

# Telecom fraud cases drop in 2024, but more students cheated out of more money

Yuki Lei

The number of telecom fraud cases dropped from 407 in 2023 to 354 last year, with a total loss of more than 150 million patacas, but the proportion of students among the victims rose slightly to nearly 30 percent, with the amount involved reaching 68.1 million patacas, an increase of 54 percent year on year, according to the Judiciary Police (PJ).

Judiciary Police (PJ) Director Sit Chong Meng briefed the media yesterday on their summary of reported crime cases last year, which showed that the overall number of investigations increased by 13.4 percent to 14,049, 7,762 of which involved special investigations. Last year, 3,323 suspects were transferred to the judicial organs for follow-up investigations, a year-on-year growth of 32.1 percent, and Filipinos remained the main segment of foreign suspects handed over to the Public Prosecutions Office (MP), followed by Vietnamese and Indonesians.

## Robbery, burglary & gaming-related crimes rise

Sit reaffirmed that very few serious violent crime cases such as homicide – one case only – and grievous bodily harm – three cases only – were reported in the whole of last year, with the number of cases involving triad organisations, criminal gangs, domestic violence, arson, and blackmail decreasing year on year to, respectively, just 1, 25, 12, 43 and 169 cases. However, he added, the number of cases such as robbery, burglary and gaming-related crimes increased as a result of the growing number of visitor arrivals.



Senior Judiciary Police (PJ) officers address yesterday's press briefing at the PJ headquarters in Zape.

## Students become fraudsters' target in 'fake police' scams

Last year, the Judiciary Police investigated 354 telecom fraud cases involving 378 victims, 47.3 percent of whom suffered losses of at least 150,000 patacas each. During yesterday's press briefing, Sit expressed concern that more and more university students in Macau have been falling victim to phone scams, with the total losses rising to 68.1 million patacas last year from 44 million patacas in 2023. He analysed that fraudsters have shifted their tactics by using "fake police" scams targeting mainly students enrolled in Macau, who "are generally affluent and have a higher level of respect and trust in government entities such as the police". He also quoted examples as saying that some students were even told by the scammers to ask their parents for about 1 to 2 million patacas as a "deposit for supporting them to further their studies abroad for master's or doctoral degree programmes".

In 2024, the most common type of cybercrime reported to the Judiciary Police was phishing, with 689 cases resulting in losses of more than 14 million patacas, Sit noted.

## High-paying job offers

Concerning five local residents who were lured last year to Cambodia and Taiwan under the guise of high-paying job offers, Sit disclosed more details of the cases yesterday, saying that four of them – one of whom is aged only 16 – have meanwhile been detained by the police in Taiwan for collecting fraudulently obtained money from family members of the gang's victims, adding that only the local resident who had been lured to a "fraud factory" in Cambodia was rescued by the Judiciary Police thanks to the "strong assistance" of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Public Security in Beijing. According to Sit, after arriving in Cambodia, the resident was



PJ Director Sit Chong Meng briefs the media yesterday about last year's crime-fighting activities by the Judiciary Police. – Photos: Yuki Lei

tricked into working for the "fraud factory", where he was being held against his will, had his passport confiscated and was forced to engage in telecom fraud until he managed to escape from the facility, hide in different areas of the country for a period of time, and finally was able to report the case to the Judiciary Police with the help of friends in Macau and Hong Kong.

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## Panama audits HK-linked canal port operator after Trump threat

PANAMA CITY – Panamanian authorities have launched an audit of the Hong Kong-linked operator of two Panama Canal ports, following US President Donald Trump's complaints of Chinese influence over the key interoceanic waterway.

Auditors arrived at the Panama Ports Company on Monday "to begin an exhaustive audit aimed at ensuring the efficient and transparent use of public resources," the comptroller's office said on social media.

The company, part of Hutchison Ports, a subsidiary of Hong Kong-based conglomerate

CK Hutchison Holdings, operates the ports of Balboa and Cristobal at the canal entrances.

The comptroller's office said the aim was to determine whether the company was complying with its concession agreements, including adequate reporting of income, payments and contributions to the state.

Trump, in his inaugural address on Monday, repeated his complaint that China was effectively "operating" the Panama Canal through its growing presence around the waterway, which the United States handed over at the end of 1999.

"We didn't give it to China, we gave it to Panama. And we're taking it back," he said.

Trump has been raising pressure for weeks over the canal – through which 40 percent of US container traffic travels – and has repeatedly refused to rule out military force against Panama, historically friendly to Washington.

Panamanian President José Raúl Mulino swiftly denied that any other nation was interfering in the canal linking the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans, saying his country operated it through a principle of neutrality.

"The canal is and will remain

Panama's," Mulino said.

Panama Ports Company's concession agreement was extended by 25 years in 2021.

The United States is the canal's main user, followed by China.

Since 2000, the waterway has contributed more than US\$30 billion to Panama's state coffers, including nearly US\$2.5 billion in the last fiscal year.

Even so, Panama's comptroller general, Anel Flores, said recently that "Panamanians deserve a little more respect and a little more resources," referring to the port operator. – AFP

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### Xi speaks with Putin, calling on China, Russia to uphold int'l fairness, justice

President Xi Jinping yesterday said he is willing to work with Russian President Vladimir Putin to continue guiding bilateral relations towards a new height in the new year.

– Story on p. 7

### Trump's US pullout order leaves WHO budget tightened

President Donald Trump's decision to pull the United States out of the World Health Organisation (WHO) leaves the agency facing a major blow to its budget.

