saturday at The Parisian Macao in Cotai, presenting over 200 works by 113 artists across eight galleries.

This year's Autumn Salon, which marks its 15th year, is showcased across Level 3 of the integrated resort's Shoppes at Parisian and features exhibits chosen from submissions made during an open call that lasted until October 31, with over 250 works received.

The chosen works were created through various mediums such as paintings of different disciplines, sculptures, photography, installations and pop art. An "Invited Artist List" also showcases works by well-known artists from Macau, according to a recent statement by AFA (Art For All Society).

The eight themed galleries housing the various exhibits are "Art Award Nominees Gallery", where one can find shortlisted works for the Orient Foundation Art Award; "Essence of Macao Art Gallery", which presents works by well-known Macau artists; "Chinese Painting Gallery"; "Sculptural Art Gallery"; Photography Gallery; "Pop Art Gallery"; "Salon Gallery"; and "Exhibition in Exhibition", a solo exhibition by Wong Sio Hang, the winner of last year's Orient Foundation Art Award.

The statement pointed out that the exhibition also features two paintings by Un Chi Iam, who is the wife of the late master Mio Pang Fei; a two-metre-tall golden bronze statue of Kun Iam by Portuguese sculptor Cristina Rocha Leiria; and three paintings by the late artist Kwok Woon, which are displayed alongside the statue.



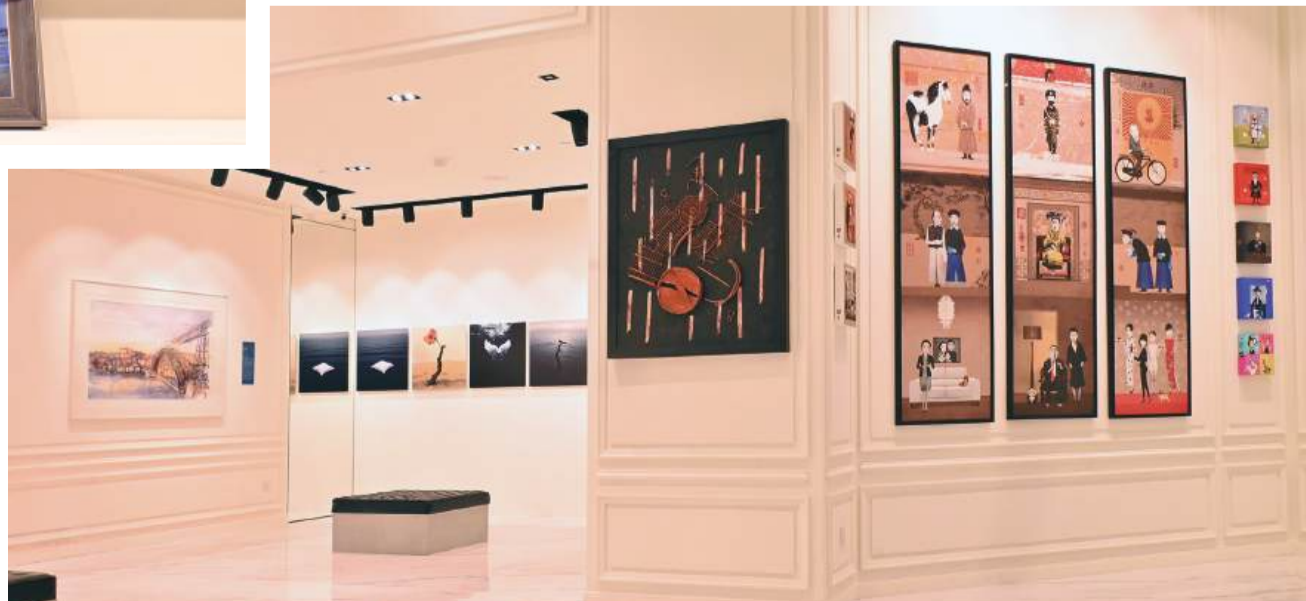
Artist Lio Pou I wins Orient Foundation Art Award

Meanwhile, the winner of the Orient Foundation (FO) Art Award was also revealed during Saturday's award presentation, with Lio Pou I taking home first prize for her piece "Mãe Terra"* (2024), while the 2nd and 3rd place winners were respectively Tsang Tseng Tseng and Ho Ka Io, the recent AFA statement said.

The winner has been awarded a prize amounting to 50,000 patacas which is to fund a one-month residency in Portugal to create, exchange ideas or receive training at private or public art institutions.

One can visit the exhibition from 12 noon to 7 p.m. until March 25. More details are available on www.afamacau.com

*Portuguese for "Mother Earth"





Govt to hold countdown gigs in Macau & Taipa on Dec 31

Ginnie Liang

The Cultural Affairs Bureau (IC) announced in a statement yesterday that it will host countdown concerts in Sai Van Lake Square and at Taipa Houses on December 31 simultaneously, featuring famous Hong Kong singers George Lam (林子祥), Sally Yeh (葉蓓文) and Johnny Yip (葉振棠), as well as a number of local artists and bands.

The event will be co-hosted by the Macau Government Tourism Office (MGTO), Municipal Affairs Bureau (IAM) and the local public broadcaster TDM.

From 10 p.m. to 12:10 a.m. of the following day, the countdown concert in Sai Van Lake Square will feature closing performances by George Lam and Sally Yeh, who will present classic hits, as well as a lineup of singers and bands including Maria Cordero (肥媽), German Ku (古淖文), Vivian Chan (陳慧敏), Rico Long (龍世傑), Nick Ngai (倪力), local bands

FIDA (青原), Daze in White, and Ying May Supermarket (英美超市) and local choir Ocean Walker, local singer KC Ao Ieong (歐陽日華) and DAX One Dance Complex, the statement said.

Meanwhile, the 2024 Taipa Countdown Show will start at 8:30 p.m. at the Taipa Houses stage, with a focus on the integration of diverse cultures, with the performances by local singers and bands including local singer winifai (林靜暉), Concrete/Lotus and Peony & Lon, ending with a series of classic songs performed by renowned Hong Kong singer Johnny Yip (葉振棠), the statement said.

