

Businesses report CNY revenue growth but still call for govt support

Interview by Yuki Lei

The mainland's eight-day Chinese New Year (CNY) Golden Week ends today, and according to provisional figures from the Public Security Police (PSP), Macau set a new record for single-day visitor arrivals during this year's "Golden Week" holiday, with 219,092 arrivals recorded last Friday, i.e., the third CNY day, in response to which business leaders from the peninsula's central and southern districts, Taipa and Coloane, as well as the city's northern district told the *Post* in separate interviews yesterday that the wave of visitors has boosted commercial activities in their areas, with business growth of more than 30-40 percent, 10-20 percent, and nearly 10 percent respectively.

According to yesterday's PSP figures, from last Tuesday to Sunday, the total number of arrivals and departures stood at about 3,687,700, an increase of 9 percent compared to the same period of the Chinese New Year last year. Based on the PSP statistics, the calculation showed that Macau recorded more than 841,000 visitor arrivals in the first five days of the eight-day mainland holiday.

'At least one-tenth of tourists willing to spend money here'

Speaking to the *Post* at his



Visitors queue at Margaret's Café e Nata on Rua do Comandante Mata e Oliveira (澳門新馬路馬統領街) during last week's Chinese New Year holiday. — Photo: Rui Pastorin

jewellery shop near the St Paul's Ruins landmark, Lei Cheok Kuan, chairman of the Industry and Commerce Federation of the Macau Central and Southern Districts, admitted that in the post-

COVID-19 pandemic era, and with online shopping already in vogue for years, there was no denying that consumers' shopping patterns have changed: "The consumption patterns of Generation Z [aka Gen Z,

which encompasses individuals born between the mid-to-late 1990s and the early 2010s] have changed, and they are more focused on travel experience and 'clock in' at tourist attractions".

Citing the PSP figure of 219,000 visitor arrivals recorded on the third CNY day, Lei said that business operators, particularly in the city centre, were "very happy" to see the massive return of tourists to Macau, pointing out that their turnover had increased by 30 to 40 percent compared to the recent Christmas and New Year's Day holidays: "The influx of tourists has significantly stimulated commercial activity in Macau".

In response to the sector's claim that the current business environment was still in a situation where there are many visitors, but without necessarily leading to business growth, Lei said: "It's still a little bit worse" than before the pandemic. However, he was quick to point out the importance of an influx of tourists to businesses, using the example of the Ruins of St Paul's area: "Unlike in the past when nine out of 10 tourists would buy souvenirs here, thanks to visitors' large replenishment flow, the trade would still benefit from at least one out of 10 tourists willing to spend money here".

According to Poe, "visitors' replenishment flow" refers to the pattern or process of how visitors return or are replaced at a particular location, such as a tourist attraction, event, or venue.

Continued on p.3

Trump says US agrees to pause tariffs on Mexico for one month

WASHINGTON, DC — US President Donald Trump said yesterday that he had "very friendly conversation" with Mexican President Claudia Sheinbaum, and the two sides agreed to "immediately pause" the anticipated tariffs for one month and continue negotiations.

"I just spoke with President Claudia Sheinbaum of Mexico. It was a very friendly conversation

wherein she agreed to immediately supply 10,000 Mexican Soldiers on the Border separating Mexico and the United States. These soldiers will be specifically designated to stop the flow of fentanyl, and illegal migrants into our Country," Trump said in a post on social media platform Truth Social.

"We further agreed to immediately pause the anticipated tariffs for a one month period during

which we will have negotiations headed by Secretary of State Marco Rubio, Secretary of Treasury Scott Bessent, and Secretary of Commerce Howard Lutnick, and high-level Representatives of Mexico," Trump continued.

"I look forward to participating in those negotiations, with President Sheinbaum, as we attempt to achieve a 'deal' between our two Countries," said the US president.

Trump signed executive orders on Saturday to impose a 25-percent additional tariff on imports from Canada and Mexico and a 10-percent tariff hike on imports from China, which has drawn widespread opposition and immediate retaliations.

Shortly after Trump's announcement, Sheinbaum on Saturday instructed the Secretariat of Economy to implement tariff

and non-tariff measures to defend Mexico's interests in response to the levies imposed by the Trump administration.

"We categorically reject the White House's slander against the Mexican government of having alliances with criminal organizations, as well as any intention of intervention in our territory," the Mexican president said on the social platform X.

— Xinhua

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Indonesia intensifies crackdown on online gambling as transactions decline

The Indonesian government has been steadily reducing online gambling throughout 2024 while continuing to strengthen its crackdown and mitigation strategies.

— Story on p.9

WHO chief counters Trump criticisms behind US pullout

The World Health Organisation's chief hit back yesterday at US President Donald Trump's reasons for pulling the United States out of the agency — and again urged Washington to reconsider.

— Story on p.11

Brazil registers lowest jobless rate since 2012

Brazil registered an unemployment rate of 6.6 percent in 2024, its lowest since 2012, the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE) has announced.

— Story on p.12

Non-local workers talk about their living conditions

Vox Pop by Rui Pastorin

Macau can be an expensive city to live in. And as prices continue to rise, the *Post* spoke with some non-local workers around Rotunda de Carlos da Maia, colloquially known as “Three Lamps” (三盞燈), and the city centre to learn more about their views on the city’s cost of living, along with their lives here.

