

Macau to welcome 2025 with concerts at Sai Van Lake & Taipa Houses

Yuki Lei

The annual outdoor countdown concerts at the peninsula's Praça do Lago Sai Van and at the area around the Taipa Houses will take place tonight, with performances starting at 10 p.m. and 8:30 p.m. respectively, and Cultural Affairs Bureau (IC) President Deland Leong Wai Man said yesterday she expected a crowd of 10,000 at the Sai Van concert.

At the blessing held yesterday for a successful 2024 Macau Countdown Concert and the 2024 Taipa Countdown Show, the organisers, including the Cultural Affairs Bureau, Municipal Affairs Bureau (IAM) and the Macau Government Tourism Office (MGTO), led a traditional worshipping ceremony in Praça do Lago Sai Van, with the attendance of the singers and bands that will be performing at tonight's two gigs, including Hong Kong singer Maria Cordero (肥媽) as well as local singers Rico Long (龍世傑) and Vivian Chan (陳慧敏).

On the sidelines of yesterday's ceremony, Leong said that the total budget for the two concerts amounted to 7.4 million patacas, of which the one held in Praça do Lago Sai Van accounted for the bulk, standing at 6.5 million patacas. The Taipa Countdown Show was budgeted at about 900,000 patacas.

The Macau Countdown Concert will start at 10 p.m. and lead to a countdown spectacle at 12:10 a.m. the following day, with Hong Kong singers George Lam (林子祥) and Sally Yeh (葉蒨文) as the grand finale performers, while the Taipa Countdown Show will start at 8:30 p.m. with cultural booths, set up by members



Deland Leong Wai Man prepares for a traditional worshipping ceremony in Praça do Lago Sai Van yesterday for a successful 2024 Macau Countdown Concert and 2024 Taipa Countdown Show. - Photo: Yuki Lei

of the local Indian, Indonesian, Myanmar, Philippine and Vietnamese communities, operating between 8:30 p.m. and 11:30 p.m.

Leong reminded members of the public that vehicle traffic restrictions and road closures along Praça do Lago Sai Van will be in effect from 7 p.m. to 1 a.m. the next day, while those along the area of the Taipa Houses will be in effect from 8 p.m. to 1 a.m. the next day. She underlined: "We have been in close communication with the Public Security Police (PSP) and, as usual, traffic control

measures will be in place and further crowd control will be carried out in the event of an overflow of people".

Leong says she's 'satisfied' with Saturday's outdoor gig in Cotai

Meanwhile, Macau's new outdoor performance venue in Cotai staged its inaugural concert on Saturday, with an attendance of nearly 11,000, in response to which Leong summed up the effectiveness of the concert's security checks, venue support,

transport capacity, staff training and the smoothness of the audience members exit from a gig with "satisfactory".

She was quick to add that the bureau was currently reviewing and assessing the next stage of work in the light of the audience views collected, with a view to refining the relevant measures, including the commendations or shortcomings of the overall arrangement, the F&B zone and venue configuration, such as reminding the audience in advance to take precautionary measures in response to the weather conditions, and the possibility of increasing the number of food vendors.

Regarding the fact that the number of spectators was less than the estimated 13,000, Leong stressed that large-scale outdoor performance was a new venture for Macau, and "we all hoped that it would be held in safe conditions". The ticket sales of Saturday's concert were controlled at 13,000, according to Leong, who pointed out that the attendance rate of that night accounted for about 90 percent, which she described as "already okay".

Leong reaffirmed that the outdoor performance venue was expected to operate on a trial basis for one year, but when asked about the arrangements for the next performance there, she said there were "no" new arrangements for the time being, adding that the bureau had already received about 10 proposals from event organisers in Asia, Europe and the US indicating that they would like to use the venue for their events, and that further arrangements would be made if they were suitable. ■

Argentina charges 5 in death of singer Liam Payne

BUENOS AIRES – Five people have been indicted in Argentina over the death of British singer Liam Payne, who fell from a Buenos Aires hotel balcony in October after consuming alcohol and drugs, prosecutors said yesterday.

Three of the five were charged with manslaughter and the other two with supplying the former One Direction pop star with illegal drugs, prosecutors said, identifying the suspects only by their initials.

The latter two have been taken into custody but the others have

been allowed to remain free, the prosecutors said.

