

3 teen school dropouts hired by gang to smuggle computer parts to Zhuhai: police & customs

Staff Reporter

Three school dropouts aged between 16 and 17 were hired by a gang to smuggle old computer parts and other electronic products from Macau to Zhuhai, the Judiciary Police (PJ) and the Macau Customs Service jointly announced last night after raiding a parallel-trading den earlier yesterday.

The gang provided school uniforms for the trio and other teenage dropouts to wear while smuggling goods.

According to last night's joint announcement, PJ and customs officers raided the den in an industrial building yesterday after the three male teenagers, dressed in school uniforms, were intercepted at the Barrier Gate checkpoint on Tuesday when they were together attempting to smuggle old central processing units (CPUs) worth 700,000 patacas in total to the mainland.

The officers seized old computer parts and other electronic products worth 17 million patacas in total in the den. At the time of the announcement last night, the authorities were still looking for the criminals who hired the three teenagers.

Senior officers from the two law enforcement agencies briefed reporters on site at the raided parallel-trading den about the case at about 8:30 p.m.

The den was located at Keck Seng Industrial Centre (激成工業中心) on Avenida



Boxes of old computer parts and other electronic products are displayed by the Macau Customs Service in the raided parallel-trading den at Keck Seng Industrial Centre on Avenida de Venceslau de Morais last night. - Photo: MPDG

de Venceslau de Morais (慕拉士大馬路).

According to last night's announcement, the Judiciary Police launched an investigation into the case after receiving a report from a school about several teenagers dressed in school uniforms smoking near the Barrier

Gate checkpoint and possibly engaging in parallel-trading activities.

On Tuesday afternoon, PJ officers saw that the three teenagers, at that time not wearing school uniforms, were entering Keck Seng Industrial Centre. After a while, they

left the building, dressed in school uniforms, and got into a taxi en route to the Barrier Gate checkpoint.

The Judiciary Police reported the situation to the Macau Customs Service, after which customs officers intercepted the trio when they were crossing the Barrier Gate checkpoint en route to the mainland. The officers seized 552 old CPUs, worth 700,000 patacas in total, from them, which were taped to their calves.

According to last night's announcement, PJ and customs officers later identified a unit in the industrial building as a parallel-trading den and raided it yesterday, where they seized around 20,000 pieces of old computer parts and other electronic products, worth 17 million patacas in total.

In addition, according to last night's announcement, the officers also seized over 40 school uniforms in the unit, believing that the gang provided teenage dropouts with the uniforms so that they could wear them to pretend to be students while smuggling goods with the aim of avoiding detection by law enforcement officers.

According to the announcements, the three teenagers were each paid 200 yuan (219 patacas) each time they smuggled old electronic products from the parallel-trading den to the mainland.

The police have meanwhile contacted the parents or legal guardians of the three teenagers. ■

Stench affecting Plot P seniors' rental housing mitigated: govt

Tony Wong

The Social Welfare Bureau (IAS) and the Environmental Protection Bureau (DSPA) said in joint statement yesterday evening that the stench issue affecting the area near the government's high-rise rental residential building for senior citizens on Plot P in Areia Preta district has now been "improved" after the completion of the sewer cleaning work for its adjacent newly completed temporary housing project.

According to yesterday's brief statement, DSPA and IAS officials have concluded that the foul odour

has been alleviated after making an on-site visit to the area yesterday.

The statement said that the sewer cleaning work for the newly completed temporary housing project on Plot P has been completed, adding that the outlet for the respective sewer pipes has been properly closed.

The government said on Tuesday that three tenants living in the rental residential building for seniors had requested that their lease be cancelled due to the reek affecting the area near the building, or for "other personal reasons". ■



Environmental Protection Bureau (DSPA) Director Ip Kuong Lam (second from left) yesterday briefs Social Welfare Bureau (IAS) President Wilson Hon Wai (first from left) about improvements in the stench issue affecting the rental residential building for senior citizens on Plot P, next to the outlet for sewer pipes for the newly completed temporary housing project. - Photo: IAS/DSPA

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In bitter cold, rescuers race against time to tackle aftermath of Xizang quake

Battling biting cold, rescuers raced against time to search for survivors and speed up the resettlement of affected residents yesterday after a 6.8-magnitude earthquake struck China's Xizang Autonomous Region on Tuesday. - Story on p. 7