– Story on p. 11

### Biden preemptively pardons family members before leaving office

Joe Biden preemptively pardoned multiple family members on Monday, just minutes before he left office as the 46th president of the United States.

– Story on p. 12



# DSAT launches diagonal crossing in Areia Preta

Yuki Lei

The Transport Bureau (DSAT) has announced that the pedestrian crossing at the junction of Rua Nova da Areia Preta (黑沙環新街) and Rua de Ma Kau Seak (馬交石街) has been converted into a diagonal crossing, which started operating yesterday morning.

A diagonal crossing refers to the arrangement when pedestrians are permitted to cross a street or junction at an angle, rather than following the straight lines of zebra crossings.

The adjustment was made after considering the road conditions, crossing places and the traffic pressure there, according to yesterday's DSAT statement, which noted that this is the eighth diagonal crossing in the city to be set up at junctions.

The statement pointed out that the diagonal crossings aim at giving pedestrians the option of crossing directly across the

street to the opposite pavement in a diagonal route, thus reducing the walking distance and time required.

The bureau stated that it has kept reviewing and optimising the city's zebra crossings, with additional diagonal crossings having been installed at eligible locations since the end of 2021.

## Avenida da Ponte da Amizade to open for traffic on Sunday

Meanwhile, according to a separate statement by the bureau yesterday, Avenida da Ponte da Amizade (澳門橋大馬路) will partially open to traffic from Sunday, when motorists will no longer be allowed to enter the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macau Bridge checkpoint and the Macau Bridge via Avenida do Mar de Espelho (鏡海大馬路), except for access to the Zone A construction site, or for authorised vehicles. ■



This handout photo provided by the Transport Bureau (DSAT) yesterday shows the diagonal crossing at the junction of Rua Nova da Areia Preta (黑沙環新街) and Rua de Ma Kau Seak (馬交石街).

## Telecom fraud cases drop in 2024, but more students cheated out of more money

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### Etomidate expected to be controlled this year

The Judiciary Police last year investigated 49 cases of drug trafficking and 15 cases of drug taking, a reduction of one case and an addition of six cases respectively over the previous year, one of which was the largest ever methamphetamine bust made in Macau. Sit said that the Judiciary Police may introduce more advanced drug testing equipment this year, while in terms of controlling the drug etomidate, he added that "we will take forward the legislative work as soon as possible this year, and we believe that the legislation can be successfully enacted this year". Sit also expressed concern that etomidate is posing a major threat to local students, particularly after the classification of etomidate as a controlled drug in neighbouring cities.

Etomidate is an anaesthetic agent commonly used for the induction of general anaesthesia and sedation. It is already classified as a controlled substance in many jurisdictions.

The local government's possible bill on the matter would have to be passed by the Legislative Assembly to become law.

### 11 million patacas seized from illegal currency exchange activities

Regarding gaming-related crimes

in Macau, according to Sit, the number of cases handled by the Judiciary Police last year surged by 28.6 percent to 1,423 compared to the same period of 2023. Among them, 84 cases were related to illegal currency exchange activities, involving 120 suspects and 11 million patacas in casino chips and cash seized. The number of cases involving loansharking and related false imprisonment cases stood at 252 and 47 respectively.

### Cyberattacks on critical infrastructure

Macau's critical infrastructure suffered last year 6,300 spikes in cyberattacks, a year-on-year growth of 8.6 percent, mainly due to a number of distributed denial-of-service (DDOS) attacks.

Cyberattack spikes refer to significant increases in the frequency or intensity of cyberattacks over a specific period.

When asked about the police forces' citywide CCTV cameras, Sit reaffirmed that the installation of the system in various local districts mainly aims to prevent crime with the assurance that the public's privacy remains protected, underlining that the Judiciary Police are not allowed to use the system for investigative purposes except for suspected criminal cases and some other special cases, such as the search for elderly people suffering from dementia. ■

## 4 from HK hired by 'guess who I am' gang to pick up cash in Macau: police

William Chan

Three Hong Kong men and a Hong Kong woman were instructed by a "guess who I am" telecom fraud gang to come to Macau to pick up cash from elderly victims, Judiciary Police (PJ) investigator Lei Chi Wai said at a special press conference yesterday.

According to Lei, an elderly man reported to the police last September that he received calls from a man claiming to be his

"son-in-law", telling him that he had been arrested for beating someone up and requesting he hand HK\$150,000 in cash as compensation to a "lawyer".

The victim handed the money to a man, one of the suspects surnamed Che who is 23 years old, on the ground floor of his residential building in the city centre. The victim later realised that he had been defrauded and reported the case to the police.

PJ officers reviewed CCTV footage near the victim's home and identified Che as the suspect. After the scam, Che returned to Hong Kong with the victim's cash. Che works as a part-time lifeguard.

Che re-entered Macau on Monday and was placed under surveillance. Police later discovered that Che had contacted two accomplices – one acting as a driver and the other as a lookout – and they attempted to collect fraud money from an elderly couple. However, they failed when the couple requested a receipt, which the gang could not provide.

The Judiciary Police arrested the trio later that day, along with another accomplice who ensured that the trio did not "embezzle" the fraud money. Under questioning, the suspects admitted to the crime, telling the police that they were promised a "commission" ranging from HK\$500 to HK\$20,000 for their involvement.