In addition, a series of cultural performances will be presented on the Taipa Houses stage, including dance by Victor Kumar and the Bollywood Dreams Group, traditional Philippine dance by the Bisdak Association of Macao, traditional song and dance by the Indonesian, Myanmar and Vietnamese communities in Macau, Jason Fong light juggling and magic

shows, as well as Youth Variety Show, the statement said.

Cultural booths will be set up by members of the Philippine, Indian, Indonesian, Myanmar and Vietnamese communities in Macau from 8:30 p.m. to 11:30 p.m. at Taipa Houses, showcasing local traditional costumes, tourist information, snacks and drinks, and “highlighting the lifestyle in Macau characterised by the harmonious co-existence and integration of different cultures and peoples,” according to the statement.

Admission to both events is free, the statement said, adding that road closures, security checks and traffic control measures will be implemented, and further details of the measures will be announced later.

For more information about the events, please visit IC’s website at www.icm.gov.mo, WeChat official account “IC_Art_Macao” and “IC Art” page on Facebook, and the Macau activities website “Enjoy Macao”. ■



This poster released by the Cultural Affairs Bureau (IC) yesterday shows the lineup for the upcoming countdown concert in Sai Van Lake Square on New Year’s Eve.

Fireworks to celebrate 25th Anniversary of Macau’s return on Christmas Day

Yuki Lei

The Macau Government Tourism Office (MGTO) has announced that a 15-minute firework display will be held next Wednesday, i.e., Christmas Day, with the theme of the 25th Anniversary of Macau’s return to the motherland and the 75th Anniversary of the Founding of the People’s Republic of China (PRC).

Taking place off Macau Tower, the themed firework display, featuring the illustration of the numbers “75” and “25”, a five-pointed star, a Chinese knot, concentric circles and a rainbow bridge symbolising the successful implementation of the “One Country, Two Systems” principle, will be visible from multiple viewing locations including Anim’Arte NAM VAN, Avenida de Sagres (沙格斯大馬路), the area between Kun Iam Ecumenical Centre and Kun Iam Statue Waterfront Leisure Area on Avenida Dr Sun Yat-Sen (孫逸仙大馬路), the waterfront at the Macau Science Centre (MSC), and Avenida do Oceano (海洋大馬路) in Taipa.

An MGTO statement said on Tuesday that the firework display “signifies Macau’s hope and longing, expressing its love for the motherland, wishing for a better future for the country and the Macau Special Administrative Region (MSAR) and, at the same time, offering best wishes and blessings to all local residents and visitors alike”.

Meanwhile, according to the statement, visitors may enter the Macau Grand Prix (MGP) Museum in Zape for free tomorrow in celebration of the anniversary of Macau’s return to the motherland on December 20.

Especially for the holidays (Reunification Day and Winter Solstice), the statement added, museum visitors on December 20 to 23, and 25 and 26 (Christmas Day and Boxing Day), will be able to enjoy a free bus tour around the Guia Circuit by signing up on presentation of their museum admission ticket for the day. ■



This poster shows the details of next Wednesday’s celebratory fireworks display. Image provided by the Macau Government Tourism Office (MGTO) on Tuesday.

Wealthy, tasty, shiny! Macau’s success in facts and figures

Analysis

There are few places where luxury hotels and Michelin-star restaurants are common sights, where roaring race cars and elite-level sports are nothing out of the ordinary, where Portuguese fado and Chinese opera meet, and where top-performing students and high-tech research achievements are frequent news items.

These rarities are the reality in Macau – a rich, exciting and colorful special administrative region (SAR) in China. As the city gears up for the 25th anniversary of its return to China from Portuguese rule tomorrow, this article compiles some impressive facts about Macau that you may not have known.

WORLD’S SECOND-RICHEST PLACE

This year, *Forbes* magazine listed Macau as the second-richest place in the world, trailing only Luxembourg. This was measured by per capita gross domestic product (GDP), adjusted for purchasing power parity (PPP).

The financial magazine calculated Macau’s real per capita GDP at US\$134,140, outranking other rich places in Asia such as Singapore, Qatar and Hong Kong.

FIVE-STAR HOTELS

The *Forbes* Travel Guide awarded 22 Macau hotels a five-star rating in both 2023 and 2024. This year is the second consecutive year that Macau has the most Forbes-approved top-tier accommodation providers in the world, beating its historic rival, London.

These opulent hotels are often parts of larger commercial complexes in Macau that encompass entertainment, shopping and dining, offering the finest one-stop travel experiences for visitors from around the world.

MICHELIN-STAR RESTAURANTS

A total of 16 restaurants in Macau hold Michelin stars in

2024. Two have won the coveted three-star designation, meaning “exceptional;” six have been awarded two stars, meaning “excellent;” and eight have one star for “high quality cooking.” This makes Macau’s density of Michelin-star restaurants among the world’s highest.

Macau continues to be “a melting pot where culinary traditions from around the world converge, creating a unique and dynamic food culture for travelers and locals alike,” said Chris Gledhill, a vice president of Michelin.

ELITE SPORTS

From car racing to table tennis, and from golf to volleyball, Macau presents top-level sporting events featuring some of the world’s best athletes all year long. In his 2024 policy address, MSAR Chief Executive Ho Iat Seng set the regional goal of hosting at least two international sporting events each month.

The annual Macau Grand Prix (MGP) – already in its seventh decade – has become a glittering calling card for Macau, igniting racing enthusiasm throughout the city. The World Table Tennis (WTT) games feature top-seed players, with legions of fans packing into grand stadiums to watch matches.

DIVERSE PERFORMANCES

A host of Broadway musicals, traditional Portuguese fado music, Hong Kong pop concerts and Peking operas mean lovers of culture and the arts can always find a musical event to suit their tastes in Macau. Cultural events have helped draw tourists from near and far, effectively boosting the local tourism industry.

Government data shows that nearly 20 million people attended various arts and culture events in Macau last year, and large-scale pop concerts drew up to one million people, generating gross

ticket sales of approximately US\$140 million.