Syria activists demand justice minister sacking over execution footage

Syrian activists and rights groups called for the new justice minister to be investigated or sacked after old footage resurfaced linking him to the summary executions of two women accused of prostitution. - Story on p. 10

Brazil gears up for 1st climate conference in Amazon

After serving a customer a bowl of açaí with fried fish in Belém's market, Sandra da Costa wipes her hands excitedly. "Finally, the long-awaited renovation is going to happen," she says. - Story on p. 12

IAM bans poultry from Hungary, Portugal & S Korea over bird flu outbreak



This undated file photo show hens in battery cages. – Photo: Wikipedia

Yuki Lei

The Municipal Affairs Bureau (IAM) has banned the entry of poultry imported from Hungary's Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg county, Portugal's capital Lisbon, and South Korea's Jincheon-gun province and Yeosu-si of Gyeonggi-do province, in response to the outbreaks of bird flu there.

According to a statement by the bureau on Tuesday, the import curbs on poultry meat and products from the four regions was imposed in response to notifications from the Ministry of Agriculture of Hungary and the World Organisation for Animal

Health (WOAH) concerning the outbreaks of highly pathogenic H5N1 avian influenza.

Currently, Canada, France, Germany, Hungary, India, Italy, Japan, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Poland, the UK and the US are among the bureau's temporary ban on imports from certain areas in those countries, also due to the avian influenza outbreaks.

In the statement, the bureau underlined that it "will continue to exercise stringent control of live and fresh food products imported for sale in Macau through an effective import inspection and quarantine mechanism". ■

Uni student nabbed for involvement in online fraud

Ada Lei

A local university student has been arrested for his alleged involvement in an online scam case, Judiciary Police (PJ) spokesman Cheong Kim Fong said in a special press conference yesterday.

The 19-year-old male suspect is surnamed Chu.

According to Cheong, a local woman read a post about an online "part time" job last month and contacted the website staff. The staff told her that she could get a return for "liking" and writing comments for various posts on a certain website. She then created an account on that website and entered her bank account, password and verification code.

The victim initially received 686 patacas in return and continued doing her "part time" job until Tuesday, when she discovered that a total of 100,000 patacas had been transferred on 101 occasions from her bank account.

According to Cheong, the victim reported the case to the police on



The 19-year-old suspect is being escorted by Judiciary Police (PJ) officers to a PJ vehicle outside the PJ headquarters in Zape yesterday. – Photo: Ada Lei

Tuesday. The Judiciary Police promptly contacted the bank and halted the transfer of 94,000 patacas using emergency safeguarding measures.

The police also discovered that the money had been transferred to Chu's account, and he was summoned to a police station for questioning on Tuesday.

Under questioning, he claimed that

"someone" had used his account to receive the money without his knowledge. However, police discovered that Chu had used 5,000 patacas of the ill-gotten money to purchase game cards and other items for himself.

Chu was transferred to the Public Prosecutions Office (MP), facing a fraud charge, according to Cheong. ■

3 Indonesians busted in drug case: police

William Chan

The Judiciary Police (PJ) have arrested three Indonesians for their alleged involvement in drug deals, PJ spokesman Cheong Kim Fong said during a special press conference yesterday.

Cheong said that upon receiving a tip-off that an Indonesian was selling drugs, PJ officers identified a 42-year-old female surnamed Heni as a possible suspect, and later put her home in the city centre under surveillance.

Cheong added that the police intercepted Heni when she returned to her flat on Tuesday afternoon. They found a packet of ice on her.

Cheong noted that Heni was involved in another drug case last September and was currently barred from leaving Macau.

The officers later took Heni to her home for further investigation, where they arrested a 47-year-old female non-resident worker (NRW) surnamed Nely who works as a domestic helper, and a 28-year-old male non-resident worker surnamed Eko who worked as a waiter. Eko



Evidence seized from the three drug suspects including drugs, electronic scales and drug-taking paraphernalia is shown during yesterday's special press conference at the Judiciary Police (PJ) headquarters. – Photo: William Chan

was taking drugs when the officers discovered him in his room.