Grateful, but hoping for a better situation for others

Laura has been working in Macau as a domestic helper for around seven years. She said she is blessed to have a good employer as well as being able to earn a higher-than-average local salary. Having a family back in the Philippines, she earns enough to be able to send some of her earnings back home to her son, while being a “stay-in” worker also helps keep her costs down, only needing to rent a room at a boarding house on Sundays as a “weekender”.

However, she remarked that Macau is, overall, expensive and that going out for things like dining can

be “a waste of money”. Speaking on behalf of other domestic workers, Laura said she hoped that there could be a way to standardise their salaries as well as to have to the chance of a wage hike, although she admitted that she has been fortunate on the salary front, while others might not be so.

Meanwhile, Ela, also a domestic helper, came to Macau in 2019 when the cost of living was “not too expensive”, she said, adding that, however, she felt that it has since gone up in the past three or four years. “Here, the salary of a domestic helper is not high”, while rent can also be pricey, she added. “It’s quite expensive”, highlighting her expenses on food and other items.

Like Laura, Ela also said she is able to earn a wage a bit higher than others in her field, allowing her to do alright. But Ela also said she hoped there would be a way for other migrant workers to speak out on the need for higher salaries.

‘A little bit expensive’

“It’s a little bit expensive” said



Shoppers buy products from a convenience store that also sells items from the Philippines. – Photo taken last night by Rui Pastorin.

a Nepalese cleaner in his thirties. Earning a salary of 7,500 patacas, he shares a room with another person, needing to pay around 1,700 patacas per month. Regarding food, he said that even if they cook at home, costs remain high. “We need to spend like

800 patacas to 1,000 patacas a month per person, even if we cook or buy things from the market”.

Compared to when he first started working in Macau at a job that provided food and accommodation in the mid-2010s

to again returning this year without those benefits, expenses are high. He also felt that living costs and products from the market were also cheaper back then.

“If we work for like a month and get a salary of 7,500 patacas, then we almost spend three, four thousand patacas only on living and then we save half or something like that”. He added that the salary was not equivalent to the cost of living here, “so it’s very hard to survive”.

A better situation

“The prices of goods are getting higher, along with the price of rent” noted Robby, a 34-year-old from the Philippines who works in the hotel industry. However, he added that his salary, from which 20 percent goes to paying for rent in a shared room, is enough. “It’s unlike before, when I first came here and had to work 16 hours just to cope with all my bills and send money back home”, adding that his current situation was better while also being able to save some money. ■

Police nab 2 drunken drivers, car turns turtle

William Chan

The Public Security Police (PSP) have arrested two local drunken drivers, PSP spokesman Wong Chi Weng said at a press conference yesterday.

In the first case, the suspect surnamed Lei is a saleswoman in her twenties.

Early Thursday morning, Lei was driving along Nova Cidade de Cotai

(新城圓形地) when she crashed into concrete barriers, causing her car to overturn. Firefighters rescued Lei from the vehicle, and she sustained minor injuries.

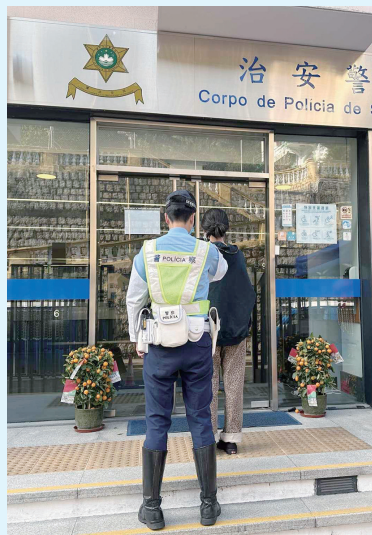
A breathalyser test revealed her blood alcohol concentration was 1.52 grams per litre, and she admitted to drinking in Nape earlier that night.

In the second case, the suspect surnamed Leong is a male restaurant manager in his thirties.

In the early hours of Wednesday, Leong reversed against the flow of traffic in Avenida do Hospital das Ilhas (離島醫院大馬路) and crashed into a bus. Leong then attempted to reverse, only to hit a concrete barrier and lamp post behind him.

The bus, concrete barrier, and lamp post were all damaged, and three bus passengers sustained minor injuries. Leong admitted to drinking while working, and a breathalyser test showed his blood alcohol concentration was 1.3 grams per litre.

Leong and Lei have been transferred to the Public Prosecutions Office (MP), facing drunk-driving charges. ■



This undated photo provided by the Public Security Police (PSP) yesterday shows the local female drunk driving suspect being escorted by a PSP officer to a police station.

Police nab mainlander for reporting false robbery case

Ada Lei

A man from the mainland has been arrested this week for reporting a false case of robbery to the police last Tuesday, Judiciary Police (PJ) spokesman Ho Wai Lok said in a regular press conference yesterday.

The suspect is a 39-year-old surnamed Guo.

According to Ho, Guo reported to the Public Security Police last Tuesday afternoon that he had been robbed in a street near a casino in Cotai and reported a loss of HK\$153,000. Guo told the police that he had been attacked and pushed to the ground from behind by two men, and that they had robbed HK\$153,000 cash from him. Guo said that they had run

away and had reported the incident to the police at once.

