



Sam pays fact-finding visit to Hengqin, urging 'bold steps' to innovate

Tony Wong

Chief Executive Sam Hou Fai paid a one-day fact-finding visit to the Guangdong-Macau In-depth Cooperation Zone in Hengqin yesterday where he called for concerted steps to advance reforms while also taking "bold steps" to innovate in terms of policymaking, according to a statement by the Macau Government Information Bureau (GCS) released last night.

The statement said that in the morning, Sam visited the "Music at Tianmu River"* exhibition hall, after which he headed to the Macau New Neighbourhood (MNN) residential estate where he visited facilities such as the Macau government's 24-hour self-service centre and health station, as well as Hengqin School Affiliated to Hou Kong Middle School, with the aim of gaining a better understanding of the MNN living conditions, as well as the extension to Hengqin of Macau's government services, community healthcare, and education services.

According to the statement, Sam also visited the Traditional Chinese Medicine Science and Technology Industrial Park of Cooperation between Guangdong and Macau, where he went to the



This photo released by the Macau Government Information Bureau (GCS) last night shows Chief Executive Sam Hou Fai (centre) talking to Macau residents seeking treatment at the Macau New Neighbourhood (MNN) residential estate's health station in Hengqin yesterday.

exhibition centre of the Chinese Medicine Science and Creativity Museum. In addition, Sam also met representatives of enterprises based in the park, and received a briefing

about the park's overall planning and operational development, as well as about the situation of companies that have launched their operations in the park.

After completing his site visits, the statement said, Sam held a meeting with members of the zone's executive committee and leading officials of bureaus run under the



executive committee, with the aim of gaining a better understanding of the zone's overall development over the past three years since its establishment.

Speaking in the meeting, according to the statement, Sam quoted President Xi Jinping's important speech delivered at the celebration of the 25th Anniversary of Macau's return to the motherland and the inauguration ceremony of the Macau Special Administrative Region's (MSAR) sixth-term government. Xi outlined four expectations for the new-term MSAR government.

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Macau logs 210 million entries & exits in 2024, highest record: police

Tony Wong

Macau recorded around 210 million entries and exits at its border checkpoints in 2024, the highest annual number on record, the Public Security Police (PSP) have announced.

According to a PSP statement on New Year's Day, last year's total number of entries and exits increased 17.5 percent from the around 180 million recorded in 2023, while the number in 2024 was even higher than in pre-pandemic 2019, a 10.3 percent increase from the around 190 million recorded that year.

The COVID-19 pandemic affected Macau for three years between early 2020 and late 2022, which severely impacted the city's economy in general, its gaming and tourism sectors in particular. The economy started its post-pandemic gradual recovery in early 2023.

According to previous PSP announcements, the cumulative number of entries and exits at Macau's border checkpoints, starting January 1, 2024, already exceeded the 200 million-benchmark on December 7, having already broken the previous

annual record of the whole of 2019 (around 190 million).

According to Wednesday's PSP statement, the Barrier Gate checkpoint recorded 110 million entries and exits last year, representing 52.7 percent of the total, while the Qingmao checkpoint, the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macau Bridge's (HZMB) Macau checkpoint, and the Hengqin checkpoint recorded 35.09 million, 26.17 million and 22.81 million entries and exits, accounting for 16.3 percent, 12.2 percent and 10.6 percent of the total respectively.

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This photo taken last week shows border crossers on their way to Zhuhai's Gongbei checkpoint after completing departure formalities at Macau's Barrier Gate checkpoint. - Photo: Tony Wong

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Gaza rescuers say Israeli strikes kill police chief, two dozen others

Israel struck a declared humanitarian zone in southern Gaza overnight, which rescuers yesterday said killed the head of the Palestinian territory's Hamas-run police force, his deputy and nine others. - Story on p. 10

FBI probes 'terrorist' links in New Orleans truck-ramming that killed 15

US authorities were investigating yesterday after an army veteran with an Islamic State (IS) flag who was "hellbent" on carnage steered a pickup truck into a crowd of New Year's revellers in New Orleans, killing at least 15 people and wounding dozens. - Story on p. 11

UN alarmed by Mozambique exodus after post-vote unrest

The United Nations has voiced alarm this week at the violence surrounding post-election protests in Mozambique, which has forced thousands to seek shelter in neighbouring countries. - Story on p. 12

Birth rate continues to fall, only 3,603 newborns last year: SSM vice chief

Yuki Lei

Macau's birth rate has been on a steady downward trend since 2016, with the public Conde de São Januário Hospital Centre and private Kiang Wu Hospital recording 3,603 births last year, a year-on-year drop of about 3.2 percent, Health Bureau (SSM) Deputy Director Kuok Cheong U told local media on New Year's Day.

According to Kuok, the total number of newborns in the two hospitals last year amounted to 3,603, of whom 1,555 were born at Conde de São Januário Hospital Centre and 2,048 at Kiang Wu Hospital, representing an overall decrease of around 3.2 percent over the previous year. He added that the local ratio of male-to-female neonates remained consistent.

Worldwide, according to Poe data, the ratio of male to female neonates typically ranges from 103 to 107 males for every 100

females born. This means that, on average, about 51 percent of newborns are male and 49 percent are female.

According to the Statistics and Census Bureau (DSEDC), the local birth rate has been on a continuous downward trend since 2016, dropping from 11 per 1,000 in 2016 to 8.9 per 1,000 in 2019, and then to 5.5 per 1,000 in 2023, while the 4,344 newborns recorded in 2022 were then the lowest since official records began in 1985.

The financial assistance scheme for fertility services by the government took effect on December 1 last year, according to which married couples or couples in a de facto relationship who meet the indications and referral criteria for assisted reproduction technology (ART) can apply for service-fee exemption of up to two cycles of ART services, i.e., the first-generation in vitro fertilization-

embryo transfer (IVF) or the second-generation intracytoplasmic sperm injection (ICSI) techniques.

When asked by reporters about the newly-launched programme, Kuok noted that the bureau has so far received 221 applications.

Flu-like-illnesses remain stable

Meanwhile, according to Kuok, the reported number of respiratory infections caused by the human metapneumovirus (HMPV) has declined, from a high detection rate of 15 percent to about 10 percent recently. HMPV, a common acute respiratory virus that was first discovered in 2001 and has meanwhile been found around the world, is an upper respiratory tract influenza-like virus, with symptoms similar to those of a cold which include a sore throat, chest congestion and a cough, nasal congestion and sometimes a fever.