The police found five packs of ice and 20,000 patacas in Heni's room, and 53 packs of ice and 9,000 patacas in Nely's room, along with drug-taking paraphernalia and digital scales. Cheong noted that the drugs seized weigh a total of 16.97 grams and have an estimated street value of 43,000 patacas.

Cheong noted that the police

suspected the drug-trafficking operation had been running for around two months.

Under questioning, the trio refused to cooperate. Urine drug tests conducted on the three individuals showed positive results.

The trio were transferred to the Public Prosecutions Office (MP) yesterday, facing a range of drug-related charges, according to Cheong. ■

Burglar's failed attempt leads to his arrest

William Chan

The Judiciary Police (PJ) arrested a male mainlander on Tuesday for allegedly attempting to burgle a flat near Forte Dona Maria II (馬交石砲台), PJ spokesman Cheong Kim Fong said during a regular press conference yesterday.

Cheong identified the suspect as a 48-year-old surnamed Yin who told the police that he's jobless.

When the owner of the flat, a local elderly woman, was sleeping in her bedroom in the wee hours of Tuesday, she was awakened by

a noise in another room and went to the living room where she saw a man – Yin – climbing into the flat.

She screamed for help, leading Yin to leave the flat right away. She reported the case to the police, and later confirmed that nothing had been stolen. Yin was arrested later that day in the city centre, where police found pairs of gloves and a torch on him. Yin refused to cooperate.

Yin has been transferred to the Public Prosecutions Office (MP), facing an aggravated attempted theft charge. ■



Judiciary Police (PJ) spokesman Cheong Kim Fong looks on during yesterday's regular press conference. – Photo: William Chan



PUI CHING MIDDLE SCHOOL (COLOANE CAMPUS)



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Macau Weather

DRY. CLOUDY APART FROM SUNNY PERIODS. FORCE 3 TO 5 NORTH TO NORTHEASTERLY WINDS WITH GUSTS. RELATIVE HUMIDITY WILL RANGE BETWEEN 40% AND 75%.



13°C~20°C

Source: SMG

CE visits Guangzhou for joint conference, Raymond Tam serving as acting CE

Yuki Lei

Chief Executive Sam Hou Fai is leading today a delegation to the Guangdong-Macau Cooperation Joint Conference 2025 in Guangzhou, during which Secretary for Transport and Public Works Raymond Tam Wai Man is serving as acting chief executive.

The announcement was made in a statement by the Government Information Bureau (GCS) on Tuesday.

According to the statement, co-chaired by Sam and Guangdong Governor Wang Weizhong, the one-day meeting will carry out an in-depth study in order to ensure the comprehensive implementation of President Xi Jinping's important speeches and instructions to "pragmatically promote various cooperation measures between Guangdong and Macau, and advance the development of the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macau Greater Bay Area (GBA) in its new phase". The statement added that the two governments will sign several cooperation agreements during the meeting.

The statement listed the members of the delegation as Secretary for Administration



This file photo taken last Thursday shows Chief Executive Sam Hou Fai posing during his inspection visit to the Guangdong-Macau In-Depth Cooperation Zone in Hengqin.

- Photo: GCS

and Justice André Cheong Weng Chon, Secretary for Economy and Finance Tai Kin Ip, Secretary for Security Wong Sio Chak, Secretary for Social Affairs and Culture Wallis O Lam, Unitary Police Service (SPU) Commissioner-General Leong Man Cheong, and Sam's chief-of-cabinet Chan Kak.

The delegation will return to Macau later today, the statement noted. ■

Sam expresses sorrow about all those affected by Xizang quake

Staff Reporter

Chief Executive Sam Hou Fai has sent a letter to the authorities of the Xizang Autonomous Region* expressing his profound sorrow regarding those affected by the earthquake that occurred in the Himalayan city of Xigaze, Dingri county, on Tuesday morning.

The Macau Government Information Bureau (GCS) issued a statement on the letter on Tuesday.

In the letter sent on Tuesday to the Secretary of the Xizang Autonomous Regional Committee of the Communist Party of China (CPC), Wang Junzheng, and the region's acting chairman, Karma Tsedan, Sam noted the 6.8-magnitude earthquake had caused serious casualties among local people and property damage.

On behalf of the Macau Special Administrative Region (MSAR) Government and all Macau residents, Sam said he is solemnly mourning for those who perished in the catastrophe and expressed his deepest condolences to their bereaved families, along with Macau's thoughts for those injured in the disaster.