The Public Security Police transferred the case to the Judiciary Police after receiving the report. The police discovered that Guo had no cash on him at the time of the incident, and after checking the citywide CCTV footage did not see Guo being robbed at all. Guo was arrested afterwards.

Under questioning, Guo admitted that he had reported a false robbery case because he was afraid to tell his family that he had lost all the money in gambling.

Guo has been transferred to the Public Prosecutions Office (MP), facing a charge of reporting a false



Judiciary Police (PJ) spokesman Ho Wai Lok looks on during yesterday’s regular press conference. – Photo: AdaLei

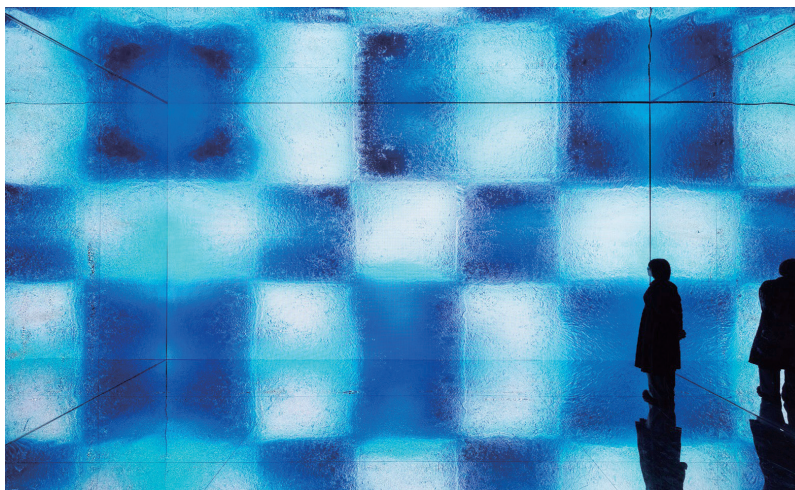
case to the police. According to Article 330 of the Macau Penal Code he faces up to one year behind bars. ■

‘Icy Fire’ installation from Macau wins gold at ‘Glow Shenzhen 2024’

Rui Pastorin

The University of Macau (UM) said in a recent statement that a digital ink generative video art installation titled “Icy Fire” has won

a gold award at the “Glow Shenzhen 2024” light art festival in Shenzhen, with the work on display at the main venue in Shum Yip Upperhills until February 16.



This undated handout photo recently provided by the University of Macau (UM) shows the video art installation “Icy Fire” created by Faculty of Arts and Humanities Centre for Arts and Design Director Lampo Leong (梁藍波) and doctoral student Zhao Yanxiu.

The statement noted that the award-winning installation, which measures at 7.5 metres by 4 metres by 4.8 metres and has drawn many visitors, was created by Faculty of Arts and Humanities Centre for Arts and Design Director Lampo Leong (梁藍波) and doctoral student Zhao Yanxiu. It consists of a high-definition LED panel and multiple mirrored walls, ceiling and floor.

It features digital ink generative video art and AI techniques to “depict the melting of glaciers through the splashing of ink and the artistic language of geometric abstraction, with a colour gradient shifting from cold to warm”, the statement said, adding that it combines light, sound and immersive settings.

The statement added that the festival comprised 209 artworks from various countries and regions around Shenzhen. ■

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MACAU POST

Macau Weather

**COLD AND DRY.
CLOUDY APART FROM SUNNY PERIODS.
FORCE 4 TO 5 NORTHERLY WINDS WITH GUSTS, BECOMING FORCE 3 EASTERLY WINDS.
RELATIVE HUMIDITY WILL RANGE BETWEEN 45% AND 80%.**



11°C~17°C

Source: SMG

Pedestrianised 'Old Taipa' attracts 30,000 visitors per day: business leader

Interview by Yuki Lei

The "Old Taipa" pedestrianisation ends today, and the government said in a statement yesterday that "it's been running smoothly since its launch", while Taipa and Coloane Industry and Commerce Federation Chairman Yeong Keng Hoi told the *Post* that the temporarily pedestrianised area received significant daily footfall, averaging 30,000 visitors per day during the first four days of the Chinese New Year (CNY), i.e., from last Wednesday to Saturday, with a peak of 38,000 visitors on Saturday, the fourth CNY day.

According to a joint statement by the Economic and Technological Development Bureau (DSED), Transport Bureau (DSAT), Public Security Police (PSP), Macau Government Tourism Office (MGTO), Cultural Affairs Bureau (IC) and the Municipal Affairs Bureau (IAM) yesterday, until this evening the pedestrianisation scheme runs from noon to 7 p.m. every day during the mainland's eight-day CNY holiday, which began last Wednesday.

The car-free zone, covering the junction of Rua de Fernão Mendes Pinto (飛能便度街) and Rua do Supico (素啤古街), the junction



Taipa and Coloane Industry and Commerce Federation Chairman Yeong Keng Hoi poses after yesterday's interview with the *Post* in the "Old Taipa" temporary pedestrianisation zone. — Photos: Yuki Lei

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 (嘉路士米耶馬路), has been implemented with the aim of optimising the pedestrian and vehicular traffic management in the area, striking a balance between the needs of residents and business



This photo taken yesterday shows the footfall in the temporarily pedestrianised area, which ends today.

operators there as well as visitors, while facilitating the smooth flow of people and traffic in the area to foster a comfortable and safe environment.