Kuok noted that the recent average attendance rates of the two hospitals varied from 500 to 600 for Kiang Wu Hospital and 800 to 900 for Conde de São Januário Hospital Centre. Among them, the number of patients with influenza-like-illness has remained stable, with Influenza B as the mainstay, followed by Influenza A, while COVID-19 infections have been on the low side, at merely 0.9 percent.

As the Chinese New Year (CNY) is approaching, which falls on January 29 this year, in view of the peak of influenza in the autumn-winter and winter-spring periods, Kuok urged members of the public to take precautionary measures when travelling outside Macau by wearing facemasks in crowded places and frequently washing their hands or using alcohol-based handrubs, especially after coming into contact with surfaces in public places. ■



Health Bureau (SSM) Deputy Director Kuok Cheong U speaks to local reporters on Wednesday.

— Photo courtesy of TDM

Woman falsely accuses man of rape over gambling row: police

Yuki Lei

A mainland woman has been arrested by the Judiciary Police (PJ) for falsely accusing a man of rape after a gambling dispute, PJ spokesman Cheong Un Hong said during a regular press conference yesterday.

In the wee hours of Sunday, the Judiciary Police received a referral from the Public Security Police (PSP) about a suspected rape case at a hotel in Cotai. The Judiciary

Police took over the investigation and discovered that the two people involved had had a verbal argument over a gambling issue, during which the man berated the woman who then falsely reported to the police that she had been raped by him.

Cheong did not elaborate on what the gambling dispute was all about.

According to Cheong, the suspect and the victim, both mainlanders, met at a local casino in mid-2024 and exchanged their WeChat contacts. On December 27, the duo met again at a casino in Cotai and later, in the early hours of the following day, had sex in their guestroom. Cheong quoted the PJ investigators as saying that this was not the first time the two had had sexual intercourse, adding that they also hung out and dined together afterwards.

Cheong noted that the Judiciary Police intercepted on Sunday the 41-year-old female suspect surnamed Xie, who has meanwhile been transferred to the Public Prosecutions Office (MP) where she is facing a charge of making a false report. ■



Judiciary Police (PJ) spokesman Cheong Un Hong looks on during yesterday's regular press conference at the PJ headquarters in Zape.

— Photo: Yuki Lei

5 mainlanders exposed as loan sharks after gambling row with debtor: police

Yuki Lei

The Judiciary Police (PJ) arrested on Saturday five mainlanders for running an illegal gambling loan business in the city, with at least HK\$500,000 involved, according to a regular press conference yesterday.

The quintet, aged between 29 and 53, surnamed Gao, Xiong, Liang, Xu and Zhang, gave the police various job titles, respectively, such as businessman, reporter and restaurant waiter,

PJ spokesman Cheong Un Hong said. The five loan sharks were exposed by casino security guards after a dispute with a debtor over the amount of a bet while the latter was gambling at a casino in Cotai, Cheong added.

Cheong quoted PJ investigators as noting that the male victim was told by Gao and Xiong of their loan services last Friday night. After gambling away all his money, he borrowed HK\$500,000 from the gang at noon on the following day,

agreeing to repay 485,000 yuan (HK\$516,485) and 25 percent "interest" on each of his winnings, with "interest" totalling HK\$50,000.

According to Cheong, upon the victim's request for assistance, the quintet were caught by the casino security guards and subsequently referred to the Judiciary Police for follow-up.

The five suspects, four males and a female, have been transferred to the Public Prosecutions Office (MP), facing charges of usury. ■

Local man gambles away part of 100,000 patacas found on bus: police

Yuki Lei

The Public Security Police (PSP) have arrested a local man in his sixties for picking up a backpack containing 100,000 patacas in cash left on a bus by a passenger and keeping it, part of which he gambled away, with only 12,000 patacas recovered.

PSP spokesman Lam Keong said during a regular press conference yesterday that the jobless suspect, surnamed Ng, has been transferred to the Public Prosecutions Office (MP) for a possible theft-by-finding charge.

A local woman reported to the Public Security Police last Friday night that carrying a backpack she had got on a bus in Praça de Ferreira do Amaral (亞馬喇前地) and got off near the CTM headquarters on Avenida Dr Sun Yat-Sen (孫逸仙博士大馬路) in Taipa, but left her backpack on the bus.

The Public Security Police identified the suspect in the case, Ng, and intercepted him in the afternoon of the following day



This undated handout photo provided by the Public Security Police (PSP) yesterday shows the local theft-by-finding suspect being escorted by PSP officers to a police station in Taipa.

near the place where the victim had alighted from the bus, according to Lam.

Under questioning, Lam noted, the suspect admitted to having picked up the victim's backpack on the bus and taken 100,000 patacas

that he found in it, insisting that he had spent some of the money on gambling and given another some to a friend.

The Public Security Police recovered 12,000 patacas of the stolen cash from Ng's home. ■

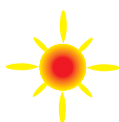
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MACAU POST

Macau Weather

DRY, FINE.
FORCE 3 TO 4 NORTH TO NORTHEASTERLY WINDS, OCCASIONALLY FORCE 5 WITH GUSTS.
RELATIVE HUMIDITY WILL RANGE BETWEEN 35% AND 80%.



14°C~22°C

Source: SMG

Over 1,000 runners join 'CEM New Year's Eve Run'

Rui Pastorin

Over a thousand runners joined Tuesday's "2024 Fourth Round of the Macau Long-Distance Running League: CEM New Year's Eve Run", according to a statement by public power utility CEM.

The race started and ended at the Coloane Power Station.

In a speech during the run's opening ceremony, General Association of Athletics of Macau President Chan Bu Qian said that he was honoured to cooperate with CEM in organising the event, which for his association was very meaningful, introducing new ideas and models, and providing a better platform for future events.

CEM Executive Committee Chairman Bernie Leong Wa Kun said in his speech that 2024 was not only a "dual anniversary year", but also marked the 40th Anniversary of the Guangdong-Macau Interconnection, making it especially significant.

The statement noted that the event consisted of a race course

of around 8.7 kilometres for the Male and Female Youth, Open, Senior, Master, and Invited categories, and approximately 5 kilometres for the Male and Female Junior categories. Invited runners from the power supply sector in other parts of the Greater Bay Area (GBA) were among those taking part in the run.