In response to the deadly temblor, Xi Jinping, general secretary of the CPC Central Committee and president of the People's Republic of China (PRC), stressed on Tuesday that he attached great importance to the matter



Rescuers assemble beds for quake-affected residents at a resettlement site in a village in Dingri County in Xigaze City, Xizang Autonomous Region, yesterday.

- Xinhua

and issued crucial directives, the GCS statement underlined adding that Premier Li Qiang has given relevant instructions, while Vice Premier Zhang Guoqing has led a team to the affected area to guide the rescue operations. The Xizang Autonomous Region has mobilised all-out relief efforts, the statement underlined.

Under the leadership of the Central People's Government, based on the unity and cooperation of local officials and members of the public, the affected areas will be able to overcome this adversity, Sam said in the letter.

The people of Macau are paying close attention to the situation in the disaster area, and are willing to work together with their compatriots in the mainland to help those affected overcome this natural disaster, offering the necessary support to back all rescue operations, Sam added.

The chief executive expressed his best wishes for the smooth progress of the rescue efforts, and said he hoped that the lives of the people in the affected area will soon return to normal. ■ (More on page 7)

*Formerly known as Tibet Autonomous Region

Academic Year 2025/2026 Central Registration for Children Entering Kindergarten for the First Time



Aims

Optimise schools' enrolment mechanism; simplify the steps for parents to enrol their children in kindergarten for the first time; enable parents to confirm the preferred schools as early as possible.

Targets

Macao residents aged 3 by 31 December 2025, and will enrol in infant education in Macao for the first time.

Gentle Reminder:

- To enrol in schools in Macao, non-Macao residents must possess a stay permit or residence permit for over 90 days issued by the competent entity of the Macao SAR. Parents must process the registration at any of the DSEDJ counters.
- Schools set no limit to the number of registrants and interviews. There is also no priority for early registration in the Central Registration system. Therefore, there is no need to be hurry to process registration.
- Macao residents can apply for "school for children of Macao residents" in Hengqin through Central Registration; it is not counted as the registration limit of 6 schools.
- At the time of interview, parents should show the screenshot of "Interview QR Code" on their phone to the school staff. The QR Code can be reused.
- Parents only need to bring the screenshot of the child's "First-time Enrolment QR Code" to the school to process enrolment or school transfer procedure according to the requirement of the school.
- The DSEDJ will provide "Service of consultation and arrangement of school places" to parents who are in need.

Timeline (Year 2025)

Admission information	Starting from 1 January onwards, parents can consult the enrolment information on the DSEDJ website or school website.
Central Registration	Parents register through "Macao One Account"/ on the DSEDJ website / at the DSEDJ counters Between 6 and 16 January
Schools announce the interview date and time	Between 19 and 21 February
School admission interviews	Between 1 and 25 March
Schools release the admission list and parents confirm online which school to enrol their children in	Release the admission list on the DSEDJ website and at schools 7 April Parents can check the admission list and confirm one school to enrol their child in through "Macao One Account"/ on the DSEDJ website Between 7 and 9 April
Schools announce the students admitted from the waiting list	From 10 April onwards
Parents go to school to process enrolment/ school transfer procedures	From 11 April onwards (According to the period informed by schools) Students on the admission list must process enrolment on or before 14 April
Enrolment at other schools	If a child has not yet been admitted to any school by 15 April, or parents want to enrol their child in another school, parents can visit the DSEDJ website to check the status of K1 places available at different schools, and go to the schools that still accept enrolment for enquiries and registration.