The quartet were transferred to the Public Prosecutions Office (MP) yesterday, where they face charges of organised crime and fraud. ■



Judiciary Police (PJ) officers escort the four hooded fraud gang suspects from Hong Kong to a police vehicle outside the PJ headquarters in Zape yesterday.

– Photo: William Chan

## Filipina maid & local tutor steal spirits from same boss: police

Ada Lei

A domestic helper from the Philippines and a local tutor were arrested on Friday and Saturday respectively for stealing expensive spirits from their employer, the Judiciary Police (PJ) spokesman Chao Teng Hin said in a regular press conference yesterday.

The female suspect is a 39-year-old woman surnamed Ortiz, while the 21-year-old male suspect is surnamed Ieng. Their employer is a local woman.

According to Chao, on January 6, the employer discovered that over 14 expensive bottles of alcohol had disappeared from her flat. She suspected Ortiz and questioned her but the latter denied she had stolen

the bottles, leading the employer to install CCTV cameras in her home.

On Friday, the employer discovered that two more bottles of spirits had vanished and reported the case to the police. The police arrested Ortiz on Friday in the flat. Ortiz admitted to stealing six bottles of spirits worth about 10,000 patacas, and that she had sent the bottles to the Philippines.

During the investigation, the police discovered that Ieng, who worked as a tutor for the victim, had also stolen a number of bottles of spirits and arrested him on Saturday.

Under questioning, Ieng admitted to stealing 16 bottles of spirits, 13 of which were worth 130,000 patacas, he had meanwhile sold to five buyers



Judiciary Police (PJ) spokesman Chao Teng Hin looks on during yesterday's regular press conference.

– Photo: Ada Lei

for 50,000 patacas in total.

Both suspects were transferred to the Public Prosecution Office (MP) yesterday, facing aggravated theft charges. ■

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### Macau Weather

MAINLY CLOUDY. A FEW RAIN PATCHES. FORCE 3 TO 4 EAST TO NORTHEASTERLY WINDS. RELATIVE HUMIDITY WILL RANGE BETWEEN 60% AND 95%.



11°C~20°C

Source: SMG



# Local businesses upbeat about CNY holiday: vox pop

Interviews by Rui Pastorin

As the Chinese New Year (CNY) holiday approaches, crowds of visitors from the mainland and elsewhere can again be found across Macau.

Visitors swarm hotspots like Rua do Cunha (官也街) in Taipa and the UNESCO World Heritage-listed Ruins of St. Paul's, while queues can be seen outside restaurants and eateries, as well as at taxi ranks and bus stops. Buses heading to places like Cotai, another area busy with visitors, are jam-packed. Some local businesses shared their optimism for the coming holiday period with the *Post* during interviews near or around the city centre yesterday.

Paula, a 44-year-old staff member of a relatively new shop that sells Portuguese culinary delights, said that business has been good. Leading up to the CNY, she said that many are already on holiday, with youngsters and families from the mainland and Hong Kong choosing to sample the shop's offerings. As she serves more customers before the holiday even starts, Paula hopes for a 60 percent increase in patrons the following week, expecting to see crowds similar to those during the Labour Day "Golden Week" period.

The optimism for the coming holiday was shared by local business owner Chan, whose shop selling branded vintage and second-hand clothing, accessories and handmade local products sees around 70 percent of its



Crowds of tourists walk in both directions on the path leading to the UNESCO World Heritage-listed Ruins of St. Paul's yesterday afternoon. — Photo: Rui Pastorin

customers coming from the mainland. "Our main customers are from [mainland] China, so that's why during the Chinese New Year, quite a lot of them come to our shop", said the 36-year-old. She added that normally, teenagers receiving red "lai see" envelopes may also choose to spend money in her shop, while tourists are more willing to spend during the period, so she experiences comparatively higher sales at that time.

Meanwhile, for a souvenir shop near the Ruins of St. Paul, business may vary on

normal days, but for the past two weeks, it has been consistently busy, according to Tim, a local part-timer. And in the following week, the 20-year-old said he expects to see more people buying souvenirs as more of them visit the city during the CNY holiday period.

A nearby shop and gallery that sells postcards and souvenirs, among other things, also expects to see an increase in business over the holiday period, especially with more pedestrians visiting the Ruins of St. Paul's neighbourhood, said part owner Fong,

expecting business to increase by "at least 70 percent". The 32-year-old added that his business already does very well at weekends, but with some mainlanders already having started their holidays, business has been better than usual. "As you can see, today is a weekday, but it is better than usual, a little similar to the weekends".

Sharing the same sentiment were Ana, a 70-year-old restaurant owner, and Jackie, her staff member aged 40. In general, Ana said that her business' situation is better than before and has been able to survive. Though her restaurant is closed during CNY due to being unable to get fresh ingredients from the market, which will also be closed, Jackie pointed out that they get more customers than usual just before the start of the actual holiday period, especially due to word spreading about their business on social media. "Tourists are very, very, very important for Macau and everywhere", stressed Ana.

However, Tam, a staff member of another vintage clothing shop near the city centre, did not share the same enthusiasm. Tourists make up a small percentage of the shop's customers, with 90 percent being locals and repeat customers, though tourists do walk in given its location.