Speaking to the *Post* during an interview in the area yesterday, Yeong mentioned that the pedestrian-only zone has been organised three times, with the first during the mainland's 2024 Chinese New Year and the second during its National Day "Golden Week" holiday last

year, all of which yielded "certain results" in enhancing the area's tourist attractiveness and business environment.

While visiting the pedestrianised area, the *Post* was briefed by Yeong on the new attractions there, including stalls selling cultural creative products, as well as the federation's expectation that the government and integrated resort operator Sands further revitalise the erstwhile Iec

Long Firecracker Factory. Yeong also said that the federation hoped to use the pedestrianised area as a pilot to create a "recognised" district, with designated "entrances" to guide tourists to spend money in different places with the help of various landmarks there, in order to enhance the overall visitor experience, while also ensuring safety in crowded conditions.

Talking to the *Post* at the Iec Long Firecracker Factory revitalisation zone, Yeong said he felt sad that the area was "quiet" even during public holidays, saying that the "Old Taipa" area has its own geographical advantages, with a number of integrated resorts around, which are within a short walk, on top of the scenic views of the Taipa Houses attraction along the way as well as the ancillary facilities such as carparks: "We don't want to sabotage such a strong poker card".

According to Yeong, the evaluation and feedback of the pedestrianised zone will be carried out by the government, in the hope that the views and suggestions of residents and tourists collected during the CNY holiday can further improve its design and layout. ■

IAM urges public not to feed babies 'Gerber' Chew Teething Sticks

Ginnie Liang

The Municipal Affairs Bureau (IAM) urged the public in a statement yesterday not to feed babies a US-made, pre-packed baby food under the brand name "Gerber", which may cause choking in infants.

The statement did not say whether the products of the problematic batch are being sold in Macau, and neither did it specify the reason why it caused choking.

According to the statement, the bureau was informed by the Centre for Food Safety of Hong Kong about the three problematic foods – the Gerber Soothe 'N' Chew Teething Sticks – Strawberry

Apple and the Gerber Soothe 'N' Chew Teething Sticks – Banana, which weigh 90 grams, as well as the 45-gram pack of the latter one.

The bureau said that it had issued at once an alert to the local food trade and dispatched officials to inspect the market, and urged consumers to stop using the products immediately if they are in possession of any of them, adding that shops should also immediately cease supplying or selling the products if they have them on their shelves.

Anyone who has food-related enquiries may call the IAM's Food Safety Hotline on 2833 8181. ■



This undated file photo provided by the Municipal Affairs Bureau (IAM) yesterday shows one of the problematic products under the US brand of "Gerber".

Businesses report CNY revenue growth but still call for govt support

Continued from p.1

Lei highlighted the fact that the consumption pattern of Gen Z has changed, urging local small- and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) to upgrade and transform their business operations, such as providing products and services that stand out from their competitors by having unique features, designs or benefits to "attract this group of young people": "From my own point of view, Gen Z basically doesn't care about neighbourhoods or tourist areas, they only focus on whether they've seen your company's products on social media platforms, and whether they've heard of your name or not".

Lei also expressed hope that the government could develop more tourist attractions in the areas surrounding the St Paul's Ruins landmark.

'Tourists more inclined to eat street food than dining in eateries'

Another popular place for souvenir shopping, Rua de Cunha, in the centre of "Old Taipa", also recorded an increase in business, according to the chairman of the Taipa and Coloane Industry and Commerce Federation, Yeong Keng Hoi, who said: "Roughly speaking, there has been an increase of 10-20 percent" in turnover.

Yeong, who talked to the *Post* while walking around the temporarily pedestrianised precinct, also pointed out tourists' changes in their consumption patterns after the three-year COVID-19 pandemic,

from a tendency to dine in restaurants in the past to a preference for street food nowadays. However, he was quick to add that brick-and-mortar shops still do have business, but their revenue has dropped slightly when compared to the pre-pandemic levels. "In the overall calculation, that amount is not too small, but the proportion of street food in the area's total revenue is having a big impact on restaurants," Yeong said.

In response to some traders' concerns that the visitors to the district are mostly attracted by street food and large-scale souvenir shops, Yeong said his federation would continue to communicate with the government to suggest more measures conducive to the business environment, but that "in business, it's really a matter of each of them finding their own way", urging business operators to be adaptable and self-reliant in the light of changing circumstances, in terms of their services and products, as well as their promotion campaigns.

'Business better than usual during CNY holidays' in northern district

People's livelihood and economic issues have always been closely related to public life, and in terms of the local "community economy", according to the president of the Industry and Commerce Association of Macau Northern District, Wong Kin Chong, the number of tourists visiting that district was still insufficient, but during the long CNY holiday, shop operators reported a

10 percent increase compared with the normal period.