For enquiries
8397 2309

For details, please browse
DSEDJ website:

www.dsedj.gov.mo



DSEDJ app



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Photos: Rui Pastorin



Youngsters showcase raft of works at youth pavilion

Rui Pastorin

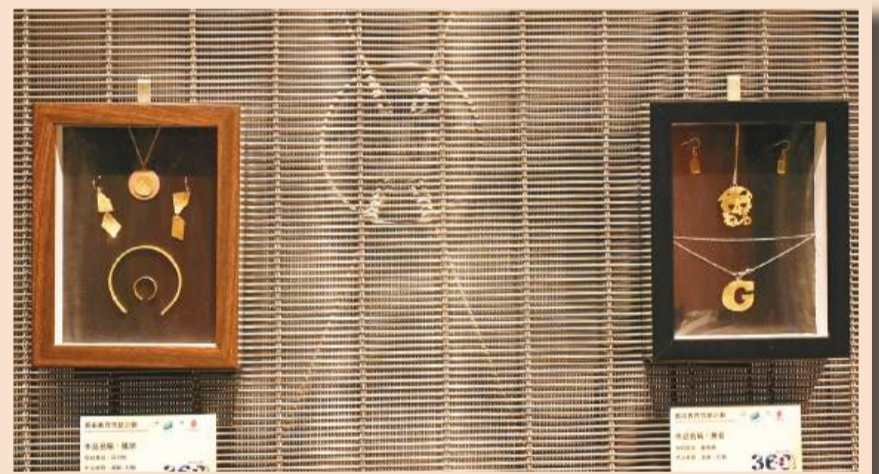
A variety of works of different mediums is being shown at the Pavilhão de Exposições e Espectáculos Artísticos para Jovens (“Pavilion of Exhibitions and Artistic Shows for Young People”) in Praça do Tap Seac (塔石廣場), with the presented artworks created by youngsters after participating in recent workshops.

On until January 19, the exhibition is entitled *Veja-se em 360 - Exposição dos trabalhos dos alunos participantes na actividade “Contacto com a Artes Visuais”* (“See yourself in 360 - Exhibition of works by students participating in the activity ‘Contact with the Visual Arts’”). It is co-organised by the Education and Youth Development Bureau (DSEDJ) and the Macao Society for Education in Art.

Information from the venue noted that those who participated in the recent activity included some as young as 12-years-old, all creating works under the guidance of professional instructors.

The exhibitiongoers will find painted wood carvings, including some of familiar characters, animation, metal work, as well as glass, leather and fabric art, with the exhibition aiming to be an opportunity for participants to show what they have learnt as well as “share the joy of their creation”, the statement said.

Those interested in visiting the exhibition can do so from Tuesday to Sunday from 12 noon to 8 p.m. The venue is closed on Mondays.



MUST hosts Int'l forum on space & planetary sciences

Yuki Lei

A three-day Macau International Forum on Space and Planetary Sciences kicked off yesterday at the Macau University of Science and Technology (MUST), with the participation of nearly 200 scholars from all over the world – and Zheng Guan Wei, member of the Administrative Committee of the Macau Science and Technology Development Fund, underlined in his opening remarks that “space exploration is a complex and challenging task that requires countries and regions to work together to overcome difficulties”.

Jointly organised by the private university and the Macau Association for the Promotion of Science & Technology (MAPST), with participants from China (mainland, Hong Kong, Taiwan, and Macau) as well as Germany, Italy, India, Japan and the US, the forum is “an important academic event to inspire the scientific community and to strengthen international cooperation and exchanges,” the

organisers said in a statement.

The forum is being held by the MUST Space Science Institute/State Key Laboratory of Lunar and Planetary Sciences and sponsored by the government-run Science and Technology Development Fund (FDCT).

“Great achievements do not happen overnight, [but] from long-term accumulation and relentless effort,” Zheng said, pointing out that the ongoing forum, featuring the latest findings by some of the participants in multiple frontier fields such as planetary exploration, observations of solar system objects, sample return missions from asteroids, searches for extraterrestrial life signs, and studies of the lunar surface, “showcases Macau’s enthusiasm for cutting-edge science and technology”.

Tam Kwong Hang, MUST’s vice-president, said in his speech: “Today, Macau stands as a modern international metropolis, not only celebrated for its cultural heritage but also emerging as a significant player in the realm of scientific and technological innovation”,



Prof. Ip Weng Huen from Taiwan, who was born in Macau, addresses yesterday's opening ceremony of the three-day Macau International Forum on Space and Planetary Sciences at the private Macau University of Science and Technology (MUST) in Taipa.

– Photo: Yuki Lei

adding he expected the forum to “stimulate” the young generation’s interest in scientific research.