Payne died on October 16 after falling from the balcony of his third-floor room at the Casa Sur Hotel in the Argentine capital.

His death at age 31 prompted a global outpouring of grief from family, former bandmates, fans and others, with thousands gathering in cities around the world to offer their condolences.

The unnamed people charged with manslaughter are a representative of the singer who was travelling with

him, a woman managing the hotel where Payne died, and the head of its reception desk, they added.

The ones charged with supplying Payne with drugs are a hotel employee and a waiter that Payne met elsewhere in the city, the prosecutors said.

Payne consumed cocaine, alcohol and a prescription antidepressant before falling to his death, Argentine prosecutors said last month.

He had spoken publicly about struggling with substance abuse and coping with fame from an early age.

- AFP



A fan holds a doll looking like the late British singer Liam Payne as she attends to pay tribute at the Obelisco in Buenos Aires on October 17. - AFP

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The Macau Post Daily

China prosecutes 39 members of major telecom fraud gangs in northern Myanmar

A total of 39 members of major criminal groups based in northern Myanmar were prosecuted in China yesterday for telecom fraud and other crimes targeting civilians in China.

- Story on p. 7

German security chiefs face questions over Christmas market attack

German security and intelligence chiefs faced questioning yesterday about the car-ramming attack that killed five people and wounded more than 200 at a Christmas market 10 days ago.

- Story on p. 11

Climate change brought extreme weather, heat in 2024: UN

Climate change sparked a trail of extreme weather and record heat this year, the United Nations said yesterday, urging the world to pull back from the "road to ruin".

- Story on p. 12

Govt reviews 'Macau Consumer Grand Prix' before new initiatives launched

Yuki Lei

The three-month "Macau Consumer Grand Prix" ended on Sunday, and Economic and Technological Development Bureau (DSED) Acting Deputy Director Chan Chou Weng said yesterday that the bureau has already started to review the overall effectiveness of the campaign at this stage, underlining that "there is no, for the time being, additional information" showing whether it will launch similar consumer promotions campaign.

"At this stage, we will first collect relevant data from various e-payment institutions to understand the overall effectiveness of the campaign, and coordinate with a number of chambers of commerce in commissioning a third-party organisation to gauge the evaluation of the campaign by local small- and medium-sized enterprise (SME) operators and consumers," Chan said, adding that the outcome will be announced as soon as possible, with the amount of promotion expense expected to be available within two to three weeks.

Chan underlined that the "Macau Consumer Grand Prix", launched in late September, was



Representatives of the organisers of the "Central & Southern District Consumer Carnival", including Economic and Technological Development Bureau (DSED) Acting Deputy Director Chan Chou Weng (sixth from right) and Lei Cheok Kuan (second from right), chairman of the Industry and Commerce Federation of the Macau Central and Southern District, pose during yesterday's closing ceremony at Rotunda de Carlos da Maia. — Photo: Yuki Lei

just one of the initiatives launched by the government to support SMEs in terms of improving their business environment, adding that on top of the recently concluded campaign, the bureau has also launched a raft of initiatives, including support for SMEs' digitisation, to cater for the current consumer segments.

Speaking to the media on the

sidelines of yesterday's closing ceremony of the "Central & Southern District Consumer Carnival" at Rotunda de Carlos da Maia (嘉路米耶圓形地 — also known as the Three Lamps in Chinese), Chan also said he believes that the "multi-entry" permits for residents of the Guangdong-Macau In-depth Cooperation Zone in Hengqin and

the "one-trip per week" permit for residents of Zhuhai to visit Macau, which will take effect from New Year's Day, i.e., tomorrow, would have a "positive impact" on the local market, in particular on the tourism and retail sectors. He urged local SMEs to make good preparations with a view to providing their customers with better services and

products in response to the measures introduced by the central authorities in Macau's favour.

'Central & Southern District Consumer Carnival'

Also after running for three months, the "Central & Southern District Consumer Carnival" ended yesterday. Lei Cheok Kuan, chairman of the Industry and Commerce Federation of the Macau Central and Southern District, told reporters on the sidelines of the ceremony that the campaign has achieved the expected results, with consumption amounting to nearly 50 million patacas and the number of participating SMEs increasing to 11,000 compared to previous years. He quoted some of the participating SME operators as indicating an increase of 20 to 30 percent in their business turnover during the campaign: "The more similar their products or services are, the smaller the increase in their revenue is, by less than 10 percent".