OUTSTANDING STUDENT PERFORMANCE

The overall academic performance of students in Macau ranked second globally in 2022, according to the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), which was created by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). PISA measures 15-year-olds’ ability to use their reading, mathematics and science knowledge and skills to meet real-life challenges, according to the OECD website.

In maths, the main focus of PISA 2022, 15-year-old students in Macau scored 552 points, compared to an average of 472 points across all OECD countries. Macau’s students averaged 543 points in science, compared to an overall average of 485 points in OECD countries. In reading, they scored an average of 510 points, compared to the OECD average of 476 points.

CUTTING-EDGE MICROELECTRONICS RESEARCH

Though known for its vibrant entertainment landscape, Macau is also a pioneer in cutting-edge high-tech research. Research on microelectronics at the University of Macau (UM) has continuously stood out at the annual International Solid-State Circuits Conference (ISSCC) of the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers. The ISSCC is the most prestigious international conference in the field of electronics, involving a rigorous paper selection process.

This year’s conference accepted 14 papers from UM, which ranked the university joint first in the number of publications. These achievements reflect UM’s international recognition, as well as its leading position in the field.

– Xinhua, MPD

STOCK MARKETS

Hang Seng Index closes 0.83 pct higher

HONG KONG – Hong Kong’s stock market ended higher yesterday with the benchmark Hang Seng Index up 0.83 percent to close at 19,864.55 points.

While the Hang Seng China Enterprises Index climbed 1.06 percent to end at 7,180.79 points, the Hang Seng Tech Index jumped 1.82 percent to close at 4,468.85 points. – Xinhua



António Duarte Mil-Homens presents 25 photos at Portuguese Consulate General



These photos show Duarte Mil-Homens works on display.

Interview by Rui Pastorin

In 1999, as Macau was on the verge of its return to the motherland, Portuguese photographer António Duarte Mil-Homens was among those who were able to capture the final moments leading up to it. And until January 17, 25 of those photographs are being presented at the Portuguese Consulate General in Macau and Hong Kong for an exhibition entitled “RAEM 25 Anos – Memórias de António Duarte Mil-Homens” (“Macau SAR 25 years – Memories of António Duarte Mil-Homens”).

According to information provided during Monday’s opening ceremony, the photos on display captured the transition process for *Revista Macau*’s coverage, while part of the photos were also taken for the book “Macau: Os últimos 100 dias do Império” – Livros do Oriente e D. Quixote (“Macau: The Last Hundred Days of the Empire”) by *Expresso* journalist José Pedro Castanheira.

Revista Macau is a magazine published by the Macau Cultural Affairs Bureau (IC).

Expresso is a weekly newspaper in Portugal.

Moreover, the Lisbon-born and



Portuguese lensman António Duarte Mil-Homens introduces his works to guests attending the opening ceremony at the Consulate General of Portugal in Macau on Monday evening.
– Photos: Rui Pastorin

essentially self-taught lensman told the *Post* at the exhibition’s opening ceremony on Monday night: “I thought it would be important to transmit my feelings about what happened 25 years ago. And the best way to do this is to present pictures that were taken in that period”, noting that the photos represent important moments.

The last Consultative Council meeting of Governor Gen. Vasco Rocha Vieira, the last solemn session of the Leal Senado (“Loyal Senate”), which is now the Municipal Affairs Bureau (IAM), moments of the transfer ceremony,

and the Chinese People’s Liberation Army (PLA) marching into Macau are just some of the scenes that the Portuguese photographer captured and is presenting.

“This is my testimony. I think it is historical, something that happened 25 years ago will not be repeated again. So, I felt the need to share my experience from 25 years ago”, Duarte Mil-Homens told the *Post*.

The photographs are on display until January 17 and the photographer hopes that those viewing the pictures, whether they are from Macau or not, will enjoy looking at them. ■

Q&A on China’s ‘One Country, Two Systems’ policy

Analysis

As China prepares to mark the 25th anniversary of Macau’s return to the motherland tomorrow, the city stands as a testament to the success of the “One Country, Two Systems” policy.

Macau and its neighbor Hong Kong are China’s two special administrative regions (SARs) governed under this policy since the Chinese government resumed its exercise of sovereignty over them following long periods of Portuguese and British colonial rule.

So what exactly is “One Country, Two Systems”? What are its distinctive features, and how does it influence China and the world at large?

This Q&A aims to answer some frequently asked questions.

Q: What do “One Country” and “Two Systems” mean?

A: “One Country, Two Systems” is a basic state policy China adopted to realize peaceful reunification.

“One Country” refers to a unified country, which is the People’s Republic of China. The central government has overall jurisdiction over its SARs. For example, the central government is responsible for foreign affairs relating to Hong Kong and Macau, and the defense of the two regions. The two SARs’ chief executives, after being elected locally, are appointed by the central government.

“Two systems” means the SARs adopt different social systems and policies from those on the mainland. This allows Hong Kong and Macau to maintain their capitalist systems and ways of life

within socialist China. Macau’s gaming industry is an example of this policy in practice, as casino gambling is illegal on the mainland.

Q: When and under what circumstances was the concept first proposed?

A: The idea was the brainchild of Deng Xiaoping and other Chinese leaders of his generation. Deng said the concept was proposed to reunify the country, initially with Taiwan in mind. The island province has not been reunified with the mainland for decades as a result of the unresolved civil war dating back to the late 1940s.

In the early 1980s, the “One Country, Two Systems” concept was formally put forward and first applied to solve the question of Hong Kong, when the Chinese and British governments began formal negotiations for the handover.

According to Deng, achieving reunification through peaceful negotiation requires that the terms be acceptable to all parties. Regarding Hong Kong, he said a socialist transformation would not be acceptable to all parties, referring to Britain and most residents of Hong Kong in particular. Therefore, the “One Country, Two Systems” formula was proposed.

Q: What is the rationale behind this policy and what issues does it address?

A: “One Country, Two Systems” was applied to facilitate the return of Hong Kong and Macau to the motherland, while respecting their distinct social systems and economic structures.

The policy balances the principle of national reunification and territorial integrity with the need to acknowledge the historical realities and current situations of these regions. Its flexibility is seen as key to addressing the complexities of integrating areas with different ideologies and social systems into the People’s Republic of China, while ensuring their long-term prosperity and stability.