Sales have been down for different reasons, he said, but was quick to add that he expects business to be just sufficient during CNY. However, he also noted that currently they have more customers compared to other days. ■

## MGM announces staff salary rise

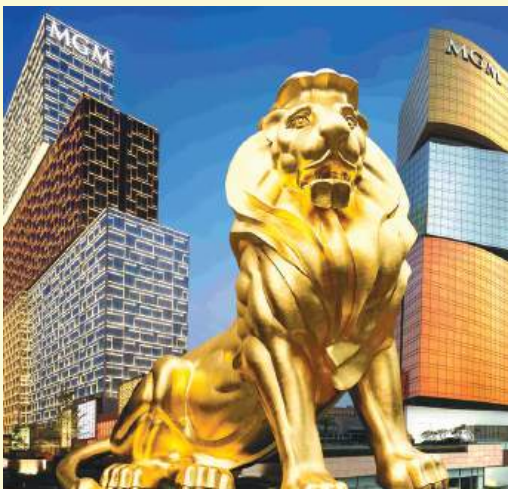
Rui Pastorin

Integrated resort (IR) operator MGM announced a salary increase for its staff in a statement yesterday, effective from March 24.

According to the statement, 99 percent of eligible staff will receive a 2.5 percent increment. The statement added that staff with a monthly salary of or less than 16,000 patacas will get a standard salary adjustment of 600 patacas, representing a 2.5 percent to 5.5 percent increment.

Chairperson and Executive Director of MGM China Holdings Limited Pansy Ho Chiu King was quoted by the statement as saying: "We extend our heartfelt gratitude to our team members for their wholehearted dedication in moving forward hand in hand with the company.

She added: "In the new year, MGM will fully support the policy implementation of the [Macau] SAR Government as always; pragmatically promote the development of all-for-one cultural tourism, while working with the team to continue to enrich the essence of Macau as 'One Centre, One Platform, One Base'." ■



This undated artist's rendition provided by integrated resort operator MGM yesterday shows its properties in Macau and Cotai.

## Old Taipa to be pedestrianised during CNY holiday, govt to arrange shuttle bus service



Economic and Technological Development Bureau (DSED) Director Yau Yun Wah (centre) and other government officials pose before a press conference announcing the arrangements for the temporary pedestrianisation of the "Old Taipa" area during the upcoming Chinese New Year (CNY) holiday, at the Lusio International Banking Building yesterday in Nam Van. — Photo: Ginnie Liang

Ginnie Liang

The "Old Taipa" area will be pedestrianised during the Chinese New Year (CNY) holiday from January 29 to February 4, with a shuttle bus service to be provided for people with limited mobility living there, Economic and Technological Development Bureau (DSED) Director Yau Yun Wah said yesterday.

Yau made the remarks during a press conference announcing the arrangement for the upcoming temporary pedestrianisation of "Old Taipa" district during the festive period, and representatives from the Transport Bureau (DSAT), Public Security Police (PSP), Macau Government Tourism Bureau (MGTO), Cultural Affairs Bureau (IC), and Municipal Affairs Bureau (IAM) co-hosted the press conference.

The pedestrianisation of "Old Taipa" district will be implemented for the third time, with the view of enhancing public safety and improving the travel experience for residents and visitors alike, and also to cope with the large flow of people and vehicles expected in the area during the CNY holiday.

The "Old Taipa" area is the junction of Rua de Fernão Mendes Pinto (飛能便度街) and Rua do Supico (素啤古街), the junction of Rua Correia da Silva (告利雅施利華街) and Rua Governador Tamagnini Barbosa (巴波沙總督街), as well as the section between Calçada do Quartel (澳門兵房斜巷) and Avenida de Carlos da Maia (嘉士米耶馬路).

Yau said that after listening to the views of the community and commercial tenants, and in order to cater for the travelling needs of people with limited mobility in the pedestrian area where bus diversions will be implemented, a dedicated seven-seat shuttle bus will be arranged in the temporary pedestrian area to pick up residents from designated locations in the pedestrian area for travelling to and from the temporary bus stops, and members of the public will be provided with the shuttle bus service upon registration.

Yau said he would collect information and publicise the booking method through the Macau Federation of Neighbourhood Associations (commonly known as Kai Fong in Cantonese), and a working group will be set up accordingly, adding that it

would not be difficult to implement the shuttle bus service as not many people live in "Old Taipa".

Kai Fong Chairman Chan Ka Leong underlined that his organisation was launching a registration process to determine the number of potential users, and emphasised that even if there was no pre-registration, advance booking could be made if necessary, and that the service could be booked from 12 p.m. to 7 p.m. during the holiday period.

When asked about the inconvenience for food couriers to pick up meals during the implementation of the pedestrian zone, Yau responded that not many people were expected to use the delivery service during the pedestrianisation, adding he hoped that residents and shop operators would understand that the pedestrian zone would be more convenient due to the recent launch of the "one-trip-per-week" entry permits for permanent Zhuhai residents and "multiple-entry permits" for Hengqin residents, as more visitors were expected in pedestrianised zone than during last year's CNY and National Day "Golden Week" holidays. ■





Lang Lang performs with the Macao Orchestra (OM) on Sunday at the Galaxy International Convention Centre. – Photos provided by Galaxy



## Lang Lang performs with Macao Orchestra in Galaxy

William Chan

The nation's top pianist Lang Lang performed with the Macao Orchestra (OM) under the baton of its principal conductor Lio Kuok Man at the Galaxy International Convention Centre on Sunday.

The show attracted a full house. The show commenced with Dmitri Shostakovich's Festive Overture, after which Lang Lang took centre stage to perform Frédéric Chopin's 12 Mazurkas, a collection of piano works that capture the spirit of Polish folk music and dance.