Lei pointed out the importance of product differentiation, urging SME operators to "try to make some differences in the process while optimising their own products". ■

MSO's hotel job training aims to enhance interpersonal skills of intellectually disabled

Tony Wong

The Macau Special Olympics' (MSO) job training programme for those with intellectual disabilities, in collaboration with the government's Labour Affairs Bureau (DSAL) and The Londoner Macao resort's Sheraton Grand Macao hotel, added two new types of jobs earlier this year, aiming to enable participants to acquire interpersonal skills, with the graduation ceremony of this year's programme held yesterday.

The programme was first launched in 2018. This year's programme is the fourth one since its inception. The training programme had only previously offered places to work as room attendants in the hotel, but this year it offered two new types of jobs, namely bellboys and staff canteen attendants, alongside room attendants. The programme's extension aims to broaden the occupational skills of those with intellectual disabilities.

Sheraton Grand Macao has recently been rebranded as Londoner Grand.

Yesterday's graduation ceremony, held at the hotel's lounge bar, was attended by Cheung Wai, who heads the Labour Affairs Bureau's Vocational Training Department, Sheraton Grand Macao & St. Regis Macao Multi-Property Vice President Frank Sanders, and Johnny Siu Yu Ning, a board member of the Macau Special Olympics.

In addition to supporting the intellectually disabled to participate in sport, the Macau Special Olympics also provides them with various other types of social services including occupational rehabilitation, as well as providing support for those with special education needs.

According to an MSO statement yesterday, a total of 24 signed up for this year's programme, 16 of whom were accepted. Seven of them have successfully completed training as bellboys, while five have completed training as staff canteen attendants. Yesterday's graduation ceremony was held for 12 of the participants.

Yesterday's statement did not mention how many of them



Cheung Wai (back row, fifth from left), who heads the Labour Affairs Bureau's Vocational Training Department, Sheraton Grand Macao & St. Regis Macao Multi-Property Vice President Frank Sanders (back row, fifth from right), and Johnny Siu Yu Ning (back row, sixth from left), a board member of the Macau Special Olympics (MSO), as well as hotel staff members, and participants with their certificates, pose during yesterday's graduation ceremony. — Photo: MSO

have graduated from the training programme as hotel room attendants.

Those who have completed the job training programme receive a certificate jointly issued by the Labour Affairs Bureau and the Macau Special Olympics.

The 12 participants received their certificates during yesterday's ceremony.

Delivering a speech during yesterday's ceremony, Siu said that thanks to the hotel's professional guidance and support, those with intellectual disabilities have been able to receive high-quality training since the programme's launch in 2018.

Siu noted that early this year his social service organisation discussed the possibility of extending the training programme with the hotel, after which the programme added the two new jobs for bellboys and staff canteen attendants.

Siu said that after receiving

three-month professional training earlier this year, the participants have acquired the necessary skills to work as bellboys or staff canteen attendants.

Yesterday's MSO statement said that four of the seven who have completed training as bellboys have been employed by hotel resorts including those operated by Sands China.

Speaking to the *Post*, Siu said that different to hotel room attendants, working as bellboys or staff canteen attendants requires them to possess communication and interpersonal skills, because of which, he said, it is more difficult for the participants to pass the training as bellboys and staff canteen attendants, compared to hotel rooms attendants.

Siu noted that "those working as hotel room attendants just need to follow the SOP (standard operating procedure) as their work primarily involves tackling items,

while working as bellboys or staff canteen attendants needs them to interact with people, requiring communication skills and emotional management skills".

A standard operating procedure (SOP) refers to a set of step-by-step instructions compiled by an organisation to help workers carry out routine operations.

Siu noted that bellboys have two major duties, carrying guests' luggage to their rooms, and arranging to store their luggage temporarily while they are out and about, adding that both require interpersonal skills.