Q: What is the legal basis for “One Country, Two Systems”?

A: The legal basis of “One Country, Two Systems” lies in China’s Constitution as well as the basic laws of the Hong Kong and Macau SARs.

According to Article 31 of the Chinese Constitution, the state may establish SARs when necessary. The systems instituted in SARs shall, in light of specific circumstances, be prescribed by laws enacted by the National People’s Congress, China’s top legislature. This article provides the constitutional basis for the establishment of SARs that adopt different social systems.

Q: What are some examples of the practice of “One Country, Two Systems” in Hong Kong and Macau?

A: Under “One Country, Two Systems,” Hong Kong and Macau can independently make and enforce their respective tariff policies, as well as implement their own customs tariff and trade rules. For instance, the Macau SAR can join international trade pacts as “Macau, China.”

Hong Kong and Macau can issue their own currencies – the Hong

Kong dollar and the Macau pataca. As international cities, Hong Kong and Macau have kept English and Portuguese respectively as their official languages besides Chinese.

The basic laws also provide that the two SARs exercise independent judicial power, including that of final adjudication. The Macau SAR’s Court of Final Appeal, for example, has the power to make final verdicts on local cases.

However, the exercise of judicial power must abide by the Constitution and the basic laws, and safeguard national unity and territorial integrity. For concerns of national sovereignty and security, the courts of the SARs have no jurisdiction over acts of state such as defense and foreign affairs.

Q: What is the significance of “One Country, Two Systems” for China and the world at large?

A: The policy ensured the smooth return of Hong Kong and Macau to China through peaceful means, avoiding violence and strife that had occurred in similar situations elsewhere in the world. It has also sustained and further boosted the two SARs’ prosperity.

Embodying the idea of “seeking common ground and putting differences aside,” the policy can serve as a reference for resolving complex issues in the international community.

Q: Is there a time frame for maintaining “One Country, Two Systems” in Hong Kong and Macau?

A: According to the basic laws of both SARs, the existing capitalist system and way of life shall remain

unchanged for 50 years.

The Chinese central government has reiterated that it will remain resolute in implementing the policy, and will not change or vacillate in this stand.

The central leadership has lately expressed the intention to maintain the policy in the long run as it serves the fundamental interests of Hong Kong, Macau and the nation as a whole, and has gained broad support both home and abroad.

Q: Will the “One Country, Two Systems” policy apply to Taiwan in the future?

A: In fact, the policy was initially proposed to resolve the Taiwan question. The central authorities have reiterated that the principles of “peaceful reunification” and “One Country, Two Systems” are the best approach to realizing full national reunification.

A government white paper issued in 2022 stated explicitly that once peaceful reunification is achieved under “One Country, Two Systems,” it will lay new foundations for China to make further progress and achieve national rejuvenation. At the same time, it will create huge opportunities for social and economic development in Taiwan and bring tangible benefits to the people of Taiwan.

Provided that China’s sovereignty, security and development interests are guaranteed, Taiwan will enjoy a high degree of autonomy as a special administrative region after reunification, said the white paper, titled “The Taiwan Question and China’s Reunification in the New Era.”
– Xinhua



Leading Macau to greater success of 'One Country, Two Systems'

Analysis

In 2012, shortly after becoming general secretary of the Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Committee, Xi Jinping visited Guangdong Province. One stop on this trip was Hengqin, a place that was not so well-known back then but has since gained much spotlight.

Hengqin is an island in the city of Zhuhai, adjacent to Macau. Xi urged exploring innovative cooperation models between Hengqin and Macau to contribute to the latter's long-term prosperity and stability.

Macau's development has long been on Xi's mind. In 2009, then as vice president of China, he visited Macau and announced the plan to develop Hengqin, highlighting its potential to bolster Macau's economic diversification.

Yesterday afternoon, Xi, also state president and chairman of the Central Military Commission (CMC), arrived in Macau to attend celebrations for the 25th Anniversary of Macau's return to the motherland. Delivering a brief speech at the airport, Xi called Macau "a pearl in the palm" of the motherland.

Over the past 25 years, the practice of "One Country, Two Systems" with Macau characteristics has achieved success widely recognized by the world, showcasing great vitality and unique charm, he said.

The strategic vision Xi outlined for the city's growth, along with his commitment to improving the livelihoods of the local people, has been pivotal to Macau's transformation into a thriving economic hub and a desired tourist and leisure destination. Its development has been a success story of "One Country, Two Systems."

Since its return from Portuguese rule in 1999, Macau has been governed as a special administrative region (SAR) 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.

Over the years, Macau's GDP had grown from 51.9 billion patacas in 1999 to 379.5 billion patacas in 2023, while its per capita GDP had more than quadrupled to around US\$70,000. This year, *Forbes* magazine listed Macau as the second-richest place in the world, trailing only Luxembourg.

The annual number of visitors to the city has also surged to more than 32 million from seven million 25 years ago.

PLANNING MACAU'S DEVELOPMENT

The Central People's Government has taken into full consideration Macau's unique position and role, encouraging it to actively integrate into the national development strategy.

For Hong Kong and Macau, "One Country, Two Systems" is the biggest strength; China's reform and opening up has set the broadest stage for their development; and the implementation of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and the development of the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macau Greater Bay Area (GBA) present new and significant



Pedestrians walk under a Macau SAR 25th Anniversary celebratory installation at the city's main square, Largo do Senado ("Senate Square"), on Wednesday. – Xinhua

opportunities, Xi has said.

The Guangdong-Macau In-Depth Cooperation Zone in Hengqin, established in 2021 under Xi's personal planning and guidance, has enabled Macau to develop industries such as high-end manufacturing, traditional Chinese medicine, financial services, and cultural tourism, helping reduce its overdependence on the gaming sector.

As of September 2024, the cooperation zone had attracted 6,461 Macau enterprises and 16,539 Macau residents to move there. The deeply-integrated development between Guangdong and Macau is becoming a reality.