The highlight of the evening was the performance of Sergei Rachmaninoff's Piano Concerto No. 2, one of the Russian composer's most celebrated and beloved works.

As the concert drew to a close, Lang Lang treated the enthusiastic audience to an encore performance of a rearranged version of the traditional Chinese folk song, "Jasmine Flower" (茉莉花).

## Window Cleaning Service features video game & anime music



Local band Window Cleaning Service performs at Sifang Art Space on Saturday night. – Photos provided by the band's guitarist Henry Huang

William Chan

Local band Window Cleaning Service hosted a Video Game & Anime Music Concert at Sifang Art Space on Saturday night, comprising six young local musicians under the age of 18, all from Macau Anglican College (MAC).

The *Post* published an interview with the band last Wednesday. \*

The show attracted over 70 attendees, featuring a range of video game and anime music including Mario Kart 8 main theme, Cruel Angel's Thesis from Evangelion and Merry Go Round of Life from Howls Moving Castle.

Girl band Finger Biscuits, also from Macau Anglican College, took the stage as the opening act and performed the Anime opening from Your Lie in April.

Window Cleaning Service's performance received overwhelming support from the audience, who called for an encore. The band delighted the crowd with a performance of "Life Goes On" from the popular video game Persona 5.

\* <https://www.macaupostdaily.com/news/23786>



Local girl band Finger Biscuits performs as the opening act for Window Cleaning Service.



## Artists reimagine 'Operation Dragon' and Macau's ties to Poland



Macau-Poland artist duo Cheong Kin Man (right) and Marta Stanislawia Sala discuss angst and language in the AI age in Poland at Katowice's City Library (MBPK) at Bogucice in Poland on January 7.

– Photo courtesy of Anna Kajzer, staff of Katowice City Council

Macau-Poland artist duo Cheong Kin Man and Marta Stanislawia Sala are showcasing their inaugural exhibition in Poland, paying homage to the 1990 "Operation Dragon" and accentuating connections between Polish historical figures and Macau. The exhibit, titled "Flora Macanensis," is on display at Katowice's City Library (MBPK) at Bogucice until February 28.

### Artist talk on Macau Biennale

Described as a "magic evening" by MBPK on Facebook, the opening took place on January 7 and featured a one-hour artist talk introduced by librarian Joanna Misielak. During the event, Cheong and Sala discussed Macau's cultural landscape and reflected on their collaboration with local curators Lam Sio Man and Pal Lok for the 2023 Macau Biennale, stressing the topics of angst and language in the age of AI.

### Revisiting "Operation Dragon"

"Flora Macanensis" (Latin for "Macau's Flora") takes its name from "Flora Sinensis" ("Flora of China"), a 1656 publication by Polish Jesuit Michael Boym. This title also frames a centrepiece of the exhibition: a series of seven hand-printed posters recounting the story of Flora, Cheong's mother. She was among over 50,000 undocumented immigrants granted residency during the 1990 "Operation Dragon."

### References to Polish adventurers

The exhibition also features "The Compass of Utopia", a series of three textile creations. These works interweave Cheong's father's unpublished memoirs with artistic nods to Boym's 17<sup>th</sup>-century mission in Macau and Maurice Benyowsky's 1771 journey through the city.

This textile project debuted in Spring 2024 at the duo's first exhibition in Germany, hosted by Krakauer Haus, Cracow's sole cultural mission abroad. Held in collaboration with Nuremberg City Council, the event was supported by Fundação Oriente.

### Artist Book in imaginary language

Also on display is "Apocalypses", a mini sci-fi book commissioned for the Macau Biennale two years ago. Written entirely in an invented language with around 200 fictional ideograms, it thematises the rivalry between AI and humanity. This publication has also been exhibited last year at Berlin's "Miss Read" book fair and Lisbon's "Touching the Word with the Tongue" art exhibition.

### Lech Wałęsa in experimental film

The five-minute video "Pomnik do Noszenia" ("The Ready-Made Monument") includes an interview with Portuguese navigator António de Abreu Freire, who recounts a brief encounter with future Polish president Lech Wałęsa in the early 1980s. This film is one of two pieces created last December during a residency program at the Baltic Gallery of Contemporary Art in Ustka, northern Poland.

### "Ghost money" giveaway

Visitors can take home some "Ostgeld" for Ghosts." ("Ostgeld" translates literally to "the East's money" and refers to currency from the now-defunct German Democratic Republic.) This installation, produced for the 2022 Begehungen Festival in Saxony, Germany, originally comprised 24,000 "ghost banknotes" arranged in an eight-person jacuzzi. The German Press Agency (dpa) noted that the interactive project "received very positive feedback from attendees of all ages."

N.B. Press release provided by Cheong Kin Man to The Macau Post Daily

## Make a wish at Albergue SCM



Messages are hung on the Albergue SCM Wishing Well and Love Tree. – Photo taken yesterday by Rui Pastorin

### Rui Pastorin

The annual Albergue SCM\* Wishing Well and Love Tree are again open in Calçada da Igreja de S. Lázaro (瘋堂斜巷).

Having kicked off earlier this week and staying open until March 10, one can drop a coin into a wooden bucket and make one's wishes for the Chinese New Year, while one can also write a message down on a heart-shaped paper and hang it up around the well or on the tree.