Siu said that during the training for staff canteen attendants, the participants were required to clean the dining tables, while they also needed to refill the food containers in the canteen in a timely manner, during which they needed to interact with other people, he said. ■

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Macau Weather

**DRY.
FINE.
HAZE DURING THE DAY.
FORCE 3 TO 4 NORTH TO
NORTHEASTERLY WINDS.
RELATIVE HUMIDITY WILL
RANGE BETWEEN
40% AND 75%.**



13°C~21°C

Source: SMG

Dual Celebration New Year's Eve Countdown

Ring in the New Year with Sands China Ltd.!
Join us for a dazzling fireworks display and live entertainment
at Le Jardin with free admission.

9:30pm

Celebrate with a band and DJ

11:55pm

Experience a world-class fireworks show over
The Venetian Macao, The Parisian Macao and
The Londoner Macao

Special traffic arrangements will be in place on
sections of the Cotai Strip **from 11:00pm until 1:00am.**
Scan for details on traffic arrangements.

NEW YEAR'S EVE COUNTDOWN



Event Details





156 photos on display at Ponte 16 exhibition

Rui Pastorin

A total of 156 photographs are being showcased at an exhibition titled “16 Photography Exhibition” on the 2nd floor of the Inner Harbour’s Ponte 16 Macau until February 12 next year.

From photographs of landmarks, culture and events to those taken of or around the hotel, the photos on display were chosen from close to 1,000 entries for the “Precious Moment with Ponte 16 Photo Contest”, which ran until November 7 and was organised by the resort in conjunction with The Photographic Society of Macao. Its categories comprised an Open and an Aerial section, as well as a popularity voting activity on social media platforms,

according to the contest website.

The contest, which was also held to commemorate the hotel’s 16th anniversary, was themed “The Charm of Macau”, inviting participants to share the city’s “cultural richness and captivating moments” over the past 16 years, a recent statement from the Ponte 16 said. The champion, first and second runners-up, along with the recipients of 10 outstanding awards, were unveiled during the prize-giving and opening ceremony earlier this month.

Those visiting the exhibition will find photos presented in four themes: “Macau Events”, “The Historical Changes of Macau Inner Harbour and Ponte 16 Resort”, “Macau Historical Landmark Buildings”, and “Macau’s Cultural Essence”.

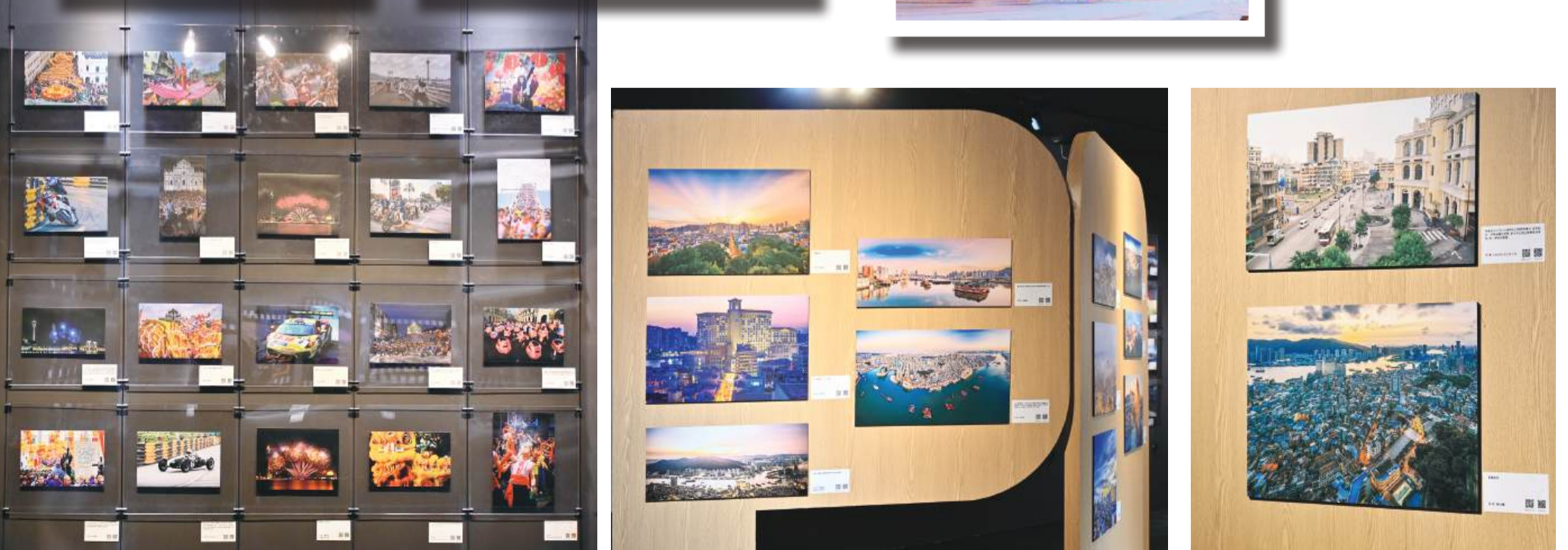
The Ponte 16 statement quoted Deputy Chief Executive Officer Hoffman Ma (馬浩文) as saying: “Through this photo contest and photography exhibition, we hope to document the city’s remarkable development and transformation over the past 16 years, share Macau’s precious memories, and inspire a deeper connection and love for its culture among more people”.