Xi regards the joint development of Hengqin by Zhuhai and Macau as a key component of the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macau Greater Bay Area's growth. As part of this major national strategy, Macau was designated as one of the four central cities in the Greater Bay Area, alongside Hong Kong, Guangzhou, and Shenzhen, serving as an engine for regional development. This has provided Macau with new opportunities, motivation, and space for growth.

Infrastructure construction has gathered speed. On October 23, 2018, the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macau Bridge, the world's longest sea-crossing bridge, was opened, with Xi personally announcing its inauguration.

Over the past six years, the bridge has evolved into a key economic and trade channel and a vital logistics artery in the Greater Bay Area. The annual number of border crossings at the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macau Bridge Port and the Hengqin Port both exceeded 20 million in 2024, setting new records.

"Over the 25 years since Macau's return, the motherland has been Macau's strongest backing for prosperity and stability, and has provided the greatest opportunities for Macau's development," said MSAR Chief Executive Ho Iat Seng.

In July, the central authorities in Beijing unveiled a master plan for furthering its reform, which emphasized leveraging the institutional advantages of "One Country,

Two Systems" and improving mechanisms to ensure that Hong Kong and Macau play a better role in the nation's opening up.

"This has pointed the way for Macau to integrate into Chinese modernization and achieve better development, providing a new historical opportunity," Xi has said.

CONNECTING WITH LOCALS

In the past years, no matter how busy his schedule was, Xi always managed to meet with ordinary local residents during his visits to Macau. He spent time learning about livelihood projects, be it a public housing program, an elderly-care facility or a government service center. "From your voices, we can gauge whether Macau is prosperous and developing," he told the locals.

Xi has also exchanged letters with people from all walks of life in Macau.

The "Macau Science 1" satellite, jointly developed by the Chinese mainland and Macau, was successfully launched in May 2023.

Following the launch, 18 faculty and students from the Macau University of Science

and Technology (MUST), who participated in the satellites' development, wrote to Xi to share the exciting news and their experiences in the project. In his reply, Xi encouraged them to actively integrate into and contribute more to the country's development.

"We received President Xi's reply just two days later. It was a tremendous encouragement for us," said Yin Liang, an assistant researcher with the project. "He recognized our work and provided guidance for our future efforts."

Xi also cares a lot about the thoughts and aspirations of Macau's youth. In May 2019, students from a Macau middle school wrote a letter to Xi, sharing their understandings of the concept of "motherland" and expressing their wishes for Xi to visit Macau again.

After replying to the students, Xi fulfilled his promise by visiting their school in December 2019. He attended a Chinese history open class on campus, and told the students: "As Chinese, we must understand the history of our nation."

That open class left a deep impression on then 15-year-old Ni Ho Lam. Inspired by that experience, she began incorporating traditional Chinese cultural elements such as dragons and cranes into her works during creative design competitions. Today, she is pursuing her dream of design and art as a student at the Beijing Institute of Fashion Technology.

During his overseas visits and domestic diplomatic activities, Xi also promoted Macau actively.

In December 2018, during a state visit to Portugal, Xi emphasized Macau's unique role in advancing cooperation and exchanges between China and Portuguese-speaking countries and in the BRI. In April 2019, while meeting with the president of Portugal, Xi stressed: "Macau has already become a bridge for long-term friendly cooperation between China and Portugal."

"As long as we give full play to the institutional strengths of 'One Country, Two Systems' and dare to strive and innovate, Macau will surely create a brighter future," Xi said yesterday. – Xinhua, MPD



A tourist takes a selfie in front of a Macau SAR 25th Anniversary celebratory installation in front of the Barrier Gate checkpoint at the northern tip of the Macau Peninsula on Wednesday. – Xinhua

Ambulances with Chinese mainland, Macau plates ready for service

GUANGZHOU – Zhuhai, which abuts Macau, is set to enhance cross-border emergency medical services with the imminent deployment of four ambulances equipped with dual Guangdong-Macau license plates.

These ambulances are awaiting final sign-off before they can be put into operation, which will largely streamline the process of

transferring critically ill patients between Zhuhai and Macau, according to the pre-hospital emergency care branch of Zhuhai's medical association.

To deepen the integration of medical resources in the Greater Bay Area, including Zhuhai, Hong Kong and Macau, Zhuhai has dispatched 12 emergency response team

members to Hong Kong for training this year. Meanwhile, 33 emergency medical personnel from Hong Kong divided into three batches visited Zhuhai for exchange and training.

Zhuhai has also organized and hosted joint drills, actively participating in emergency exercises and academic exchanges in the Greater Bay Area (GBA), broadening and deepening

cooperation in emergency medical rescue.

Yang Lijuan, director of the city's emergency medical rescue center, said that introducing the dual-license ambulances and enhancing academic exchanges have marked new progress in the city's efforts to promote emergency medical rescue cooperation between Zhuhai, Hong Kong and Macau. – Xinhua

Outlook rosy as SAR diversifies its economy

Zhang Tianyuan

Macao's push to break free from its casino-dependent economy paints a rosy picture for the young generation's aspirations for careers in areas such as scientific research, technology, arts and tourism.

As the city marks its 25th Anniversary tomorrow as a special administrative region (SAR) of the People's Republic of China (PRC), its economic transformation is opening doors that were once inconceivable for residents.

Tang Chi-pui, a 38-year-old assistant professor at Macao University of Science and Technology's State Key Laboratory of Lunar and Planetary Science, exemplifies a new generation that is charting unconventional careers in the SAR.

"When I completed my doctorate at Nanjing University, Jiangsu Province, 2014, pursuing lunar research in Macao seemed far-fetched," said the Macao native, who studies Changshite-(Y), a lunar mineral crucial to understanding the Moon's evolution and the first lunar mineral discovered and identified by Chinese scientists.

Tang's parents once envisioned a stable civil service path for their son – a traditional path in a city where jobs typically revolve around casino floors, government offices and insurance sales.

The transformation is tangible. In early November, Tang gave a speech at a local high school, where students and teachers eagerly inquired about paths to aerospace research careers. "I have never been asked questions like that before," he said. "The unprecedented curiosity indicates how Macao's expanding technological sphere is opening new horizons."