Concerning Macau’s participation in the development of the nation’s space industry, Zong Qiugang,

director of the MUST Space Science Institute, told reporters on the sidelines of the forum that “MUST is now deeply involved in a number of the nation’s space science development programmes, in addition

to its “Macao Science II” project, the institute is currently striving, in conjunction with the mainland, to participate in the Chinese Ha Solar Explorer project*, hoping to “make some concrete contributions to the nation’s space development, such as building a spacecraft designed and built by Macau”.

*According to the Poe chatbot, the Chinese Ha Solar Explorer (CHASE) is a space mission developed by China to study the Sun, particularly its solar activities and phenomena. Launched in 2022, CHASE is equipped with advanced instruments designed to observe the Sun in the H-alpha wavelength, which is a specific part of the red spectrum of light emitted by hydrogen atoms.

H-alpha is a specific spectral line of hydrogen that occurs at a wavelength of 656.28 nanometres in the red part of the visible spectrum. It is produced when an electron in a hydrogen atom transitions from the third energy level to the second energy level, releasing energy in the form of light. ■

6 UM students win awards at translation contest



This undated handout photo provided by the public University of Macau (UM) shows the contestants and their supervisors.

Rui Pastorin

The public University of Macau (UM) said in a statement earlier this week that six students from its Department of Portuguese of the Faculty of Arts and Humanities (FAH) have garnered prizes in the recent 3rd Chinese-Portuguese Translation Contest for Higher Education Institutions in China.

The contest finals were simultaneously held at UM and the Beijing Foreign Studies University (BFSU). The statement said that it was divided into “Undergraduate Group” and “Postgraduate Group”, with each category further divided into “Chinese-to-Portuguese Translation” and “Portuguese-to-Chinese Translation”.

The statement added that the texts used were mainly news and literary texts.

The winners and their respective categories are as follows: Tian Xiner won the first prize in the “Undergraduate-Portuguese-to-Chinese Translation” category; Chan Siokuan garnered the second in the “Undergraduate-Chinese-to-Portuguese Translation” category; Yu Qianhao was awarded the third prize in the “Undergraduate-Chinese-to-Portuguese Translation” category; and Ruan Chunyue won third prize in the “Undergraduate-Portuguese-to-Chinese Translation” category;

Moreover, Lian Zimo received the first prize in the “Postgraduate-

Portuguese-to-Chinese Translation” category, while the “Postgraduate-Chinese-to-Portuguese Translation” category saw Mu Shuang taking home second place.

The statement said that the recent contest saw 84 students from 26 universities in Macau and the mainland taking part in the recent competition, which aimed to “promote exchanges in Portuguese language teaching between universities in Macau and the mainland, encourage students in Portuguese studies to gain practical experience in Chinese-Portuguese translation, and to identify high-quality Chinese-Portuguese bilingual talent”. ■

Police nab mainland trio for theft, bust illegal inn in Zape

William Chan

The Public Security Police (PSP) arrested three mainland men on Tuesday for stealing a wallet from a tourist, and on the same day busted an illegal inn in Zape, where the trio were nabbed, PSP spokeswoman Kong Chi Ian said during a regular press conference yesterday.

The suspects in their fifties are a man surnamed Deng who told the police that he’s a businessman, a man surnamed Tang who claimed to be jobless, and a farmer surnamed Liu.

Tang and Liu were arrested for their alleged involvement in another theft case in 2017.

On Monday, a male tourist from the mainland reported to the police that while walking in a Cotai casino, he was jostled by a group of men. Later, he discovered that the zip on his backpack was open, and his wallet containing 1,600 patacas was gone.

After identifying the trio through CCTV footage, PSP officers apprehended them in a three-bedroom flat in Zape on

Tuesday. Deng confessed to the theft, admitting that he noticed the victim’s open backpack zip and “succumbed to temptation”, directing his accomplices to participate in the theft. Tang and Liu denied any involvement.

The stolen wallet, discarded by the suspects in a Cotai casino toilet, was recovered there. The police found cash on the three men, suspected to be the stolen money.

During the investigation, it was revealed that the flat, leased by a mainland man surnamed He, where the trio stayed, was also home to an overstayer. He confessed to operating the illegal inn, charging the trio a daily rent of 450 patacas, while the overstayer paid him 100 patacas to sleep in the living room. He told the police that he rented the flat from an acquaintance he met in a casino for 10,000 patacas, earning a monthly profit of 20,000 patacas with the illegal inn.