Ma added that they hope to highlight the winning works’ artistic values and encourage people to explore and appreciate Macau from diverse perspectives,

One can visit the exhibition daily from 11:30 a.m. to 7:30 p.m., with more information available on the Ponte 16 website.



Photos: Rui Pastorin



Parents can apply for kindergarten enrolment online from next Monday: DESDJ



Education and Youth Development Bureau (DSEDJ) Non-Tertiary Education Department Chief Choi Man Chi addresses a press conference at the bureau in Nam Van yesterday.

Ginnie Liang

Local parents can go to their “Macao One Account” mobile app to apply for “Enrolment Procedure for Children Entering Kindergarten for the First Time” online from January to April, Education and Youth Development Bureau (DSEDJ) Non-Tertiary Education Department Chief Choi Man Chi announced during a press conference at the bureau’s offices in Nam Van.

The measure is targeted at Macau residents who will reach the age of three on 31 December next year and will be enrolled in early childhood education in Macau for the first time, Choi said, adding that according to the schedule, the admission interviews for children will begin on March 1, and the list of accepted students will be announced by the bureau and the schools on April 7.

Choi pointed out that in the 2025/2026 school year, there are about 4,000 children of the appropriate age for admission to K1, and 65 schools are offering K1 places, which is a sufficient number of places to ensure that all young children in Macau can have access to education.

In recent years, in response to the drop in the birth rate, the number of classes in local schools decreased in the 2024/2025 school year, and the reduction in the number of classes is within a reasonable range, Choi noted.

Choi also said that the bureau has continued to actively communicate with schools and coordinate the arrangement of school places in the hope that schools can be allowed to enrol students in accordance with the flexible admission mechanism of 25 to 35 students per class, and that adjustment will be made in the light of the school’s existing teachers’ qualifications, so that qualified teachers will be allowed to teach in other stages of education, in the hope of minimising the impact of the drop in the birth rate on the schools.

In addition, in order to cope with the diversified development of education and meet the educational needs of Macau residents living in the Macau New Neighbourhood (MNN) in Hengqin, parents can apply to enrol their children in up to six Macau schools and one Macau children’s school in Hengqin online, Choi said. ■

Xmas jazz gig mesmerises audience, conductor praises local jazz development

Interview and review by William Chan

Conductor Zé Eduardo and the Jazz Mission Big Band performed four gigs at the Dom Pedro V Theatre in Largo de Santo Agostinho over the Christmas period.

Attending their concert on the first two nights of “Jazz Up for Christmas at Dom Pedro V Theatre,” organised by the Cultural Affairs Bureau (IC), I was intrigued by the diverse repertoire prepared by the ensemble. Both performances drew a full-house on the lower floor, while the upper floor was reserved for walk-ins.

Featuring a mix of pop songs in English, Portuguese and Putonghua, alongside traditional big band tunes and Christmas-themed arrangements, the concert aimed to appeal to a wide audience with its accessible music selection.

Unfortunately, one of the Portuguese vocalists fell ill during her time in Macau, leading to her absence from the concerts. Overall, the gig was well-received, though as a jazz enthusiast, I personally craved more jazz numbers. However, it was evident that the audience resonated most with the Putonghua song “Scent,” performed by local singer Elisa Chan, which received resounding applause at both shows.

Prior to the concert, the *Post* had a brief interview with Eduardo, who reminisced about his first performance in Macau in 1979, which was also held at the historic Dom Pedro V Theatre. He praised the preservation efforts in Macau, noting the remarkable condition of the theatre after four decades, highlighting Macau’s commitment to safeguarding its cultural heritage.