He attributes this expansion to the nation's development of aerospace sectors and the government's financial incentives for technology.

Macao's efforts to shake off a long-standing reliance on casinos



This aerial drone photo taken last week shows Macao Tower and Sai Van Bridge.

– Xinhua

have been in full swing since 2006, when then SAR chief executive Edmund Ho Hau Wah vowed to diversify economic development, echoing the nation's 11th Five-Year Plan (2006-10). The vision morphed into the "1+4" strategy, unveiled in 2023, to entrench Macao's status as a tourism and leisure hub while wagering on healthcare services, modern finance, advanced technology, and the meetings, incentives, conventions and exhibitions industry (MICE).

Since returning to the motherland, Macao has seen its gross domestic product (GDP) skyrocket nearly eightfold, from US\$6.1 billion in 1999 to US\$47 billion last year. As for gaming revenues, which once contributed more than 60 percent of GDP, officials aim to cut the share to less than 40 percent by 2028.

Sam Hou Fai, the city's incoming chief executive, who will take office tomorrow, pledged to advance the SAR's diversification by developing aerospace research, artificial intelligence-powered traditional Chinese medicine, and

financial services for Portuguese-speaking countries.

Hong Kong lawmaker Adrian Pedro Ho King-hong, who is also familiar with Macao policies, said, "Over the next decade, many young people will gravitate toward emerging sectors, particularly in traditional Chinese medicine, technology and specialized finance."

Some Macao students have already chosen technically focused university programs to pursue fresh opportunities, switching from general business studies, Ho said. Macao could accelerate its economic restructuring by leveraging Hong Kong's talent and fundraising pools, he added.

According to official data, gaming, hotels and restaurants remained Macao's largest employers in the third quarter of this year, accounting for 33 percent of the local workforce – far ahead of other sectors. Unemployment hovered at 1.7 percent.

However, the Guangdong-Macao In-Depth Cooperation Zone, established in 2021 on Hengqin Island of Zhuhai, Guangdong

Province, provides opportunities for Macao manufacturers to gain access to experts such as architects, lawyers and doctors, who can practice their professions on the mainland. The zone, which is home to about 56,000 commercial entities and more than 10,000 technology companies, covers 106 square kilometers.

In the tourism sector, Macao's visitor arrivals surged 30 percent year-on-year to 25.92 million in the first three quarters, with mainland tourists accounting for 70 percent of the visitors. International visitors made up just 6.5 percent of the total.

Paul Wong Fai, president of the Macao Leisure Tourism Services Innovation Association, said the city is ramping up efforts to draw tourists from Asia as well as Europe and the United States.

Wong noted that Macao's next administration plans to create an integrated tourism zone for international tourists. "The government is already revitalizing various districts across Macao, blending community development with tourism initiatives," he said.

"The government's move is

breathing new life into neighborhoods like Rua da Felicidade, the area around Fortaleza do Monte, the historic Lai Chi Vun Shipyards, and Barra Square near A-Ma Temple," Wong said. "These efforts aim to highlight Macao's unique fusion of Eastern and Western cultures."

The Cultural Affairs Bureau is collaborating with local small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) to organize various events during festivals, including those involving gastronomy, performances and art, to revitalize the historic districts. Furthermore, the bureau aims to create a business environment that is conducive to attracting merchants to the area.

Reinvesting Macao as a "city of performing arts" has also been discussed in recent years amid its economic reshuffle. In 2023, more than 2,000 major performances and 10,000 cultural events drew a total of nearly 20 million participants. Large-scale concerts alone attracted one million people, generating US\$137.4 million in ticket sales.

The concert craze has had a ripple effect on various sectors of the city's economy, giving catering, hotel and retail businesses a lift, along with a surge in tourists. Henry Lei Chun-kwok, an associate professor of business economics at the University of Macau, said the economic impact is clear, since typical mainland tourists spend an average of around US\$385 per visit, while concertgoers spend nearly twice that amount on accommodations, dining and shopping.

The SAR government signed 10-year concession contracts with six key gaming operators in 2022, including Galaxy Entertainment Group, requiring them to invest US\$13.6 billion in nongaming projects and overseas markets over the next decade. Entertainment and performances are among the nongaming investment categories outlined in the agreements.

– Courtesy of China Daily

Hengqin announces nation's first commercial mediation regulations, effective Jan 1

Zeng Xiangxing

The Guangdong-Macao In-Depth Cooperation Zone in Hengqin has unveiled this week the nation's first commercial mediation regulations, which will come into effect on January 1, 2025.

The regulations, which were announced on Monday, aim to address challenges in the development of commercial mediation and seek to improve the legal framework for commercial mediation, making it more adaptable to market needs.

As Hengqin's economy becomes increasingly internationalized, commercial mediation is emerging as an effective and low-cost dispute resolution method. Commercial mediation not only helps reduce the burden of lawsuits, saving time and costs, but also preserves the business relationships between parties. Furthermore, it offers a

more flexible and internationally recognized solution for cross-border transactions, providing legal safeguards for cross-border cooperation between businesses.

Filling in the existing laws by clearly defining commercial mediation for the first time, the regulations also establish a more regulated approach to mediation organizations, with the Legal Affairs Bureau of Hengqin designated as the overseeing body. In line with international practices, the rules emphasize institutional mediation and require mediators to work within registered mediation organizations, thereby strengthening their management and training.