The trio and He were transferred to the Public Prosecutions Office (MP), where He faces a charge of aiding and abetting an overstayer, while the trio face theft charges. ■



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

STOCK MARKETS

Hang Seng Index closes 0.86 pct lower

HONG KONG – Hong Kong’s stock market ended lower yesterday with the benchmark Hang Seng Index down 0.86 percent to close at 19,279.84 points.

The Hang Seng China Enterprises Index edged down

0.84 percent to end at 6,990.65 points, while the Hang Seng Tech Index fell 1.09 percent to close at 4,307.40 points.

– Xinhua

No family dispute mediation fee, mediators won't get paid: Vong



Lawmaker-cum-lawyer Vong Hin Fai (left), who chairs the legislature's 3rd Standing Committee, and the committee's secretary Leong Sun lok, pose after the committee's closed-door meeting reviewing the government's bill on family dispute mediation yesterday. — Photo: Ginnie Liang

Ginnie Liang

Lawmaker-cum-lawyer Vong Hin Fai, who heads the Legislative Assembly's 3rd Standing Committee, said yesterday that family dispute mediators would not receive any additional payment for providing their services, meaning that the parties concerned don't need to pay for the compulsory mediation service.

The committee held a closed-door meeting yesterday to review the bill – the outline of which was passed during a plenary session in November – after which Vong said during a media briefing that his committee has finished the review of the bill yesterday, and will send it to a plenary session for its article-by-article review in due course.

Several government officials attended yesterday's meeting.

Vong quoted some committee members as suggesting that the bill could be used to promote the professional development of mediators, such as the accreditation of courses for mediators run by community associations and organisations, and also asking the government whether mediators included on the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macau Greater Bay Area Mediators' List would be qualified to act as mediators in Macau as required under the bill.

Vong quoted one of the government officials as reiterating yesterday that the scope of qualification of mediators as stipulated in the bill is to be taken up by two kinds of social workers designated by the Social Welfare Bureau (IAS), comprising social workers from the bureau and those from community associations.

Vong explained, "As the government's legislative intent is to provide free services

to the public, it is more appropriate to allow social workers to act as mediators."

According to the bill, parties must undergo mediation before engaging in judicial proceedings, such as cases involving litigated divorces, the exercise of parental rights, the provision of alimony, and property divisions.

However, some committee members suggested that social workers, whether from the government or community associations, should be provided with additional payment even if it is only nominal in nature, so as to show their respect for the mediation profession. Vong said that the government officials at yesterday's meeting had not mentioned any monetary figures concerning the mediation process.

Regarding some members' suggestion of setting up a regular review mechanism, Vong quoted the government officials as saying that it would not be appropriate to specify the review period or cycle in the bill, and that the government would conduct a review in a timely manner in the light of the implementation of the law once it has taken effect.

Vong said that after the law has become effective, the bureau would need to enter into cooperation agreements with local social service organisations for the provision of mediation services and select social workers with experience in family disputes to attend the relevant training courses.

Meanwhile, the bureau will also need to organise a raft of tasks, such as the formulation of guidelines and regulations, therefore, the government expects the bill to come into effect only six months after its promulgation in the Official Gazette (BO), according to Vong. ■

André Cheong reappointed ExCo spokesman

Yuki Lei

Secretary for Administration and Justice André Cheong Weng Chon has once again been appointed as the spokesman for the government's top advisory Executive Council (ExCo), with his new term of office having taken effect yesterday, the local government announced.

Cheong began his tenure as Secretary for Administration and Justice in December 2019 and was appointed the following month as the spokesperson for the Executive Council, a change from the practice of the first four terms of the Macau Special Administrative Region (MSAR) government, when the advisory body's spokespersons were non-government officials.

The executive order, which was signed by Chief Executive Sam Hou Fai on Friday and published in the Official Gazette (BO) yesterday, states that "Executive Council member Cheong Weng Chon is appointed to serve as the council's spokesperson with effect from January 8, 2025".

According to a statement by the Government Information Bureau (GCS) yesterday, the spokesperson's primary responsibility is to make known the council's announcements to the community at press conferences or through press releases.