Zé Eduardo (centre) conducts the Jazz Mission Big Band at the Dom Pedro V Theatre on December 21. – Photo: William Chan

Neoclassical Dom Pedro V Theatre, which was built in 1860 in commemoration of Portugal’s King Peter V, as China’s first Western-style theatre and a distinctive landmark in Macau.

Eduardo made regular visits to Macau after his first visit, often bringing musicians along and conducting music classes for local musicians. Reflecting on the pre-handover era, he noted that jazz music in Macau was scarce, primarily limited to small Portuguese groups, with virtually no formal jazz education available. Following Macau’s return to China, he observed a gradual shift in the jazz landscape, with increased involvement from local government and organisations in jazz promotion and youth education initiatives.

While pleased with the progress he has witnessed, Eduardo emphasised that Macau could “do more” in its jazz development,

citing the rapid advancements seen on the mainland. He noted the mainland’s burgeoning pool of exceptional players, established jazz educational institutions, and dedicated performance venues, areas where Macau still has room for growth.

Eduardo highlighted the participation of five local musicians in the big band performance, three of whom, all instrumentalists, had been his students during his frequent visits to Macau over the years. He expressed immense satisfaction in seeing their musical growth and maturity, sharing the stage with esteemed European musicians he brought to Macau. “When I see them on stage, I tell myself I finally made it. And they work really hard as well, leaving their home city to go to other places to pursue their studies. I am proud of them.” Zé remarked. ■

*<https://www.macaupostdaily.com/news/23479>

Patuá self-study guide authors hope to raise interest, reach wider audience

Interview by Rui Pastorin

A book launch and presentation of “Patuá for everyone – A self-study guide” was held at the International Institute of Macau (IIM) on Rua de Berlim (栢林街) last night, with Macanese* authors Elisabela Larrea and Carolina Nogueira hoping to generate more interest in and debate on the critically endangered Portuguese-Asian Creole language, as well as to reach a wider audience.

Larrea is a Macanese culture researcher who has also authored “Unchinho de Língu Maquista: Patuá bit by bit – Flashcard book”, while Nogueira is a language teacher and linguist.

During last night’s event, the authors introduced Patuá** and the contents of their IIM-published trilingual (Chinese, Portuguese and English) self-study guide, which targets beginners and has a print run of 300 copies.

Complete with graphics and easy-to-understand explanations, the self-study guide comprises eight themed



This photo shows both the “Patuá for everyone – A self-study guide” (right) and the “Memories of Macau: Homage in Lisbon to three notable figures of our literature”.

– Photo: Rui Pastorin

chapters such as Greetings, Family, Celebrations and Food, the authors pointed out during their presentation. Moreover, grammar points and vocabulary as well as how to use them are also covered by the book, along with facts about Macanese culture. The guide also includes an online pronunciation demonstration,

enabling readers to hear the words so that they can pronounce Macau’s Creole correctly.

On writing the book, the authors told the *Post* prior to the start of last night’s event that during their studies, they noticed that there was a dearth of teaching or learning materials on Patuá.

“That’s why we think that there are a lot of people like us who are interested in the Creole [of Macau], but they do not know how to approach and learn it. That’s why we wanted to create this book, like a first step for people to go into this world of Patuá, so that they can explore more later on”, Nogueira pointed out.

Larrea also told the *Post* they hope to reach out to a more diverse audience. “Our book is written in Chinese, English, and Portuguese so that people with different language backgrounds, academic backgrounds, or even different ages can learn and have a way to study this Macanese language”.

Larrea added that there are various forms of safeguarding Creole including theatre, music, as well as past literature works, but she admitted that a very systematic approach towards teaching Patuá has so far been “quite rare”. She said that though neither she nor Nogueira are really Patuá experts, they love the

language, therefore having tried their best to set up a system and share it with others who are interested in Macau’s very own tongue.

Looking ahead, Nogueira said that both hope to explore all opportunities in advancing the study of Patuá in the future.