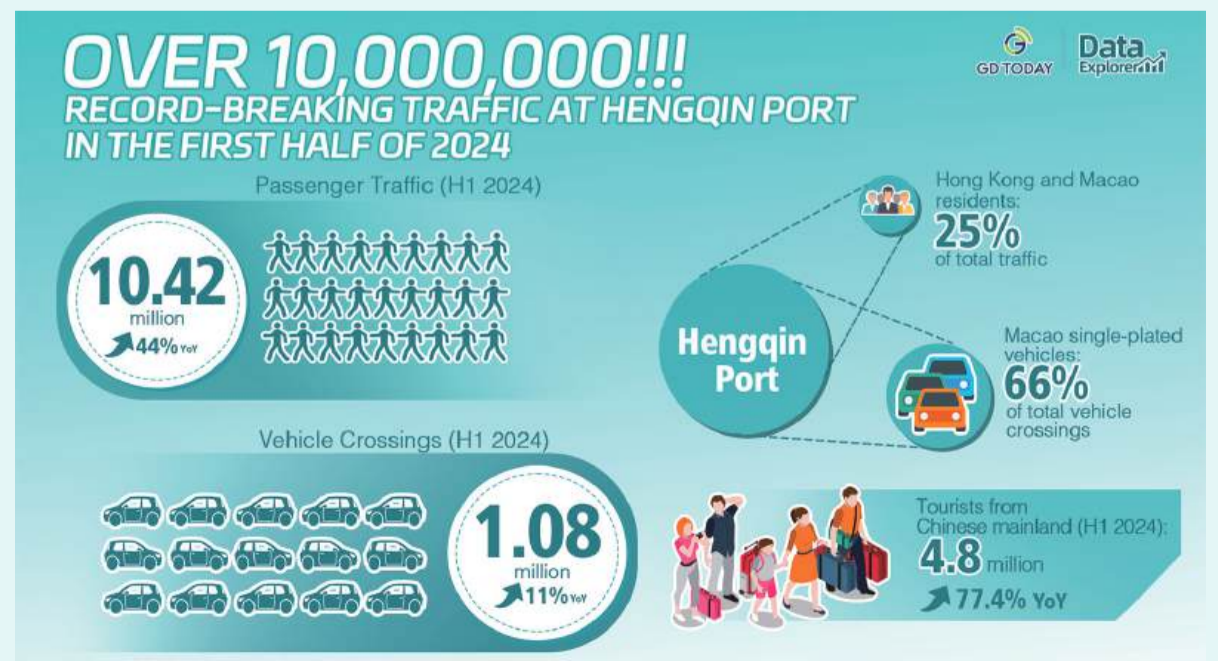
Furthermore, the regulations ensure the enforceability of commercial mediation agreements, offering legal pathways for parties to implement the terms of mediated agreements. The Legal Affairs

Bureau is also taking steps to support the involvement of international mediators, including those from regions like Macao and Hong

Kong, enhancing the credibility of the mediation process. To ensure mediators meet professional standards, the bureau is preparing a

comprehensive training system that will include pre-employment and ongoing education programs.

– Courtesy of GDToday





2024 marks the 75th anniversary of the founding of the People's Republic of China and the 25th anniversary of the establishment of the Macao Special Administrative Region, as well as the 20th anniversary of the opening of Sands Macao, holding significant meaning for Sands China and Macau. Dr. Wilfred Wong, Executive Vice Chairman of Sands China Ltd., describes the 25 years since Macau's return as having achieved remarkable accomplishments; having been a crucial part of Macau for over 20 years, he has witnessed the changes of the times. He noted that 25 years ago Macau's gaming industry was still in the monopoly era. After Macau's return to the motherland, the SAR government opened up gaming operations to foreign companies and promoted investment and talent training, thereby stimulating innovative ideas and allowing Macau's economy to take off.

Sands China Takes Root in Macau Witnessing the Changes of the Times

Wilfred Wong: 25 Years Since the Handover Marks a Prosperous Era and a New Starting Point

Speaking on the development of Macau's economy, Dr. Wong points out that the number of visitors entering Macau increased from 7.44 million in 1999 to 29.4 million in 2023, with a peak of 39.4 million in 2019; meanwhile, Macau's GDP per capita rose from US\$15,000 in 1999 to US\$69,000 in 2023. These two sets of figures effectively demonstrate the leap in Macau's economic development.

The 25th Anniversary of the Handover is a New Starting Point for Development

On a related topic, Dr. Wong stated that after Macau's return, social order has been stable, and past factors of instability have been eliminated. "As long as people have a stable place to live, they will work happily. With comfortable living conditions and a safe environment, many say these 25 years represent a prosperous era; I would say that today, 25 years after the return, we welcome a new starting point for development." Macau has reached a high point; successive SAR governments have worked hard to create conditions and environments for Macau's development, proposing various new policies aimed at supporting a moderately diversified economy through the integrated tourism and leisure industry. He believes this trend will continue and is an important direction for development.



Sands China is Committed to Developing Non-Gaming Elements

In 2007, Sands China opened The Venetian Macao, the first integrated resort in Macau, featuring non-gaming facilities such as convention centers, shopping malls, entertainment venues, and theaters, providing visitors with a one-stop experience for accommodation, shopping, and entertainment. The innovative business model it introduced completely changed the development landscape of Cotai. Subsequently, various integrated tourism and leisure enterprises actively constructed non-gaming facilities in Cotai, creating a flourishing environment.

Dr. Wong anticipates that non-gaming sectors will grow rapidly in the future, led by tourism, followed by exhibitions and other industries. Many integrated tourism and leisure enterprises will also implement the "growing with small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs)" concept, as SMEs account for over 90% of all businesses in Macau and more than 40% of the city's total employment. Therefore, Sands China's corporate social responsibility lies in helping SMEs fully take advantage of Macau's economic gains so that enterprises outside the integrated tourism and leisure sector can also benefit. The past 25 years have laid a solid foundation; it is precisely because leisure enterprises have achieved a certain level of success that they can drive the development of other industries. He believes that future leisure enterprises must align with government policies, as the government has macro considerations including launching the "1+4" strategy for moderate diversification.



Twenty Years of Overcoming Challenges and Moving Forward

Discussing the past 20 years, Dr. Wong says that Sands China has always moved forward courageously, developing from the Macao Peninsula to the Cotai Strip to become the largest integrated tourism and leisure enterprise in Macau. He candidly admitted that Sands China's journey over the past 20 years has not been completely smooth sailing and the company has certainly faced setbacks; the most significant blow was undoubtedly the financial crisis





of 2008. After Sands Macao opened in 2004, Sands China used three years' worth of its revenue to invest in building The Venetian Macao, which opened in 2007 but faced severe economic difficulties just a year later due to the financial crisis. Fortunately, there was an opportunity to raise funds through an IPO to continue operations and build new projects.