Moreover, the "Most Creative Costume Award" was up for grabs, offering a Grand Prize of 3,000 patacas in cash and 10 Excellence Awards of 500-pataca supermarket gift vouchers, while exhibition boards and a photo zone were set up to celebrate the 40th Anniversary of the Guangdong-Macau electricity supply interconnection.

Deputy Director-General of the Department of Social Affairs of the Liaison Office of the Central People's Government in the Macau SAR, Zhao Heqing; Sports Bureau (ID) President Luís Gomes and lawmakers Leong Sun Iok and Wu Chou Kit were also among the officiating guests on Tuesday. ■



This photo downloaded from the CEM website shows officials starting the "2024 Fourth Round of the Macau Long-Distance Running League: CEM New Year's Eve Run" on Tuesday night as runners set off.

Casino takings fall 2.0 pct last month, up 23.9 pct to US\$28.39 billion last year, reaching 77.5 pct of pre-pandemic 2019

Staff Reporter

Macau's 30 casinos generated gross gaming revenue (GGR) of 18.2 billion patacas last month, a year-on-year decline of 2.0 percent, the Gaming Inspection and Coordination Bureau (DICJ) announced on New Year's Day.

Month on month, GGR in December was down by 1.27 percent, last year's only month to suffer a year-on-year decline.

Last year's GGR rose by 23.9 percent year on year to 226.78 billion patacas, reaching 77.5 percent of the GGR recorded in pre-pandemic 2019, exceeding the government's forecast by 4.95 percent. Macau recorded its first COVID-19 case in January 2020. The pandemic severely affected Macau's economy in general, its

gaming sector in particular between early 2020 and late 2021.

Macau's casinos recorded their highest annual GGR of 360.7 billion patacas in 2013. Last year's GGR reached 62.87 percent of the one in 2013.

The government's 2024 budget had predicted GGR of 216 billion patacas.

Macau's government-concessed gaming industry is run by six rival integrated resort (IR) operators – Sands, Galaxy, SJM, Melco, Wynn, and MGM. Under their concession agreements with the government, the IR operators are required to strengthen their non-gaming attractions and support Macau's cultural heritage promotion and old-quarter renovation projects. The operators pay 35 percent of their GGR as direct gaming tax to

the government, aside from an additional 5.0 percent in levies for funding a range of public causes. However, the gaming law, amended in 2022, allows the government to lower the additional levies (officially termed "contributions") for a raft of reasons, such as for operators expanding their foreign client markets or when they have to cope with unforeseen adverse developments affecting their business operations. So far, this has not been the case.

In the first three quarters of last year, according to the latest available official gaming statistics, baccarat generated 85.0 percent of local casinos' GGR, among over a dozen games of chance. Gaming machines produced 5.6 percent of GGR between January and September last year. ■

Sam pays fact-finding visit to Hengqin, urging 'bold steps' to innovate

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Sam noted that the first expectation laid out by Xi for the local government is to endeavour to promote appropriate economic diversification, including effort to: promote high-level coordination and deep alignment of rules between the zone and Macau; ensure the smooth cross-border flow of various factors; and target key areas promoting the development of "distinctive" industries at scale and creating a series of landmark and impactful projects and programmes.

According to the statement, Sam also noted that the central government's decision to develop Hengqin aims to promote Macau's appropriate economic diversification and to facilitate Macau residents' living

and employment conditions there.

The statement said that Sam urged the zone's management team to further expedite work for its development, selecting key industries in the zone to set up pilot projects, on the basis of ensuring the nation's sovereignty, security and development interests, and in line with the mainland's fundamental and constitutional legal principles.

According to the statement, Sam noted that there are a number of differences in terms of institutions, laws, regulations, and preferential policies between the zone and Macau because of which there should be further efforts to complement the two sides' strengths.

The statement said that Sam also stressed the need to strengthen the training of public servants in

Macau enabling them to gain a deep understanding of the regulations of both sides. The chief executive also said that the Macau government will second more public servants to the zone to work in its executive committee with the aim of strengthening the Macau-Hengqin integrated development drive.

Secretary for Administration and Justice André Cheong Weng Chon and Secretary for Economy and Finance Tai Kin Ip accompanied Sam on his inspection visit.

Meanwhile, the zone's Livelihood Affairs Bureau announced on New Year's Eve that effective from February 1, eligible young people from Macau working in the zone can apply for a monthly subsidy of 4,000 yuan for a period of up to 36 months.

*Tianmu is a river in Hengqin ■

6 IR operators announce staff bonuses

Sands China's staff to also get pay hike

Rui Pastorin

Macau's six integrated resort operators announced in separate statements earlier this week that eligible staff members will be getting discretionary bonuses equivalent to a month's salary.

Galaxy Entertainment Group said that discretionary bonuses equivalent to a month's base salary and guaranteed tips (if applicable) will be awarded to eligible staff at the senior manager grade and below on January 22, benefitting around 97 percent of its employees. Meanwhile, MGM said that around 95 percent of its staff will benefit from a discretionary bonus, which will be distributed in two phases around the Lunar New Year.

Melco Resorts & Entertainment's eligible non-management staff in Macau and Hong Kong are set to receive their

discretionary bonus before the Chinese New Year (CNY), while Wynn Macau, Limited said that the "Special Allowance" equivalent to a month's gross salary for its eligible full-time Wynn Macau and Wynn Palace staff members is slated to be paid out on January 21, representing 98 percent of its 11,317-strong workforce.

SJM Resorts will also be paying out its discretionary bonuses this month, according to a TDM report. A Macau Business article adds that the announcement was made in an internal memo and that the bonuses will be paid out on January 20.

Moreover, on January 27, Sands China will pay out its discretionary bonuses to non-management staff who have been with the company for a year or more, while management staff will be paid based on their individual

performance, the company's Management Incentive Plan and financial results, according to the company's statement. Staff who have worked for the company for less than a year will receive prorated bonuses if they joined the company before October 1, 2024, and are still employed on the bonus pay-out date.

Sands China's salary increase, meanwhile, takes effect on March 1, with eligible full-time staff currently earning monthly salaries of up to 16,000 patacas (before tax) to receive a pay rise of 600 patacas, an increase of between 3.8 and 5.0 percent, while full-time staff earning monthly salaries above 16,000 patacas (before tax) will receive a 2.5 percent pay rise. The pay increase will benefit 99 percent of the company's 27,000 staff members. ■

MACAU ANGLICAN COLLEGE



**PARENTS' INFORMATION MEETING FOR ENROLING
NEW K1 PUPILS FOR SEPTEMBER 2025**

MACAU ANGLICAN COLLEGE
AV. PADRE TOMÁS PEREIRA, NO. 109-117, TAIPA, MACAU
THIRD FLOOR, SCHOOL HALL
ON
TUESDAY, JANUARY 07th 2025, 7 P.M.