The book presentation was part of IIM’s Macanese Evening event, which also saw the launch of “Memórias de Macau: Homenagens em Lisboa à três notáveis figuras da nossa literatura” (“Memories of Macau: Homage in Lisbon to three notable figures of our literature”). ■

*Customarily, the term “Macanese” refers to Macau’s community of mixed Portuguese and Asian descent, as well as their diaspora, accounting for less than 2.0 percent of the local population. – MPD

**Patuá is Macau’s severely endangered Portuguese-Asian Creole, nowadays spoken by just a few dozen people in Macau and a number of hundreds overseas, in California in particular. – MPD

Local woman loses 600,000 patacas in fake police scam

William Chan

Judiciary Police (PJ) spokesman Cheong Un Hong said in a regular press conference yesterday that a local woman fell victim to a fake police scam, losing 600,000 patacas.

The victim is under the age of 30.

According to Cheong, the victim was contacted by a man claiming to be a Shanghai police officer on December 18. The "police officer" alleged that the

victim's phone number had been used to disseminate a large number of fraudulent text messages.

Complying with the scammer's demands, the victim stayed in a hotel guestroom to participate in video calls purportedly for the "investigation" with the fake "police officer."

Over the course of nine days staying alone in the room, she borrowed money from her family

to cover her expenses during her stay in the hotel as well as 600,000 patacas which she deposited into her bank account, subsequently sharing her bank details with the scammer.

Cheong noted that the victim noticed the 600,000 patacas had vanished from her account on Thursday, prompting her to realise that she had been deceived. She promptly reported the case to the police the following day. ■

Breakthrough in world's longest expressway tunnel marks leap in Xinjiang's infrastructure

URUMQI – The Tianshan Shengli Tunnel, the world's longest expressway tunnel, completed tunneling yesterday morning, paving the way for the opening of a new shortcut linking southern and northern parts of Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region.

The 22.13-kilometer tunnel will reduce the time it takes to drive across the middle section of the Tianshan Mountains from several hours to about 20 minutes once operational.

It is a key project of the Urumqi-Yuli Expressway, which runs from the regional capital of Urumqi in northern Xinjiang to Yuli County in southern Xinjiang. The expressway is expected to be fully completed and open to traffic in next year. The driving time between the two locations will be reduced from about seven hours to just over three hours.

Shortcut connection north and south

Covering one-sixth of the country total land area, Xinjiang is divided into northern Xinjiang and southern Xinjiang by the Tianshan Mountains, stretching over 2,500 kilometers from east to west and forming a formidable natural barrier.

Qadir Abliz, a truck driver from Urumqi who makes regular trips between the north and south of the Tianshan Mountains, said the winding mountain roads would often freeze in the winter, and many trucks carrying coal, agricultural produce and livestock products would be stranded on the way across.

"There will be no need to worry about such situations anymore when the tunnel opens next year," he said.

Baye, a herdsman whose family has lived near the tunnel at the foot of the Tianshan Mountains for generations, has a deep connection with this project.

"I really hope it opens to traffic soon! In the past, when a family member had an emergency, and we needed to go to northern Xinjiang for medical treatment, we would drive up the mountain and might encounter road closures due to heavy snow at altitudes above 3,000 meters," said Baye.

The Tianshan Shengli Tunnel stands as a landmark



This aerial drone photo taken on yesterday shows the exit of the Tianshan Shengli Tunnel and a nearby expressway which is under construction in Hejing County of Mongolian Autonomous Prefecture of Bayingolin, Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region. – Xinhua

project showcasing the country's unwavering commitment to improving people's well-being through transportation development, according to Li Zhicui, a professor at the Business School of Xinjiang Normal University.

"The tunnel will serve as a key tourism corridor and enhance the market competitiveness of local products by making transportation faster and cheaper, thus playing a vital role in driving regional economic development," said Li.

In addition, the tunnel will significantly improve communication between the north and the south, fostering closer ties among ethnic groups and promoting balanced regional growth, according to Li.

Overcome mountainous challenges

Since the 1950s, mainland China has worked to connect northern and southern Xinjiang with roads such as the Urumqi-Korla and Dushanzi-Kuqa highways. However, rapid economic and social development, along with the growing needs for transportation, have outpaced the capacity of these routes.

Over the past decade, Xinjiang has invested heavily in building transportation infrastructure, improving its network of highways, railways, airports, and logistics hubs to support its role as the core area of the Silk Road Economic Belt.