According to information displayed at the venue,

the event organised by CAC – Círculo dos Amigos da Cultura de Macau ("Circle of the Friends of Macau's Culture"), is held in support of World Cancer Day, with the funds raised to be passed on to Caritas Macau which then go directly to cancer patients in need. The coins will be collected from the bucket and then transferred to the nearby donation box, where one can also make one's donations directly. ■

\*SCM stands for Santa Casa da Misericórdia ("Holy House of Mercy"), Macau's oldest charitable organisation.

## UN Holocaust Memorial Day held in HK



Consul General of Israel to Hong Kong and Macau Mr. Amir Lati addresses a commemoration ceremony for the United Nations Holocaust Memorial Day (UNHMD) at the Jewish Community Centre in Hong Kong on Monday. – Photo: Israel Consulate-General in Hong Kong

On Monday evening, a commemoration ceremony for the United Nations Holocaust Memorial Day (UNHMD), which fell this year on the 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Liberation of Auschwitz, was held in Hong Kong at the Jewish Community Centre.

January 27<sup>th</sup> is the day chosen to commemorate the memory of the Jewish victims murdered during the Holocaust. On this day every year, the world remembers the six million lives slaughtered, simply because they were Jewish. It marks the day when Soviet troops liberated the Nazi concentration and death camp Auschwitz-Birkenau in Poland.

The official representative of the Hong Kong SAR Government Mr. Nick Au Yeung, Deputy Secretary for Home and Youth Affairs, delivered a speech at this symbolic and important memorial ceremony in Hong Kong.

Mr. Xu Min, Deputy Director of the General Office of the Consular Dept of the Commissioner's Office of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China in the HKSAR, was also present with around 200 guests including consuls general and diplomatic representatives, leaders and members of the Jewish community and friends in Hong Kong.

Consul General of Israel to Hong Kong Mr. Amir Lati said in his remarks that the Holocaust history has left us the lessons of what racism, the hatred of the other, can cause one human being to do to another. He warned that antisemitism has been raising once again in the past year, with the number of antisemitic incidents on the rise in many countries around the world. It is alarming that, as recent surveys show, 20% of the people especially the young ones do not know what the Holocaust is. The year of 2024 marked a record year for Anti-Semitic incidents, with

an increase of 340% in these incidents worldwide compared to 2022 and an increase of nearly 100% compared to the previous year.

Mr. Lati stressed the importance of education on the Holocaust and antisemitism, particularly in Hong Kong, and dedicated his speech to Holocaust survivor Mr. Yosef Wiener, who has lost two grandchildren in Hamas's terror attack on Israel on October 7<sup>th</sup> in 2023. Mr. Wiener could not bear the loss and passed away at the age of 98 last month in Israel. The Jewish historic motherland Israel is the only Jewish nation in the world and was created to ensure the wellbeing and safety of the Jewish people globally.

84-year-old Holocaust survivor Mr. Mark Spiegelman travelled especially to Hong Kong to share his experience in person. Born in Poland, Mr. Spiegelman's parents dressed him in a dress disguising him as a girl, in order to evade the Nazis. He had endured unimaginable hardships, hiding in a ghetto and living in secrecy. His experiences are featured in the graphic novel Maus: A Survivor's Tale.

In display at the event was the exhibition "Auschwitz a Place on Earth", portraying photos taken at the end of May or beginning of June 1944 by two SS men. The Auschwitz Album is the only known visual documentation of the arrival of the transport of Jews taken to Auschwitz-Birkenau. It shares the entire cruel process the Jews had endured since their arrival at the camp until their last moments.

The event and related educational activities were made possible by the event organizer – the Hong Kong Holocaust and Tolerance Centre, and other supporters including the Hong Kong Jewish Community Centre, the Carmel School Hong Kong and the Consulate General of Israel in Hong Kong.



# Citywide e-coupon consumption campaign boosts 1.1 billion patacas spending: govt

## Economic chief stays mum on campaign's possible relaunch



Economic and Technological Development Bureau (DSED) Director Yau Yun Wah speaks to reporters at the Macau Chamber of Commerce's (ACM) headquarters in Zape yesterday. Yau took office on December 20 last year.

Tony Wong

The Economic and Technological Development Bureau (DSED) announced yesterday that the government has spent 227 million patacas on its 13-week citywide e-coupon consumption stimulation campaign, which ended late last month, generating consumer spending worth over 1.1 billion patacas for businesses across the city, underlining that the drive has achieved the desired results in boosting local consumption.

When asked by reporters yesterday, DSED Director Yau Yun Wah did not mention whether the government will launch a similar campaign again, adding that with the central government's new measure making it more convenient for those in Zhuhai to visit Macau, which started on New Year's Day, the local government's next task is to assess the extent to which the new measure will benefit Macau's community consumption, i.e., consumer spending in neighbourhoods other than the city's tourism districts.

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.

The bureau carried out the recently concluded citywide



Macau Chamber of Commerce (ACM) President Frederico Ma Chi Ngai stands beside the lucky wheel for the winners of the citywide e-coupon consumption stimulation campaign's final lucky draw at the ACM headquarters yesterday.

— Photos: Tony Wong

e-coupon consumption stimulation campaign in collaboration with the influential Macau Chamber of Commerce (ACM), colloquially known in Cantonese as Chung Chung.

The closing ceremony and final lucky draw for the recently concluded campaign was held at the ACM headquarters in Zape yesterday.

The citywide e-coupon consumption stimulation campaign ran between September 30 and December 29 last year, lasting 13 weeks.