*Four K1 classes commence in September 2025.

*104 places will be offered to new K1 pupils aged 3, in 4 classes of 26.

*English and Putonghua are the main languages of instruction.

*Creative teaching styles; child-centred learning.

*DSEDJ Central Registration: January 6 to 16, 2025.

*MAC Application Documents Submission Days: February 19 to 21, 2025.

*Interview Days: March 1 to 8, 2025.

Fireworks show on New Year's Eve 'never a tradition': IC

Ginnie Liang

The Cultural Affairs Bureau (IC) said in a statement yesterday that it has "never been a tradition" to include a fireworks show in its New Year's Eve countdown concerts since Macau's return to the motherland 25 years ago, and that's why there wasn't a firework display at the end of the countdown concert in Sai Van Square at midnight on Wednesday.

The statement was released yesterday after commenters on social media platforms complained that a large number of revellers

went to Sai Van Lake Square to wait for the fireworks show, but were left disappointed because there was none.

In 2023, the bureau collaborated with integrated resort (IR) operator SJM Resorts to put on a two-minute firework display aimed at enhancing the atmosphere during the concert. However, the firework display staged in 2023 atop Macau Tower did not meet the expectations, according to the bureau's feedback at that time, the statement said. Therefore, the bureau decided not to

include a firework display this time.

According to the statement, a number of opinions collected by the bureau showed that the 2023 display had failed to match the "grandeur" of a full fireworks show. As a result, the statement said, this time the bureau only focused on musical and dance performances, as well as stage effects to celebrate the evening with residents and visitors alike.

While Sands China arranged a midnight firework display on New Year's Day in Cotai for spectators to watch the show in the

city's leisure and entertainment area, there was no arrangement for firework displays at the countdown shows in both Sai Van Lake Square and Taipa Houses.

The bureau was committed to listening to public feedback and considering opinions from various sectors to create a vibrant atmosphere for future events, the statement said, adding that its aims to ensure more comprehensive communication regarding upcoming activities, enhancing the overall experience for the audience. ■



Take a trip down memory lane at M8 gallery photo exhibition

Rui Pastorin

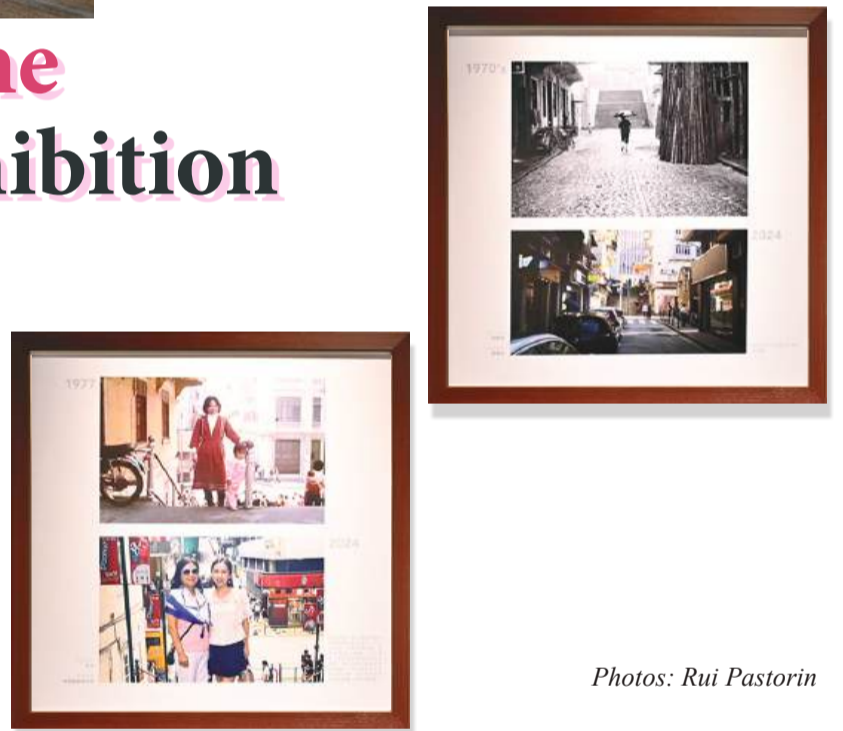
Photographs of past and present-day Macau are on display at an exhibition titled "Nostalgia photo exhibition – We grew up with Macau" at the private M8 Gallery, allowing nostalgic exhibitiongoers and those curious to see glimpses of the city's past to appreciate them until February 15.

Situated on the B3 level of the recently opened M8 mall, which is a short walk up Travessa do Roquete (羅結地巷) from Largo do Senado, the gallery's walls not only show pictures of Macau in different eras, but the people who grew up and lived in the city as well.

According to a statement on the M8 website, the exhibition is organised by the mall in conjunction with the Macau Digital Photography Association, with works by its members on display. The images of different eras, the statement noted, enable exhibition visitors to "experience the transformations and developments between the photographers and Macau across various times".

Two different eras of Fai Chi Kei district, old photos, and adults recreating poses that they did when they were younger in certain areas around the city, and scenes of familiar places are among those that the public will be able to scrutinise. Moreover, four enlarged old photographs by late photographer Lei Lok Tin are also on display.

Those interested may visit the free-admission gallery from 10 a.m. to 10 p.m. daily. For more details, one can visit <https://www.m8macau.com/en/> ■



Photos: Rui Pastorin



'Keeping in mind the instructions and working together to make progress, reform and innovate, and setting sail again'

New Year's Message for 2025 by Zheng Xincong, Director of the Liaison Office of the Central People's Government in the Macao SAR

The winter solstice marks the beginning of the year, and the year is turning. We are still immersed in the great joy of President Xi Jinping's visit to Macao to attend the celebrations [of the 25th Anniversary of Macao's return to the motherland], and we have ushered in a new year full of hope. On this occasion of bidding farewell to the old and welcoming the new, on behalf of the Liaison Office of the Central People's Government in the Macao Special Administrative Region, I would like to extend New Year greetings and good wishes to the vast number of Macao compatriots!