"Xinjiang has entered a period featuring unprecedented investment scale and development speed," said Zheng Mingquan, deputy director

of the regional administration of transportation law enforcement.

The new tunnel, whose construction began in April 2020, is no small feat. It has faced multiple challenges, such as extreme cold, high altitudes, high ground stress, strong seismic activity and strict environmental requirements, according to Mao Jinbo, an engineer on the project.

The Tianshan Mountains are known as a "geological museum," featuring numerous fault zones, 16 of which the tunnel passes through. Its No. 2 ventilation shaft reaches a depth of 706 meters – taller than China's highest building, the Shanghai Tower.

The builders broke down construction into smaller, more manageable segments and employed domestically-designed hard rock tunnel boring machines, developed using innovative pressure injection methods. As a result, the original construction timeline was shortened by more than 25 percent.

Also, the four ventilation shafts together form the tunnel's "respiratory system," addressing the ventilation challenges of an ultra-long tunnel.

Not far from the tunnel's entrance lies Tianshan No. 1 Glacier, the source of Urumqi's drinking water. To minimize the environmental impact on the glacier and snow leopard habitats, on-site facilities were established to contain wastewater and fully utilize gravel, helping the project meet key environmental protection goals, said the engineer Mao. – Xinhua

MTel seeks fee reductions for senior housing: Choi

Ginnie Liang

Local MTel Telecommunication Company Limited representative Alex Choi Chin Chong said yesterday that the company has submitted a request to the government to give the company a fee reduction of 10 to 20 percent.

Choi made the remarks on the sidelines of a press conference yesterday at Plaza Restaurant in Zape, adding that he hoped for a timely response and will announce the details once available.

Choi highlighted the company's ongoing efforts to provide affordable network services to various communities. "For instance, in the rental flats for the seniors, MTel currently offers a monthly plan of just 25 patacas for 100Mbps residential fibre broadband", said Choi, adding that the company holds a market share of approximately 75 percent for network services in these senior facilities.

In addition to maintaining quality services for seniors, MTel plans to collaborate with various organisations in the community to offer training on smart applications, aiming to enhance seniors' access to technology.

When asked about expectations regarding the licensing system for converged services under the telecommunications law, Choi emphasised the need for the government to reorganise consultation meetings with industry stakeholders to gather insights, adding that he believes that the telecommunications law is crucial in the digital age, and



Local MTel Telecommunication Company Limited representative Alex Choi Chin Chong speaks during a press conference at Plaza Restaurant in Zape yesterday.

– Photo: Ginnie Liang

the government should carefully consider long-term developments, even if it requires additional time.

In addition, MTel also held a session on cyber security yesterday during the conference to explain how young people can cope with the challenges of the digital age. Choi encouraged young people to promote the integration of digital technology into public utilities and to facilitate the deep integration of digital technology with social undertakings.

He also hoped to take advantage of well-known international platforms such as the Internet World Congress to demonstrate the technical capabilities and nationalistic sentiments of Macau youth, and continue to work towards building a more open and inclusive cyberspace community. ■

Nov's package tour visitors rise 5.2 pct year-on-year to 213,000

Staff Reporter

Macau's number of package tour visitors rose by 5.2 percent year-on-year to 213,000 last month, with those from the mainland up by 2.1 percent to 189,000, the Statistics and Census Bureau (DSEC) announced yesterday.

Foreign package tour visitors increased by 36.3 percent to 20,000, and those from South Korea (10,000) and India (2,000) rose by 89.8 percent and 37.1

percent respectively.

In the first 11 months, a total of 1,908,000 package tour visitors were recorded, an increase of 70.9 percent year-on-year. Package tour visitors from the mainland went up by 63.4 percent to 1,699,000. Foreign package tour visitors surged by 179.4 percent to 182,000, with those coming from South Korea (79,000) and India (23,000) soaring by 257.9 percent and 426 percent respectively. ■

STOCK MARKETS

Hang Seng Index closes 0.24 pct lower

HONG KONG – Hong Kong's stock market ended lower yesterday with the benchmark Hang Seng Index down 0.24 percent to close at 20,041.42 points.

The Hang Seng China Enterprises Index edged down 0.34 percent to end at 7,280.48 points, while the Hang Seng Tech Index fell 0.84 percent to 4,500.6 points. – Xinhua