The government decided to launch a citywide e-coupon consumption stimulation campaign covering businesses across the city, after one for the peninsula's northern district was carried out earlier last year, running between March 18 and August 4, lasting 20 weeks.

According to its previous announcements, the government spent 29.75 million patacas on its 20-week e-coupon campaign for the northern district, generating consumer spending worth 150 million patacas for businesses in the district.

The two e-coupon campaigns last year covered consumers who spent in participating shops, restaurants and other outlets and made their payments on one of the various mobile payment platforms. During weekdays, consumers entered lucky draws to receive e-coupons, which had to be used on the following Saturday or Sunday.

Consumers meeting certain criteria automatically entered the citywide e-coupon campaign's final lucky draw, which was held yesterday.

Yesterday's final lucky draw chose 499 winners, who will be

given prizes worth 1.68 million patacas between them in total.

The prizes comprise cash prizes worth 300,000 patacas in total sponsored by Chung Chung and other prizes sponsored by various other organisations.

A DSED statement yesterday said that the government has spent 227 million patacas on its 13-week citywide e-coupon consumption stimulation campaign, generating consumer spending worth over 1.1 billion patacas for businesses across the city.

The statement also said that retail outlets accounted for 60 percent of the businesses covered by the citywide e-coupon campaign, while restaurants made up 31 percent. Outlets providing other services accounted for the other nine percent.

Speaking to reporters after yesterday's final lucky draw, Yau underlined that the citywide e-coupon campaign achieved the government's expected and desired results in boosting community consumption.

Yau also underlined that the reason that the e-coupons could only be used on Saturdays or Sundays was to encourage residents to stay in Macau and spend at weekends.

Yau said that with the implementation of the central government's new measure for those in Zhuhai and Hengqin to travel to Macau, the city's number of visitors can be expected to continue rising this year, adding that the local government will assess the extent to which the new measure will benefit Macau's community consumption, as well as whether it will change the city's overall visitor consumption patterns. ■

## Customs busts 2 shops selling bogus watches worth 72,000 patacas

Ginnie Liang

Macau Customs Service (SA) officers on Monday busted two shops suspected of selling fake watches infringing on various brands' intellectual property rights (IP), involving 19 bogus items worth 72,000 patacas in total, according to the prices set by the retailers, an SA spokesperson said during a press conference yesterday.

Two local male shop owners, surnamed Van, aged 46, and Sou, aged 53, were arrested on Monday, according to the spokesperson, adding that SA officers did not rule out that more people were involved in the case.

According to the spokesperson, the Macau Customs Service received a report from a woman earlier this month saying that she had bought a watch that was later found to be fake from a shop in Zape.

Upon receiving the report, SA officers carried out spot checks on shops in the Zape and Nape areas

that were suspected of selling copyright infringement products.

The spokesperson did not reveal the affected brands.

SA officers seized nine fake watches from each of the two shops in Zape and Nape, and together with the one fake watch that the victim had bought, the number of fake designer watches seized by the officers in the operation amounted to 19, the spokesperson said.

The spokesperson noted that the bogus items were purchased online from abroad. The items were purchased at prices ranging from 800 to 2,000 patacas each, and then sold for 3,200 to 5,420 patacas, which were mostly sold to tourists and also local residents.

The spokesperson said that the suspects have been transferred to the Public Prosecutions Office (MP). According to the Industrial Property Code Decree-Law No 97/99/M, the suspects face a hefty fine and up to six months in jail. ■



A total of 19 bogus watches seized on Monday are displayed at the Macau Customs Service (SA) headquarters in Barra yesterday. — Photo courtesy of TDM

## Police nab local man for theft by finding

Ada Lei

A local man was arrested on Saturday for theft by finding, Public Security Police (PSP) spokesman Cheong Heon Fan said in a regular press conference yesterday.

The suspect surnamed Ieong is in his sixties. He claimed to be jobless.

According to Cheong, the police received a report from a man on Thursday saying that he had left his wallet with 6,800 patacas inside on a shop counter.

After scrutinising their citywide CCTV camera system, the police identified Ieong as the suspect who had picked up the wallet and intercepted him at the Barrier Gate checkpoint.

Under questioning, Ieong admitted to stealing the wallet out of greed. The police retrieved the wallet from his backpack, with all the cash still inside.

Ieong has been transferred to the Public Prosecutions Office (MP), facing a theft by finding charge, according to Cheong. ■



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

## STOCK MARKETS

### Hang Seng Index closes 0.91 pct higher

HONG KONG — Hong Kong stock market ended higher yesterday with the benchmark Hang Seng Index up 0.91 percent to close at 20,106.55 points.

The Hang Seng China Enterprises Index gained 1.18 percent to end at 7,320.88 points, while the Hang Seng Tech Index jumped 2.14 percent to end at 4,693.72 points. — Xinhua



# Xi speaks with Putin, calling on China, Russia to uphold int'l fairness, justice

BEIJING – President Xi Jinping yesterday said he is willing to work with Russian President Vladimir Putin to continue guiding bilateral relations towards a new height in the new year.

Speaking with Putin in a meeting by video link, Xi called for coping with uncertainties of the external environment with the stability and resilience of China-Russia relations, jointly promoting the development and revitalization of the two countries, and upholding international fairness and justice.

The two heads of state exchanged festive greetings for the upcoming Chinese Lunar New Year.

Xi recalled the three meetings he had with Putin last year, which led to a range of important common understandings. He also said last year marked the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the China-Russia diplomatic relations, which feature permanent good-neighborly friendship, comprehensive strategic coordination and mutually beneficial cooperation, and have become increasingly dynamic.