2024 marked the 75th anniversary of the founding of the New China and was a key year for achieving the goals and tasks of the "14th Five-Year Plan". The Communist Party of China Central Committee, with Comrade Xi Jinping as the core, united and led the people of the whole country, responded calmly and adopted comprehensive measures, and the main goals and tasks of economic and social development were successfully completed, and Chinese-style modernization took new and solid steps. In the outgoing year, the Third Plenary Session of the 20th CPC Central Committee was successfully held, which made systematic arrangements for further deepening reform and promoting Chinese-style modernization, and injected strong momentum into promoting the common development of China and the world. This year, the country's high-quality development has been steadily promoted, the overall economic operation has been stable and steady, people's livelihoods have continued to improve, and grain production has exceeded 1.4 trillion jin [a traditional measure of weight equivalent 500 grams per jin] for the first time; Chang'e 6 completed the first sampling of the back of the Moon in human history, the third-generation independent superconducting quantum computer "Original Wukong" was put into operation, and the first domestic large cruise ship "Aida-Modu" started its commercial maiden voyage; Team China achieved its best results in overseas competitions at the Paris Olympics, China's Spring Festival World Heritage application was successful, and the domestically developed game "Black Myth: Wukong" was selected as the best game of the year by "Time" magazine. In 2024, President Xi Jinping attended the 70th anniversary of the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence, the China-Arab Cooperation Forum, and the Beijing Summit of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation, embarked on four important overseas visits, namely Europe, Central Asia, BRICS, and Latin America, and participated in a series of multilateral summits.

China's unique major power diplomacy has been courageous and resolute. Looking back at the glorious 75-year history, the New China has grown from poverty and weakness to the world's second largest economy, from insufficient food and clothing to achieving a well-off society in all respects. Chinese-style modernization has unfolded a magnificent picture and presented an extremely bright and brilliant prospect, and the realization of the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation has entered an irreversible historical process.

2024 was the 25th anniversary of Macao's return to the motherland, and it was a focused display of the advantages, brilliant achievements and bright prospects of the "One Country, Two Systems" principle. In 2024, the Macao Legislative Assembly Election Law was revised, the election of the sixth Chief Executive was successfully held, the sixth Special Administrative Region Government was successfully set up, and the new government governance team is strong and ready to go, which is widely recognized and highly expected by all sectors of society. In 2024, the "1+4" appropriate economic diversification development plan was implemented in an orderly manner, and the Hengqin line management was officially implemented; the 6th Ministerial Meeting of the Forum for Economic and Trade Cooperation between China and Portuguese-speaking Countries (Forum Macao) was successfully held, and the "CEPA Service Trade Agreement" between the mainland and Macao was revised; Macao was successfully named the "East Asian City of Culture", and won the Best Convention City (Asia) and the Best BT-MICE City for two consecutive years, and became the most satisfactory destination for mainland tourists for outbound travel for the first time; Macao's GDP in the first three quarters increased by 11.5 percent year-on-year, ranking among the top in the world and first in Asia in the 2024 list of the richest countries and regions published by the "Forbes" magazine in the United States. This year, major livelihood projects such as the Macao Medical Center of Peking Union Medical College Hospital, the government's Building for Seniors, the Macao Bridge and the Hengqin School Affiliated to Haojing Middle School were completed and put into use as scheduled, and the welfare of Macao's people's livelihood has reached a new level, and the overall social situation has always remained safe, stable, festive and harmonious. After 25 years of hard work, Macao has created the best development situation in its history and has become one of the richest, safest, most dynamic and happiest cities in the world. The practice of



Undated file photo of Macao-based Liaison Office Director Zheng Xincong. - Photo courtesy of Liaison Office of the Central People's Government in the Macao Special Administrative Region

"One Country, Two Systems" with Macao characteristics has achieved universally recognized success.

President Xi Jinping has always been concerned with Macao's development and the well-being of its residents. Since the 18th CPC National Congress, he has visited Macao three times and written back to Macao compatriots four times, repeatedly emphasizing that the original intention of developing Hengqin is to promote the appropriate diversified development of Macao's economy and facilitate the lives and employment of Macao residents. In particular, at the important moment of the 25th Anniversary of Macao's return to the motherland, President Xi Jinping visited Macao in person, had extensive and in-depth exchanges with all sectors of society, discussed Macao's development plans, and praised Macao as the "pearl in the palm" of the motherland, a shining pearl on the shore of the South China Sea, a treasure of the great motherland, and a blessed land for living and working in peace and contentment; he solemnly declared that "One Country, Two Systems" is a good system to maintain the long-term prosperity and stability of Hong Kong and Macao, a good system to serve the great cause of building a strong country and achieving national rejuvenation, and a good system to achieve peaceful coexistence and win-win cooperation among different social systems, which must be adhered to for a long time. Domestic and foreign media have released comprehensive and in-depth reports and comments about President Xi's inspection tour [from December 18-20, 2024] and the brilliant achievements of Macao in the 25 years since its return to the motherland, attracting global attention and triggering enthusiastic responses. Various sectors of Macao held a variety of colorful celebrations, and Macao compatriots went from looking forward to them to becoming excited about them. Especially during the celebrations, wherever President Xi went, all sectors of society and residents

expressed true feelings, fully demonstrating their deep affection for the nation's leader, their high recognition of the country, and their beautiful vision for the future. "The 25th Anniversary of Macao's return to the motherland, 'One Country, Two Systems' is steady and far-reaching" and "Celebrating the 25th Anniversary of Macao's return to the motherland and creating a new situation for the development of the 'One Country, Two Systems' cause" were rated as the top ten domestic news in 2024 by China Central Radio and Television and Xinhua News Agency respectively. In the 2025 New Year's message just released, President Xi Jinping also said that on the occasion of the 25th Anniversary of Macao's return to the motherland, he came to the banks of the Haojiang [one of Macao's ancient names] River again, and the new developments and changes were gratifying, and emphasized that he would unwaveringly implement the "One Country, Two Systems" policy to maintain the long-term prosperity and stability of Hong Kong and Macao.

2025 is the first year to implement the spirit of President Xi Jinping's series of important speeches during his inspection tour of Macao, the key year to implement the spirit of the Third Plenary Session of the 20th CPC Central Committee, and the first year for the sixth SAR government to govern in accordance with the law. Macao will also welcome the eighth Legislative Assembly elections and other major events in 2025. We firmly believe that Chief Executive [Sam Hou Fai] and the new government will unite and lead all sectors of society, bear in mind President Xi's earnest instructions,

carry forward the four important experiences that must be grasped for the steady and long-term practice of "One Country, Two Systems", bear in mind President Xi's four hopes for the new government, look far ahead, embrace all rivers, forge ahead, better play the advantages of the "One Country, Two Systems" framework, promote Macao's appropriately diversified economic development at a faster pace, improve the governance efficiency of the SAR with deeper reforms, build a high-level opening-up platform with more practical measures, and maintain social harmony and stability with a more solid foundation, so that the "Macao" train can run faster and more steadily, and make greater contributions to the construction of a strong country and national rejuvenation.