In 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic brought tremendous changes, greatly affecting industries across Macau. Dr. Wong stated that, at that time, the SAR government requested enterprises to ensure local employment; Sands China team members united to weather the storm together while remaining committed to helping society cope with the pandemic. Throughout it all, Sands China was full of confidence about Macau's future.



Shouldering Social Responsibility During the Pandemic

During the pandemic, Sands China fearlessly took on social responsibilities by providing The Venetian Macao's Cotai Expo convention center as a testing site for mass nucleic acid testing initiated by the SAR government while mobilizing employees to stay on the frontline against COVID-19. Additionally, the Sheraton Grand Macao Hotel served as a medical observation hotel nine times during the pandemic; later on, The Parisian Macao was used in similar manner. Both hotels provided over 6,000 guest rooms during peak pandemic periods with staff working nearly 7.4 million hours in closed-loop operations.

These actions demonstrated Sands China's comprehensive support for Macau's development and stability. The company mobilized its entire organization to cooperate

with the SAR government in its COVID-19 measures. Dr. Wong noted that many of the employees who volunteered to help came from the company's Sands Cares Ambassador Program. This year marks the 15th anniversary of the volunteering program – the first established by an integrated tourism and leisure enterprise in Macau. Initially, there were only 200 volunteer members; now over 3,600 employees have become ambassadors willing to dedicate their spare time outside work to volunteer efforts. As a member of Macau society, Sands China's confidence in Macau has never wavered; even during three years of pandemic challenges, the company did not significantly cut expenditures nor slow down renovations at The Londoner Macao because it firmly believed that the challenges would eventually pass. Dr. Wong pointed out that the company was looking forward to presenting The Londoner Macao to the world with a fresh appearance after the pandemic and welcoming visitors back to the property; indeed, this strategy was proof of Sands China's confidence in Macau's future.

Macau's True Spirit Revealed During Typhoon Hato

Sands China has accompanied Macau through various storms over many years, enduring both financial crises and a pandemic. Reflecting on the past, Dr. Wong recalls vividly the impact of Typhoon Hato's severe destruction across Macau. He noted that Macau had never experienced such widespread flooding before; despite facing numerous difficulties as a company, Sands China took on social responsibilities unreservedly by assisting with rescue efforts, repairs, and rebuilding initiatives, while providing educational assistance





to children from affected families. During this time, all sectors of society worked together harmoniously; volunteers from all walks of life stepped forward to accelerate the recovery of social order and revitalize the city, reflecting a genuine attitude of mutual aid among Macau residents.

Sands China actively participates in community activities across various community sectors to contribute to long-term prosperity and stability in Macau. Dr. Wong indicated that Sands China carries out its corporate social responsibilities in various ways; for instance, the company has donated over MOP 15.7 million in scholarships to various higher education institutions in Macau since 2006, benefiting over 1,800 local students. The company also launched “Back to School” Recurrent Education Programme that encourage employees to pursue further studies and enhance their competitiveness amid rapid developments in Macau.

In terms of culture and arts, Sands China established Sands Gallery in 2022 as a permanent space for art exhibitions aimed at providing guests with diverse art experiences while promoting sustainable development within local cultural industries. Currently, Sands Gallery is hosting “Echoes of a Golden Age: Macro Events through the Micro Visions of Macao’s Legendary Contemporary Artists” as part of its continuous promotion of the diverse development of the cultural industry, while providing an artistic exchange platform for local and international artists. Dr. Wong also revealed that Sands China will continue bringing art into communities and promoting art appreciation in a variety of accessible ways.

Striving to Assist Various Industries’ Development

Besides art initiatives, Sands China operates the Sands Retail Academy, which helps employees from retail partners at Sands Shoppes Macao acquire training, as these shops account for 40% of Macau’s total retail sales. If mall employees are able to perform at ever higher levels, it will help drive retail development in Macau. The academy is one of eight sub-academies under the larger Sands China Academy, whose targeted beneficiaries include SMEs, employees, and the wider community, as a way to share knowledge and skills with surrounding industries. Currently, there is a need for professional stage lighting and sound technology as Macau aims to develop into a “City of Performing Arts.” Dr. Wong candidly expressed that there are gaps in this area; thus, future plans for developing a “City of Performing Arts,” “Cultural City,” and “Event City” should be shaped under guidance from the SAR government, with the hope that Sands China can support Macau’s progress toward these goals through the company’s resources. He stated that Sands China has sent personnel to the Escola Luso-Chinesa Técnico-Profissional to teach students stage technology and event production.





Continuously Supporting Development of Local SMEs

Sands China currently boasts over 12,000 hotel rooms, 150 restaurants, some of Asia’s top convention centers, more than 720 duty-free shops, two arenas that host international superstar shows, as well as four theaters, among other non-gaming facilities. Over the years, Sands China’s arenas and theaters have hosted more than 740 shows attended by around 4.7 million spectators.

Looking ahead, Dr. Wong says that Sands China will continue its corporate social responsibility initiatives, including supporting the development of local SMEs; the company’s procurement volume from SMEs is expected to be around MOP 3 billion in the first three quarters of 2024. He described that Sands China maintains close ties with SMEs through various initiatives such as the Sands Shopping Carnival, which is aimed at supporting local SME growth by providing free retail booths during the annual weekend shopping festival.

Future Non-Gaming Elements Will Be Rich and Diverse

In addition to culture and arts, Sands China will continue its efforts in sports as another vital non-gaming component. In regards to performance events and exhibitions, the company will continue collaborating with global partners interested in holding exhibitions and conferences in Macau according to SAR government policies. Furthermore, Sands China has plans to expand its convention centers by adding an additional 18,000 square meters of exhibition space connecting to The Venetian Macao’s current exhibition facilities, making it one of Asia’s largest exhibition venues upon completion. The recently upgraded The Venetian Arena has reopened, and will be hosting NBA games as part of its offerings, which already include dozens of concerts and other events each year. The company also plans to transform Le Jardin opposite The Parisian Macao into a unique international garden destination among its rich diversity of non-gaming elements in the works—an endeavor worth looking forward to.