Xi also mentioned various activities held as part of the China-Russia Years of Culture, as well as steadily progressing pragmatic cooperation and growing bilateral trade.

The close coordination between the two countries on multilateral platforms such as the United Nations (UN), the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) and BRICS has provided more positive energy for the reform and development of the global governance system, Xi said.

He called on the two sides to continue deepening strategic coordination, firming up mutual support, and safeguarding the legitimate interests of the two countries. China and Russia should consolidate and expand bilateral relations and push for in-depth development of practical cooperation, Xi added.



President Xi Jinping (right) talks with Russian President Vladimir Putin via video-link meeting at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing yesterday. – Xinhua

He noted that this year marks the 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the victories of the Chinese People's War of Resistance against Japanese Aggression, the Soviet Union's Great Patriotic War and the World Anti-Fascist War, as well as the 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the founding of the UN.

China and Russia should take this as an opportunity to jointly defend the UN-centered international system and the outcomes of victory in World War II, promote all countries' adherence to the purposes and principles of the UN Charter, uphold the universally recognized basic norms governing international relations, and practice true multilateralism, Xi stressed.

He said as the rotating chair of the SCO, China is willing to work with Russia and other member states to usher in a new phase of the SCO featuring higher-quality development

and greater responsibility.

Xi also called on the two countries to jointly advance greater BRICS cooperation and write a new chapter of unity and self-improvement for the Global South.

Putin said that Russia and China have always provided each other with trust and support, and treated each other as equals. Cooperation between the two sides is in the interests of the two peoples and has been unaffected by changes in the international landscape.

He expressed satisfaction with the sustained positive momentum in bilateral trade and energy cooperation, the constant increase in mutual visits by people of the two countries, and the close communication and collaboration between the two sides on multilateral arenas.

Putin said Russia firmly upholds the

principle that Taiwan is an inalienable part of China's territory and resolutely opposes "Taiwan independence" in any form.

He noted that 80 years ago, the Russian and Chinese people resisted aggressors with their blood and lives, safeguarding their national sovereignty and dignity. He said that this year, the two sides will jointly commemorate the 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the victory of the World Anti-Fascist War and defend the outcomes of World War II.

Russia is willing to strengthen cooperation with China on multilateral affairs, and play a positive role in promoting world peace and development, Putin added.

The two heads of state also engaged in in-depth discussions on international and regional issues of common concern, and agreed to maintain strategic communication in the new year. – Xinhua

## Macau's securities depository links with HK's Moneymarkets Unit, promoting both sides' bond markets

Staff Reporter

Macau's central securities depository (CSD) and Hong Kong's Central Moneymarkets Unit (CMU) were directly linked to each other yesterday with the aim of promoting the development of the two cities' respective bond markets, with the new measure's launching ceremony held in Macau yesterday.

The measure was announced in a joint statement by the Macau Monetary Authority (AMCM) and the Hong Kong Monetary Authority (HKMA).

Yesterday's statement announced the official launch of the direct linkage between Hong Kong's Central Moneymarkets Unit (CMU), operated by CMU OmniClear Limited (a wholly-owned subsidiary of Hong Kong's Exchange Fund), and Macau's central securities depository (CSD), operated by Macao Central Securities Depository and Clearing Limited (a wholly-owned subsidiary of the AMCM).

The statement said that since the two sides announced their joint decision in September last year to launch the measure, the HKMA and the AMCM had cooperated closely to prepare for the launch of the direct linkage and to jointly develop the business arrangements and operational procedures.

The statement underlined that the connection between the bond market

infrastructures in Hong Kong and Macau will provide a cross-border investment and financing channel, enabling investors from both markets to participate in each other's bond market with greater ease and efficiency. The direct linkage also marks a new milestone in financial cooperation between Hong Kong and Macau, leveraging the own strengths of both cities and demonstrating the synergistic development of the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macau Greater Bay Area (GBA), the statement said.

The statement also said that the official launch of the direct linkage between the

two cities' bond markets has now enabled Macau's bond market infrastructure to connect with a central securities depository located outside Macau for the first time.

The statement said that this will provide international investors, including those from Portuguese-speaking countries (PSCs), with a convenient channel to participate in the bond markets of both cities, further strengthening Macau's function as the financial services platform serving China and Portuguese-speaking countries.

The statement underlined that the AMCM will continue to establish

connectivity with the bond markets in the mainland and international markets with the aim of gradually expanding new financial services and supporting Macau's appropriate economic diversification.

Yesterday's launching ceremony, held at the World Trade Centre Macau (WTCM) in Zape, was attended by Macau Secretary for Economy and Finance Tai Kin Ip, Macau Monetary Authority (AMCM) President Benjamin Chan Sau San, Hong Kong Monetary Authority (HKMA) Deputy Chief Executive Howard Lee Tat Chi, as well as other officials from both cities. ■



Guests such as Secretary for Economy and Finance Tai Kin Ip (centre), Macau Monetary Authority (AMCM) President Benjamin Chan Sau San (fourth from right), and Hong Kong Monetary Authority (HKMA) Deputy Chief Executive Howard Lee Tat Chi (third from left) pose for a group photo after symbolically marking the direct linkage between Hong Kong's Central Moneymarkets Unit (CMU) and Macau's central securities depository (CSD) yesterday, at the World Trade Centre Macau (WTCM) in Zape. – Photo: AMCM