The Liaison Office of the Central People's Government in the Macao Special Administrative Region will, as always, firmly support the Chief Executive and the SAR Government in governing in accordance with the law, and work together with all sectors of Macao society and the vast majority of Macao compatriots to make Macao, this pearl in the palm of the motherland, shine even brighter.

Wishing the great motherland prosperity!

Wishing Macao's development to achieve a higher level!

Wishing Macao compatriots happiness and health!

N.B. Translation of the unabridged message obtained from the official website of the Liaison Office arranged and edited by The Macau Post Daily. Explanations within square brackets added by the Post.

AD

GRAND OPENING

Autumn Books Culture Festival

Tap Seac Multisport Complex, Macau

04-12 Jan 2025

Plaza Cultural Macau, Ltd

鳴謝：澳門特別行政區政府文化發展基金資助

'Shouldering the mission and working together, opening up and developing a new chapter'

2025 New Year's Message by Foreign Ministry Commissioner Liu Xianfa

The order of the year changes, and the chapters are renewed day by day. On the occasion of bidding farewell to the old and welcoming the new, on behalf of the Office of the Commissioner of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in the Macao Special Administrative Region (Macao SAR), I would like to extend my best wishes to the Macao compatriots and express my sincere gratitude to all friends from all walks of life who care about and support Macao-related diplomatic work.

2024 marked the 75th anniversary of the founding of the People's Republic of China. The Third Plenary Session of the 20th Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Committee was successfully held, the comprehensive deepening of reforms is marching forward, and China's modernization is advancing vigorously, contributing Chinese solutions and Chinese strength to the cause of world peace and development. 2024 also marked the 25th anniversary of Macao's return to the motherland. President Xi Jinping visited Macao and delivered a series of important speeches, highly affirming the great achievements made in the practice of "One Country, Two Systems" with Macao characteristics over the past 25 years, profoundly expounding the value concept and contemporary significance of "One Country, Two Systems", and comprehensively drawing up a blueprint for Macao's long-term development, which fully reflects President Xi's deep concern and earnest expectations for Macao, which is encouraging and inspiring.

Looking back over the past 25 years, with the strong support of the Central People's Government and the mainland, Macao's "one center, one platform, and one base" development has been deepened, and cooperation with countries and regions that jointly build the "Belt and Road" with high quality has continued to deepen. The number of international "sister cities" and "circles of friends" is growing more and more, and there are more and more "Macao Golden Business Cards" such as "City of Gastronomy", "City of Culture" and "City of Events". The advantages of the base for cultural exchanges and cooperation between China and foreign countries have become more prominent, and Macao's international influence and prestige have been greatly improved. It has developed into a world-renowned international metropolis that connects the inside and the outside world, and has become an important bridgehead for the country's high-level opening-up to the outside world. It has made important



Undated file photo of Commissioner Liu Xianfa. - Photo courtesy of the Office of the Commissioner of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China in the Macao Special Administrative Region.

contributions to comprehensively promoting the construction of a strong country and the great cause of national rejuvenation with Chinese-style modernization.

At present, the international situation is changing and turbulent. Chinese diplomacy has demonstrated calmness and confidence in the chaos and actively taken on responsibilities in the changing situation. In 2024, President Xi attended the 70th anniversary of the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence, the China-Arab Cooperation Forum, and the Beijing Summit of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation, and embarked on four global tours, namely Europe, Central Asia, BRICS, and Latin America, writing a new chapter in the diplomacy of heads of state and leading the trend of win-win cooperation. Under the guidance of the head-of-state diplomatic strategy, China has expanded and deepened its all-round diplomatic layout, firmly defended its core interests, adhered to international fairness and justice, and promoted the building of a community with a shared future for mankind in the spirit of "joint efforts". China's initiatives and ideas are increasingly recognized by the world, and major global issues are increasingly inseparable from China's participation. China's significance to the modern world has been fully demonstrated, bringing broad opportunities for global open development and providing strong support for global strategic stability.

2025 is the first year of the full implementation of the spirit of the Third Plenary Session of the 20th CPC Central Committee, and it is also the first year of the new government of the Macao Special Administrative Region. President Xi has expressed his earnest expectations for Macao to build a higher-level opening-up platform, emphasizing that Macao should focus on the "two overall situations", based on the positioning

of "one center, one platform, and one base", improve the mechanism to play a better role in the country's opening-up, actively connect with major national strategies, further increase the intensity of two-way opening-up, make good use of the cultural advantages of the integration of Chinese and Western cultures, and show greater achievements on the international stage. President Xi's earnest expectations and clear requirements not only point out the direction and path for the Macao SAR to expand foreign exchanges and cooperation, but also provide an action guide for Macao-related diplomatic work. We must take President Xi's diplomatic thought as a guide, thoroughly study and implement the spirit of President Xi's series of important speeches during his inspection visit to Macao [last month] and the arrangements of the Third Plenary Session of the 20th CPC Central Committee, earnestly shoulder our responsibilities and missions, firmly safeguard national security, deeply practice the concepts of "diplomacy for the people" and "diplomacy for Macao", make every effort to safeguard the legitimate rights and interests of Macao compatriots overseas, better support and assist the Macao SAR to expand foreign exchanges and cooperation, attract more international resources, build a higher-level opening-up platform, continuously enhance global influence and attractiveness, and create a more favorable international environment for constantly creating a new situation of high-quality development of the "One Country, Two Systems" cause.

The brave will win when a thousand ships compete; and the brave will be the first to row when a hundred boats contest. We firmly believe that with President Xi at the helm and with the full support of the mainland, and with the joint efforts of the Macao SAR government and all sectors of society, Macao will surely seize the historical opportunity of the country's high-quality development and high-level opening up, so that Macao as the "pearl in the palm" of the motherland will shine more brightly and write a new chapter of the prosperous Macao with the successful practice of "One Country, Two Systems"!

I wish the great motherland prosperity! I wish Macao a better tomorrow! I wish all Macao compatriots a Happy New Year and all the best!