Wong said that according to his assessment more local residents chose to stay and spend money in Macau during the CNY break to avoid long queues at border checkpoints, "which improved business during the weekdays". However, he also expressed concern that after the holiday, local residents would again choose "to go north", which would trigger a return to the "dismal" business environment in the district.

"To go north" is a local colloquialism for visiting Zhuhai and other mainland cities north of Macau for shopping, eating out and other leisure activities.

Commenting on the government's ongoing efforts to encourage visitors to engage with the community, Wong pointed out that the results were "not very good", saying he believed that traffic problems and the lack of special attractions are the main reasons why tourists do not visit the northern district, in the light of which Wong urged the government to improve Macau's public transport problem by, for example, increasing the number of shuttle bus services and creating special attractions.

Wong also told the *Post* in a phone interview he hoped that the government would launch consumption vouchers to encourage tourists to spend money in the northern district, and at the same time, provide support to business operators there to improve their business environment. ■

Year of Snake Parade features 17 floats, Culture Cities of East Asia 2025

William Chan

The “Parade for Celebration of the Year of the Snake”, organised by the Macau Government Tourism Office (MGTO), set off from Sai Van Lake Square on Friday night, the third day of the Chinese New Year (CNY), followed by the first Chinese New Year Fireworks Displays.

Central People’s Government and Macau Special Administrative Region (MSAR) officials, including Chief Executive Sam Hou Fai, Deputy Director of the Liaison Office of the Central People’s Government in the MSAR Huang Liuquan and Commissioner of the Office of the Commissioner of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People’s Republic of China (PRC) in the MSAR Liu Xianfa officiated at the opening ceremony.

Secretary for Economy and Finance, Anton Tai Kin Ip, delivered a Chinese New Year Message for the Year of the Snake during the opening ceremony.

Performance teams from the Culture Cities of East Asia 2025 were featured in the parade, comprising representatives from Macau, Huzhou in Zhejiang Province, Japan’s Kamakura city, and South Korea’s Anseong city.

The Huzhou, Kamakura, and Anseong performance teams showcased their traditional clothing, music, and cultural themes as part of the parade, highlighting the diverse cultural heritage of the East Asian region.

There was a total of 17 floats in the parade. Eight of the floats were designed by local government entities, while the remaining floats were provided by Hengqin and local enterprises.

The floats set off from Sai Van Lake Square, passed by Kun Iam Ecumenical Centre and Macau Science Centre in Nape, before reaching Macau Fisherman’s Wharf, where they are on display until Friday. The floats will also be exhibited in Tap Seac Square from February 9 to 16, from 5 p.m. to 10 p.m.

The second float performance is scheduled for this Saturday night, with the floats to set off from Estrada Marginal da Ilha Verde (青洲河邊馬路) en route to Iao Hon Market Garden.

Following Friday’s parade, a firework display lit up the sky for 15 minutes in Sai Van. ■

Over 1,000 performers and 17 colourful floats are featured in the “Parade for Celebration of the Year of the Snake” on Friday night at Sai Van.
— Photos: William Chan



Gaming inspection bureau gets new deputy

Tony Wong

The government has appointed a department chief of the Labour Affairs Bureau (DSAL) as a deputy director of the Gaming Inspection and Coordination Bureau (DICJ) effective from Monday next week.

The Gaming Inspection and Coordination Bureau has two deputy directors in its organisational structure.

Since Adriano Marques Ho, who had headed the bureau since June 2020, became the director-general of the Macau Customs Service, one of the principal officials of Chief Executive Sam Hou Fai's administration, on December 20 last year, the bureau has been headed by Lio Chi Chong, who had been a deputy director of the bureau since February 2021, on a temporary basis, i.e., Lio has been the bureau's acting director. Consequently, one of the bureau's two deputy director positions has been left vacant.

The currently serving deputy director of the bureau is Chui Hou Ian, who took up the position in February 2023.

According to an executive order

published in the Official Gazette (BO) yesterday, Secretary for Economy and Finance Anton Tai Kin Ip has appointed Lei Seak Chio, who currently heads the Occupational Safety and Health Department of the Labour Affairs Bureau, as a deputy director of the Gaming Inspection and Coordination Bureau for a one-year term effective from February 10, 2025.

Tai, whose portfolio oversees both bureaus, signed yesterday's executive order on January 21.

According to Tai's executive order, Lei started working in the Labour Affairs Bureau in 2005 where he was promoted to the chief of the Hazard Inspection Division in 2020, before becoming the chief of the Occupational Safety and Health Department in 2023.

While bureaus consist of departments, the latter consist of divisions.

Lei holds a bachelor's degree in Engineering Management from Huaqiao University in Quanzhou City, Fujian Province, and a master's degree in Public Administration from the National Academy of Governance in Beijing. ■



This handout photo released by the Labour Affairs Bureau (DSAL) in November 2023 shows Lei Seak Chio, who heads the bureau's Occupational Safety and Health Department, delivering a presentation about Macau's occupational health and safety measures during a forum held in Hong Kong in October 2023.

Correction

This is just to apologise for a mistake in our story headlined "Macau sets post-COVID-19 single-day record of 219,000 entries and exits during CNY" on Page 10 yesterday. In fact, the post-COVID-19 single-day record was about 219,000 visitor arrivals.