The new government's Executive Council

consists of 11 members – Cheong, Leonel Alberto Alves, Andrew Chan Chak Mo, Frederico Ma Chi Ngai, John Chan Ka Leong, Ip Sio Kai, Lao Ngai Leong, Leong Wai Fong, Becky Song Pek Kei, Samuel Tong Kai Chung, and U Seng Pan. Among them, Ip, Song and Andrew Chan are also serving members of the Legislative Assembly (AL). ■



This file photo taken on December 20, coinciding with the 25th Anniversary of the Macau Special Administrative Region (MSAR) and the swearing-in of the new local government on that day, at Forum Macao in Sai Van shows Secretary for Administration and Justice André Cheong Weng Chon speaking to the media. — Photo: Yuki Lei

Be vigilant when opening 'WhatsApp' links: police

Ginnie Liang

The Judiciary Police (PJ) yesterday urged residents to be aware of a new deception in which fraudsters pretended to be holders of genuine WhatsApp accounts to send scam messages to victims, according to a PJ statement yesterday.

Unlike in the past when scammers randomly spammed members of the public with a large number of SMS messages, PJ's Anti-Deception Coordination Centre (ADCC) has recently noticed the occurrence of multiple phone scam cases using the new method, in which the scammers fraudulently claim that the victims' accounts were involved in a breach of the law and therefore were about to be suspended by WhatsApp, the statement said.

According to the statement, the fraudsters asked the victims to click on the links to complete a "verification" process, after which they were redirected to another WhatsApp account used by the fraudsters, who then provided the victims with a six-digit number, asking them to enter the number in their phones.

However, the statement said, this is actually the verification code of the victims' WhatsApp accounts, and once the victim enters the code as requested, his or her account will immediately be logged in by the fraudster elsewhere, who then can hack the victims' accounts and steal their personal data for unlawful purposes, the statement said.

The Judiciary Police reminded members of the public in the statement that WhatsApp will never ask members of the public to click on any link through SMS or software messages to deal with account suspension issues, no matter how realistic it appears to be, adding that any genuine WhatsApp account has a "blue tick" beside the name of the account holder.

One may call the PJ anti-scam hotline on 8800 7777 or the crime report hotline on 993

for assistance if one suspects that they are a victim of fraud or other crimes.

Be wary of bogus calls from Fire Services Bureau: CB

In addition, the Fire Services Bureau (CB) received reports from a number of local vehicle maintenance and spare parts suppliers claiming that they have received phone calls from a person claiming to be a "staff member of the Fire Services Bureau", requesting them to send their staff to the bureau to carry out inspections on vehicles, batteries, tyres or auto parts, according to a CB statement last night.

During the process, the scammer also requested that the victims add their contact details through mobile phone communication software, the statement said.

The bureau clarified that it has nothing to do with such calls and that they will be reported to the police for further investigation, the statement said, urging members of the public, businesspeople in particular, to remain highly vigilant, and to doublecheck any messages appearing to have been sent by the bureau, in order to prevent fraud. ■



This poster provided by the Judiciary Police (PJ) yesterday shows details about the scam messages.

AMCM investigates early morning bus fare deduction complaints

Ginnie Liang

The Monetary Authority of Macau (AMCM) announced yesterday that it is investigating a situation where a user of the payment platform MPay was unexpectedly charged bus fares in the early hours of yesterday although, the user had not caught a bus.

This statement was released following a user's complaint on social media. In the statement, AMCM has demanded a thorough investigation by the MPay provider and a detailed report on the matter.

The user shared screenshots of his or her MPay account yesterday on a social media platform showing multiple deductions – over 70 transactions – during the early hours of yesterday. Upon contacting the MPay customer service, the user was informed that these deductions were for outstanding bus fares from 2021, and the company said that

a system upgrade at the time had delayed the processing of these payments, resulting in the recent additional deductions.

AMCM has conducted a preliminary investigation and concluded that the incident did not involve account theft or any cybersecurity vulnerabilities, the statement said, adding that the bureau emphasised that the overall system run by MPay remains secure and operational.

The statement also underlined that the core issue appears to be related to the payment process for bus fares, where transactions that were not successfully processed at the time of the trip were only later deducted.

In response to the incident, AMCM has instructed MPay to promptly reach out to affected users to clarify the situation and improve the payment mechanism to minimise the impact on customers. ■