N.B. Chinese Foreign Affairs Ministry Commissioner Liu Xianfa's New Year's Message was released by his office in the Chinese language on New Year's Eve. Its translation was arranged and edited by The Macau Post Daily.

IAM urges public to stop eating 'LORINS' fish sauce that contains excessive heavy metal cadmium

Ginnie Liang

The Municipal Affairs Bureau (IAM) warned the public yesterday against eating a certain batch of fish sauce (250 ml) under the brand of "LORINS" made in the Philippines, as one batch of the product was found to contain excessive levels of the heavy metal cadmium.

The problematic product batch, which has a batch number of CBD 04JUL2026 B# A483 1046, was found to contain an excessive amount of heavy metal cadmium, 0.176 mg of heavy metal cadmium per kg, the statement said.

The bureau said in a statement yesterday that it has issued a food alert to order local retailers to remove the product from their shelves and stop selling it, while also dispatching

IAM officials to inspect the food market and tracing the source and sales direction of the products.

Cadmium is a heavy metal contaminant whose long-term ingestion can cause damage to human kidney functions, the statement said, adding that according to the analysis of the cadmium content detected in the samples concerned, the chance of adverse health effects is low under normal consumption conditions.

Consumers who have purchased and are in possession of the above affected batch of product should stop consuming it immediately, the statement said, adding that the bureau will continue to follow up and investigate the incident to protect the food safety of consumers. ■

IAS plans to install video surveillance in nurseries

Ginnie Liang

The Social Welfare Bureau (IAS) said in a statement yesterday that it is working on a preliminary implementation plan for video surveillance to be installed in nurseries, with the aim of enhancing safety and transparency in childcare environments in Macau.

The bureau made the remarks in its reply to a written interpellation from lawmaker Ho Ion Sang who sought updates on the installation of video surveillance systems in nurseries, locally also known as creches, and called for the establishment of a professional recognition system for nursery caregivers to ensure that they possess the necessary skills and training.

In the written interpellation submitted to the government in November, Ho advocated for improved quality in nursery services, asking about the progress of the "Macao 2023-2025 Childcare Services Planning Scheme," particularly its upcoming phase and any new initiatives aimed at optimising service quality and staffing.

According to Ho, Macau's birth rate fell from 11 percent in 2016 to a mere 5.5 percent in 2023. Despite the decrease in the birth rate, there has been growing demand for childcare services, particularly among dual-income families who often struggle to find adequate care for their young children, Ho pointed out in his

written interpellation, adding that parents are increasingly concerned about the quality of care, calling for better staffing ratios, enhanced facilities, and more specialised training for nursery staff.

In its response, the bureau confirmed that it is actively implementing measures outlined in the childcare scheme, and the current average caregiver-to-child ratio stands at about 1:6.3, with infant classes having a ratio of 1:3.8. For subsidised nurseries, the ratio has improved to 1:4.4 and 1:2.7 for infants, aligning with standards in neighbouring regions, the bureau said.

To enhance nursery service quality, the bureau has introduced a series of measures, including the development of individualised operational manuals for subsidised facilities, annual self-assessments, and external evaluations, while also supporting caregivers in obtaining professional certifications and providing ongoing training to improve service delivery, the bureau said.

The bureau said that it plans to collaborate with nursery providers to ensure high-quality services, taking into account feedback from the community, adding that it will also summarise the practical experiences from the current scheme and consider society's needs when formulating the next phase of its childcare plan in 2025. ■

STOCK MARKETS

Hang Seng Index closes 2.18 pct lower

HONG KONG - Hong Kong's stock market ended lower yesterday with the benchmark Hang Seng Index down 2.18 percent to close at 19,623.32 points.

The Hang Seng China Enterprises Index fell 2.73 percent to end at 7,090.56 points, while the Hang Seng Tech Index fell 2.47 percent to end at 4,357.53 points. - Xinhua

Full text of President Xi's 2025 New Year message

BEIJING – On New Year's Eve, President Xi Jinping delivered his 2025 New Year message through China Media Group and the Internet. The following is the full text of the message:

Greetings to everybody! Time flies fast, and the new year will be with us shortly. I extend my best wishes to you all from Beijing.

In 2024, we have together journeyed through the four seasons. Together, we have experienced winds and rains and seen rainbows. Those touching and unforgettable moments have been like still frames showing how extraordinary a year we have had.

We have proactively responded to the impacts of the changing environment at home and abroad. We have adopted a full range of policies to make solid gains in pursuing high-quality development. China's economy has rebounded and is on an upward trajectory, with its GDP for the year expected to pass the 130 trillion yuan mark. Grain output has surpassed 700 million tons, and China's bowls are now filled with more Chinese grain. Coordinated development across regions has gained stronger momentum, and mutually reinforcing advances have been made in both new urbanization and rural revitalization. Green and low-carbon development has been further enhanced. Indeed, a more beautiful China is unfolding before us.

We have fostered new quality productive forces in light of actual conditions. New business sectors, forms and models have kept emerging. For the first time, China has produced more than 10 million new energy vehicles in a year. Breakthroughs have been made in integrated circuit, artificial intelligence, quantum communications and many other fields. Also for the first time, the Chang'e-6 lunar probe collected samples from the far side of the moon. The Mengxiang drilling vessel explored the mystery of the deep ocean. The Shenzhen-Zhongshan Link now connects the two cities across the sea. The Antarctic Qinling Station is now in operation on the frozen continent. All this epitomizes the lofty spirit and dreams of the Chinese people to explore stars and oceans.

This year, I have visited many places across the country and seen how our people enjoy their enriching lives. I saw the big, red Huanian apples in Tianshui, Gansu and the fishing boats in Aojiao Village, Fujian loaded with their catches. I watched the millennium-old "Eastern Smile" in the Maiji Mountain Grottoes, and I learned more about good-neighborliness passed from generation to generation in Liuchixiang Alley. I enjoyed the hustle and bustle in Tianjin's Ancient Culture



President Xi Jinping delivers his 2025 New Year's Address through China Media Group on New Year's Eve in Beijing. – Xinhua

Street, and I saw how the people in Yinchuan's mixed-ethnic residential communities live together as one family. The concerns of the people about jobs and incomes, elderly and child care, education and medical services are always on my mind. This year, basic pension has been raised, and mortgage rates have dropped. Cross-province direct settlement of medical bills has been expanded, making it easier for people to seek medical treatment across the country. And consumer goods trade-in programs have improved people's lives... All these are real benefits to our people.