The government's entry and exit data comprise local residents, non-local students and non-resident workers, as well as visitors. We regret the error which occurred in the editing process

STOCK MARKETS

Hang Seng Index closes 0.04 pct lower

HONG KONG — Hong Kong's stock market ended lower yesterday with the benchmark Hang Seng Index down 0.04 percent to close at 20,217.26 points.

The Hang Seng China Enterprises Index edged down 0.03 percent to end at 7,384.11 points, while the Hang Seng Tech Index dipped 0.29 percent to 4,737.46 points.

Yesterday marked the first trading day of the Year of the Snake. The Hang Seng

Index rose nearly 4,500 points across the preceding Year of the Dragon, the most in seven lunar years, Paul Chan Mo-po, financial secretary of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region government, said at a ceremony yesterday to relaunch trading at the Hong Kong Stock Exchange.

Chan also said that he is "cautiously optimistic" about Hong Kong's stock market in the Year of the Snake.

— Xinhua

Embracing AI as a tool for progress

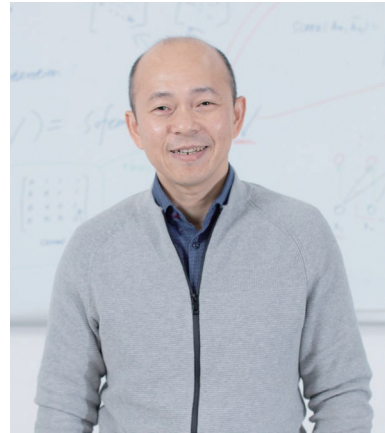
Feature by Ginnie Liang

Have you heard of DeepSeek? It's an artificial intelligence (AI) tool designed to follow human instructions, analyse vast amounts of data, generate reports, and even write code.

Developed by a Hangzhou-based company, DeepSeek is an open-source large language model (LLM) that has quickly gained traction. Its first free chatbot app, released last month, surpassed ChatGPT as the most-downloaded free app in the iOS App Store in both China and the US.

But what does this mean for the future of work? According to Derek Wong Fai, an associate professor at the University of Macau (UM) specialising in Machine Learning, Computational Linguistics and related areas, the key lies in how humans adapt to these advancements. In an online interview with the *Post* yesterday, Wong emphasised that AI should be seen as a tool, not a replacement for human expertise. "AI cannot operate independently," he said. "It relies on human input to perform tasks effectively."

The real takeaway? Those who learn to work alongside AI and leverage its capabilities will gain a significant edge. As Wong put it, "It's not AI replacing humans, but humans

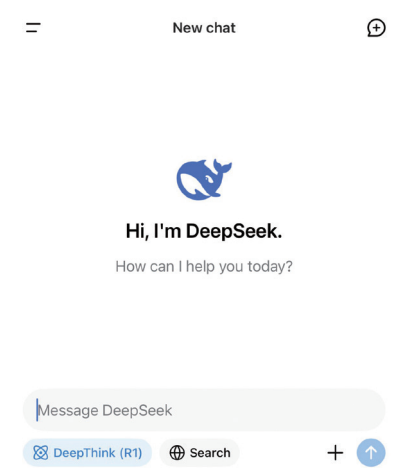


This undated file photo downloaded from the website of University of Macau (UM) last night shows Derek Wong Fai, associate professor of the UM Faculty of Science and Technology.

who know how to use AI effectively replacing those who do not."

Wong encouraged individuals to embrace AI as an opportunity to learn new skills. By mastering tools like DeepSeek, people can unlock new possibilities in their work and stay competitive in an evolving job market, Wong said, adding that rather than fearing AI, we should focus on integrating it into our workflows to boost productivity, foster innovation, and prepare for the future.

However, Wong also highlighted the importance of using AI responsibly. While tools like DeepSeek can provide valuable



The screenshot captured yesterday shows the interface that users will see after entering the DeepSeek app.

insights, they are not infallible. "AI generates responses based on patterns in data, but it doesn't truly 'understand' information," he noted. This means its advice, especially in sensitive areas like healthcare, should always be cross-checked with qualified professionals.

In short, AI is a powerful ally when used wisely. With proper safeguards and awareness, it can enhance human capabilities, helping us make better decisions and achieve more than ever before. "The future belongs to those who learn to harness its potential while staying mindful of its limitations," Wong concluded. ■

O Lam pledges to improve elderly & child care services

Ginnie Liang

Secretary for Social Affairs and Culture Wallis O Lam marked the Chinese New Year by visiting several elderly care facilities yesterday, bringing festive greetings and reaffirming the government's commitment to improve elderly and child care services, according to a statement from her office yesterday.

Accompanied by other officials, O's visits aimed to express the government's care and support for Macau's senior citizens while assessing the quality of services provided at elderly care service centres by engaging directly with seniors and service providers, the statement said, adding that O underscored the importance of continuous improvement in elderly care services, ensuring that Macau's elderly feel cherished and supported throughout the year.

According to the statement, O's first stop was the government's high-rise rental residential building for senior citizens on Plot P in Areia Preta, where O inspected the building's security and support personnel control centre, including the 24-hour emergency call system and data on its residents' participation in activities and services.

O emphasised the need to optimise the control centre's computer systems to ensure the safety and health of elderly residents, the statement said.