In the Paris Olympics, Chinese athletes raced to the top and achieved their best performance in Olympic Games held overseas, fully demonstrating the vigor and confidence of young Chinese. The PLA Navy and Air Force celebrated their 75th birthdays, and our servicemen and women are full of drive. When floods, typhoons and other natural disasters struck, members of the Communist Party of China and officials stepped forward to lead disaster relief efforts, and our people were of one mind and reached out to each other. People in all fields – workers, builders and entrepreneurs, among others – are working hard to fulfill their dreams. I presented awards to recipients of national medals and honorary titles. The honor belongs to them; it also belongs to every hard-working person who has lived up to their responsibilities.

In a world of both transformation and turbulence, China, as a responsible major country, is actively promoting global

governance reform and deepening solidarity and cooperation among the Global South. We are making deeper and more substantive advances in high-quality Belt and Road cooperation. The Beijing Summit of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation was a full success. We put forward China's vision at the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, BRICS, APEC, G20 and other bilateral and multilateral forums. We have contributed greatly to the maintenance of world peace and stability.

We celebrated the 75th anniversary of the founding of New China. With deep affection, we looked back at the sea change that has taken place across China since the birth of the People's Republic. Nurtured by our 5,000-plus years of continuous civilization, our country, China, is engraved not only on the bottom of the ancient bronze ritual wine vessel of He Zun, but also in the heart of every Chinese. At its Third Plenary Session, the 20th Central Committee of the Communist Party of China sounded a clarion call for further deepening all-round reform. We will march forward in great strides to advance reform and opening up as the trend of our times. We will surely embrace even broader prospects in pursuing Chinese modernization in the course of reform and opening up.

In 2025, we will fully complete the 14th Five-Year Plan. We will implement more proactive and effective policies, pursue high-quality development as a top priority, promote greater self-reliance and strength in science and technology, and maintain

sound momentum in economic and social development. The Chinese economy now faces some new conditions, including challenges of uncertainties in the external environment and pressure of transformation from old growth drivers into new ones. But we can prevail with our hard work. As always, we grow in the wind and rain, and we get stronger through hard times. We must be confident.

Of all the jobs in front of us, the most important is to ensure a happy life for our people. Every family hope that their children can have a good education, their seniors can enjoy good elderly services, and their youngsters can have more and better opportunities. These simple wishes are our people's aspirations for a better life. We should work together to steadily improve social undertakings and governance, build a harmonious and inclusive atmosphere, and settle real issues, big or small, for our people. We must bring more smiles to our people and greater warmth to their hearts.

On the eve of the 25th anniversary of Macau's return to the motherland, I visited the city again, and I was gratified to see the new progress and changes there. We will unswervingly implement the policy of One Country, Two Systems to maintain long-term prosperity and stability in Hong Kong and Macau. We Chinese on both sides of the Taiwan Strait belong to one and the same family. No one can ever sever the bond of kinship between us, and no one can ever stop China's reunification, a trend of the times.

As changes unseen in a century accelerate across the world, it is important to rise above estrangement and conflict with a broad vision, and care for the future of humanity with great passion. China will work with all countries to promote friendship and cooperation, enhance mutual learning among different cultures, and build a community with a shared future for mankind. We must jointly create a better future for the world.

Dreams and wishes may be far, but they can be fulfilled with dedicated pursuit. On the new journey of Chinese modernization, everyone is a key actor, every effort counts, and every ray of light shines.

Splendor adorns our motherland, and starlight graces every home. Let us greet the new year with hope. May our great country enjoy harmony and prosperity! May all your dreams come true! May you all have a new year of happiness and peace!

Source: Xinhua

N.B. Xi's remarks on his recent visit to Macau have been boldfaced by The Macau Post Daily for emphasis.

Macau logs 210 million entries & exits in 2024, highest record: police

Continued from p.1

The statement underlined that the Qingmao checkpoint was "effective" in diverting the flow of border crossers from the nearby Barrier Gate checkpoint last year.

The statement also said that in addition to the highest annual number of entries and exits at all Macau's checkpoints on record, the city's 2024 checkpoint entry and exit statistics also broke different types of records. On August 24, 2024, the statement said, all Macau's checkpoints recorded 753,000 entries and exits, the highest daily number on record.

In addition, the statement said, the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macau Bridge's (HZMB) Macau checkpoint had its highest daily number of entries and exits on record on February 12, 2024, when 131,000 entries and exits were recorded.

According to the statement, the Hengqin checkpoint recorded 103,000 entries and exits on October 3, 2024, its highest daily number on record.

Macau logs 34.93 million visitors in 2024

Meanwhile, the PSP statement also announced that Macau recorded 34.93 million visitor arrivals in 2024, a 23.6 percent growth from 2023, returning to 88.6 percent of the level recorded in pre-pandemic 2019.

According to the statement, Macau recorded 24.48 million visitor arrivals from the mainland last year, representing 70.1 percent of the total, a 28.6 percent increase from 2023, while the number of visitor arrivals from Hong Kong, China's Taiwan region and foreign countries accounted for 20.6 percent, 2.4 percent and 6.9 percent of

the total respectively.

However, according to the statement, the number of visitor arrivals from Hong Kong last year dropped 0.8 percent from 2023, while the number of those from Taiwan and foreign countries rose 64.1 percent and 66 percent from 2023 respectively.

The PSP data on visitor arrivals in 2024 announced yesterday will be slightly adjusted by Macau's official statistics agency, Statistics and Census Bureau (DSEC), which is scheduled to announce Macau's 2024 number of visitor arrivals and their composition on January 21.

In the first 11 months of 2024, according to DSEC announcements last month, Macau recorded 31.88 million visitor arrivals, a year-on-year increase of 26.2 percent from the same period of 2023.

Meanwhile, starting on New Year's Day,

permanent residents of Zhuhai City can apply for a "one trip per week" travel permit to Macau, enabling them to visit Macau once per calendar week, with a maximum stay of seven days per trip, within a one-year validity period, while permanent residents or residence permit holders in the Guangdong-Macau In-depth Cooperation Zone in Hengqin can apply for a multi-entry travel permit to Macau, granting them unlimited visits to Macau within a one-year validity period, with a maximum stay of seven days per trip.

A separate PSP statement on New Year's Day said that as of 6 p.m. that day, Macau recorded 1,742 visitor arrivals holding their "one trip per week" travel permits on Wednesday, while 406 visitor arrivals holding their multi-entry travel permits were recorded. ■