O then proceeded to the Macau



This handout photo released by O Lam's office shows Secretary for Social Affairs and Culture Wallis O (second from left) and Social Welfare Bureau (IAS) President Wilson Hon Wai (right) pose with senior citizens at the Macau Federation of Trade Unions' (FAOM) social rental housing project Toi Fai Building in Toi San district yesterday.

Federation of Trade Unions' (FAOM), commonly known as Gung Luen in Cantonese, social rental housing project, Toi Fai Building, in Toi San district, where she toured facilities such as activity rooms, nursing stations, resource library*, and physiotherapy rooms, the statement said, adding that O praised FAOM for its role as a bridge between the elderly community and the government, and expressed hope that such efforts would ensure seniors feel valued and enjoy a fulfilling life in their golden years.

The final stop O visited was Centro de Convívio da Obra das Mães* ("Mothers' Work Community Centre") elderly care centre in Mercado de S. Lourenço district,

where O had a look at various facilities, including residential floors, activity rooms, day care services, sensory rooms, and physiotherapy areas.

She commended the centre for its dedication to providing comprehensive services and pledged continued collaboration to improve elderly and child care services, contributing to the vision of a "Happy Macau", the statement said. ■

*A resource library is a collection of materials and tools designed to provide information, support, and resources on specific topics or areas of interest. It can serve various purposes depending on the context, such as education, research, or professional development. — Poe

Avenida do Nordeste skywalk project to start tomorrow: govt

Tony Wong

The Public Works Bureau (DSOP) and the Transport Bureau (DSAT) announced in a joint statement yesterday that the government's project to build a skywalk along Avenida do Nordeste (東北大馬路) in the peninsula's Areia Preta district will start tomorrow.

Yesterday's announcement came after the two bureaus announced last week that the project will get off the ground after the ongoing Chinese New Year (CNY) holiday. *

Today is the last day of the mainland's eight-day Spring Festival Golden Week holiday.

Running along almost the entire section of Avenida do Nordeste, the 600-metre-long skywalk will run between Avenida de Venceslau de Morais (慕拉士大馬路) and Rua Central da Areia Preta (黑沙環中街).

On the side in Avenida de Venceslau de Morais, the skywalk will be linked to the podium area of the Mong Son social rental housing estate, while on the other side near Rua Central da Areia Preta, the skywalk will be linked to the podium area of the government's high-rise rental residential building for senior citizens on Plot P, with other access points outside the Polytec Garden (保利達花園) and La Baie Du Noble (海名居) private residential estates.

There will be a total of 13 access points to the skywalk.

Measures to mitigate impact on traffic

Yesterday's statement underlined that considering the skywalk



A public bus drives along Avenida do Nordeste last week, where construction of a skywalk will start tomorrow. — Photo: Tony Wong

project's extensive construction area, various measures will be implemented to alleviate the adverse impact of the project's duration on the traffic on Avenida do Nordeste and its surrounding areas.

The project's work will be carried out in phases and sections, the statement said.

The statement said that with the skywalk project's various work to move forward, the vehicular areas of Avenida do Nordeste and some other roads in the vicinity will be gradually narrowed.

The statement underlined that the Transport Bureau will constantly adjust its special traffic measures throughout the project's duration according to the real situation of the project's execution in different phases.

In the first phase of the project's execution, the statement said, work will be carried out to identify the exact locations of underground pipes and cables on a section of pavement on Rua Central da Areia Preta outside the La Baie Du Noble private residential estate, in certain areas of

Areia Preta Park, and on the central divider of Avenida do Nordeste.

In addition, the statement said, some pavement sections in the area will be enclosed and accordingly temporary areas for pedestrians to walk will be set up.

The statement said that various work to be carried out in the first phase will create the necessary conditions for the project's next phase to start next month, namely the skywalk's pile foundation and underground structure.

The statement reminded drivers that during the project's duration, vehicular traffic restrictions will be in place on certain sections of Rua Central da Areia Preta and Avenida do Nordeste, while the dog park in Areia Preta Park near the petrol station will partially remain open.

The skywalk project was initially slated to get off the ground in the second quarter of last year. ■

* More details about the Avenida do Nordeste skywalk can be checked on: <https://www.macaupostdaily.com/news/23930>

China's annual trade in services exceeds US\$1 trillion in 2024, boasting significant potential

Analysis

BEIJING— China's annual trade in services exceeded US\$1 trillion for the first time last year, demonstrating significant potential for further growth.

China's services import and export value amounted to a record-high of 7.5 trillion yuan (US\$1.05 trillion) in 2024, expanding 14.4 percent year on year, according to the latest data from the Ministry of Commerce (MOC).

Exports grew 18.2 percent year on year and imports grew 11.8 percent, the ministry said.

Driven by the global trends of digitization, smart technology advancement and green development, China's trade in services grew in scale, its structure was optimized further and its international competitiveness was enhanced in 2024, said Li Jun, a researcher at the Chinese Academy of International Trade and Economic Cooperation under the MOC.

He noted that the comprehensive relaxation and optimization of China's visa-free transit policy has played a role in boosting inbound tourism over the last year.

The broadly welcomed new policy has sparked the rise of "China Travel," a popular hashtag on social media where many

travelers share their experiences in China, with increasing numbers of international tourists being drawn by the country's cultural landmarks, nature and city walks.

"China Travel" is booming rapidly, and this growth is expected to boost the country's services trade further, while helping to drive the global travel industry toward continued recovery and prosperity," Li said.

China's digital cultural platforms and content have been gaining significant traction overseas, Li said, noting the popularity of Chinese video game "Black Myth: Wukong," the distribution of high-quality Chinese films and TV dramas on overseas streaming platforms such as Netflix and YouTube, and the fact that Chinese internet literature is influencing an increasing number of international readers.

The Chinese government released a guideline on promoting the high-quality development of trade in services through high-standard opening-up in August last year.

The document offered robust policy support for the development of China's services trade, Li said, calling for more efforts to advance opening-up, innovation and international cooperation in the sector.

Noting that China established a nationwide negative list management system for cross-border trade in services last year, Li suggested that the level of institutional opening-up should be improved continuously, that the negative list should be shortened gradually as appropriate, and that high-standard international economic and trade rules should be aligned with actively.

He urged launching the construction of national demonstration zones for the innovative development of trade in services as soon as possible.

To facilitate innovation, Li called for the potential of industrial digitization and digital transformation to be unlocked, for support for the professional organizations offering services in finance, consulting, design and certification to enhance their ability to provide international services, and for the accelerated development of green services.

Bilateral, multilateral and regional collaboration in digital trade and trade in services should be expanded, Li said, suggesting that the role of major exhibition platforms should continue to be leveraged, and that international services trade cooperation parks should be developed. — Xinhua

Police nab mainlander for loan-sharking and falsely imprisoning gambler

Ada Lei

The Judiciary Police (PJ) busted a casino loan-sharking case on Friday, arresting a man from the mainland, PJ spokesman Ho Wai Lok said at a regular press conference yesterday.

The 47-year-old suspect surnamed Liang told the police that he is jobless.

According to Ho, the female victim borrowed HK\$300,000 from Liang and another accomplice to gamble in a local casino on Thursday night. She was required to pay 20 percent of her winnings under certain conditions as "interest." They also signed a "loan agreement", with the victim signing

her car, which is worth 1.2 million yuan (1.33 million patacas), over to Liang as "collateral".

The victim then gambled in a casino in Zape, and eventually lost all the money the next day. She was then confined by Liang against her will in a hotel guestroom in the central district. While she was in captivity, the victim's son arrived and reported the case to the police.

Police officers intervened later on Friday, rescuing the victim and apprehending Liang in the room.

Liang was transferred to the Public Prosecutions Office (MP) on Saturday, facing charges of false imprisonment and usury, according to Ho. ■

Govt to start supplying reclaimed water in 2026 Q1: marine & water chief

Tony Wong

Marine and Water Bureau (DSAMA) Director Susana Wong Soi Man has said that the government expects to supply reclaimed water to Coloane's sprawling Seac Pai Van public housing neighbourhood and the University of Macau (UM) campus in the first quarter of next year.

Wong made the remarks on Friday while delivering her Chinese New Year message by phone call to the audience of the current affairs phone-in programme hosted by Ou Mun Tin Toi, the Chinese-language radio channel of public broadcaster TDM.

According to Wikipedia, water reclamation, aka wastewater reuse or water recycling, is the process of converting municipal wastewater (sewage) into water that can be reused for a variety of purposes, such as the flushing of toilets, watering plants, road cleaning, car washing, and firefighting. Such water is also known as reclaimed water.

According to the DSAMA website, reclaimed water in Macau will be used for two purposes first, namely the flushing of toilets and watering plants.

Construction of Macau's first treatment plant for wastewater reuse, located in Coloane, got off the ground in October last year.

The city's first reclaimed-water plant will be located next to the Coloane Wastewater Treatment Plant near Concórdia Industrial Park.

The reclaimed-water plant is being constructed in two phases.

Wong noted on Friday that the construction of the first phase of the reclaimed-water plant in Coloane is underway, while underground reclaimed-water pipes connected to the plant are being installed. She underlined that the government expects the plant's first-phase construction and the installation of the respective pipes to be completed before the first quarter of next year when the plant will be able to start supplying reclaimed water to Coloane's sprawling Seac Pai Van public housing neighbourhood and the University of Macau (UM) campus.

The UM's current campus is situated in a one-square-kilometre area of Zhuhai City's Hengqin island that is under the Macau Special Administrative Region's (MSAR) direct jurisdiction, i.e., Macau's laws and regulations fully apply there.

Wong noted that after the second phase of the reclaimed-water plant in Coloane is completed in the future, it will start supplying reclaimed water to properties in Cotai.

Wong also said that the government will build another reclaimed-water plant, on a plot on the man-made island where the Macau checkpoint of the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macau Bridge (HZMB) is located, adding that after its completion, it will start supplying reclaimed water to properties on the HZMB man-made island, in the Zone A land reclamation area, and on Plot P in the peninsula's Areia Preta district. ■



This undated photo downloaded from the Marine and Water Bureau's (DSAMA) website yesterday shows purple pipes in a building used for carrying reclaimed water.