

# Sam sets up 5 groups to boost governance, promote Hengqin growth

Tony Wong

Chief Executive Sam Hou Fai has decided to set up five special groups aiming to advance the development of the Guangdong-Macau In-depth Cooperation Zone in Hengqin, the local government's public administrative reform, as well as improvements in Macau's legal system and in its urban and municipal amenities, the Macau Government Information Bureau (GCS) announced in a statement yesterday.

According to the statement, the five special groups comprise two leadership groups chaired by Sam, namely the Leadership Group for Public Administration Reform, and the Leadership Group for Promoting the Development of the Guangdong-Macau In-depth Cooperation Zone in Hengqin, and three coordination or working groups chaired by Secretary for Administration and Justice André Cheong Weng Chon, namely the Coordination Group for Public Administration Reform, the Working Group for Coordinating Legal Matters, and the Working Group for Urban Beautification and Cleanliness.

The statement said that with the objective of ensuring the implementation of the spirit of President Xi Jinping's important speech delivered at the celebration of the 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Macau's return to the motherland and the inauguration ceremony of the Macau Special Administrative Region's (MSAR) sixth-term government, Sam convened a regular meeting with his five policy secretaries on Thursday last week where he decided to establish the five interdepartmental special groups in



This handout photo released by the Macau Government Information Bureau (GCS) yesterday shows Chief Executive Sam Hou Fai (centre) chairing a meeting with his five policy secretaries on Thursday last week.

order to strengthen the government's cross-departmental coordination with the aim of making achievements in the respective fields.

According to the statement, the two groups for public administration reform aim to enhance the MSAR's governance capability, to improve its leadership and coordination mechanisms for public administration reform, and to strengthen top-level guidance and cross-departmental coordination.

The Working Group for Coordinating Legal Matters aims to improve the government's legislative coordination and planning and the city's legal system and to foster positive interaction between the executive and legislative organs, the statement said.

The statement said that with an innovative and proactive mindset, the leadership group for promoting Hengqin's development aims to advance the high-quality achievements in

the in-depth cooperation zone's second-phase development goals by leveraging the central authorities' various favourable measures and policies.

With the setting-up of the Working Group for Urban Beautification and Cleanliness, the government aims to improve its systems for safeguarding and improving people's well-being and to effectively address key issues concerning people's well-being, the statement said. ■

## China aims to establish 1,000 globally influential scientific journals by 2035

BEIJING – The China Association for Science and Technology (CAST) unveiled a plan to develop about 1,000 world-class scientific journals by 2035, as outlined in the CAST 2035 action plan approved during the ninth meeting of its 10<sup>th</sup> National Committee yesterday.

Scientific journals are seen as a direct indicator of a nation's scientific competitiveness and cultural influence. Cultivating top-tier journals is a key pillar for becoming a global science and technology leader.

In 2019, CAST and six other departments launched an action plan for developing

excellent scientific journals. To date, the action plan has elevated nearly 300 Chinese journals into the global elite. The number of journals ranked in the top 5 and 25 percent of their fields worldwide has surged sixfold and twofold, respectively, compared to 2018.

The second phase of the action plan is now in full swing, supporting 450 journals and 13 journal clusters. This phase shifts focus from individual journal breakthroughs to fostering a sustainable ecosystem, integrating cluster development and platform construction to drive long-term growth. – Xinhua

## EU lawmakers warn Europe 'can no longer fully rely US'

BRUSSELS – EU lawmakers yesterday demanded Europe "double down" on bolstering its defences and supporting Ukraine after the United States launched efforts with Russia to stop the war.

"Europe can no longer fully rely on the United States to defend our shared values and interests, including continued support for Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity," said a statement from the European People's Party, Socialists and Democrats, Renew and Greens.

"We must face this new reality and double down on our joint European effort in defence of Ukraine and European security as a whole by establishing a credible and strong deterrence against any aggression."

The call for action came after top US officials met Russian negotiators in Saudi Arabia to lay the ground for talks on ending Moscow's three-year war on Ukraine. (More on p.11) – AFP



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### Hamas to free 6 Israeli Gaza hostages, hand over 4 bodies this week

Hamas said yesterday that it would hand over all six living Israeli hostages due for release under the first phase of the Gaza ceasefire this week, as well as the bodies of four dead captives.

– Story on p. 10

### Russia, US to name negotiators on ending Ukraine war

Russia and the US will name teams to negotiate a path to ending the war in Ukraine, the powers decided yesterday in discussions that drew a rebuke from Kyiv over its exclusion.

– Story on p. 11

### Why Lula is losing support

Brazilian President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, 79, has been on a whirlwind campaign of interviews and public appearances in recent weeks to shore up dwindling support, but the numbers keep getting worse.

– Story on p. 12

# 60 pct of seniors' rental housing residents are MTel clients

Yuki Lei

Macau-based MTel Telecommunication Company Limited held yesterday a banquet at L'Arc hotel in Nape to celebrate Spring Festival, on the sidelines of which the company's chairman and CEO, Michael Choi Tak Meng, briefed the media about the company's development in the past year, saying that "we've had a steady, solid growth in our results", with over 60 percent of residents in the government's high-rise rental residential building for senior citizens being MTel clients.

The number of internet customers exceeds 10,000 users, Choi said, adding that for the next three years, he hoped the company could achieve a 10-20 percent growth in Macau's Internet Freedom Rate\*: "Faced with the challenge of Macau's population not increasing much, we still achieved a good performance last year".

The company has experienced a significant increase in demand for value-added services, such as dedicated lines and cloud computing, according to the telecom operator.

In terms of tariffs, Choi pointed out that with the approval of the government, the company has reduced the original price by 35 percent, i.e., the current price of internet services is now 65 percent of the original price last year. He added that the company will progressively apply to the government for special concessionary rates for specific groups, such as the elderly.

Choi also said that although the price reduction has had a positive effect on attracting new customers, it has proved not very effective: "Because customers tend to stick with the companies they are familiar with, they often continue using the same provider," adding he believed that the most competitive scene in the future for local telecom operators would be in the Zone A land reclamation development area.

Regarding future development, Choi pointed out that alongside the Guangdong-Macau In-Depth Cooperation Zone in Hengqin, artificial intelligence (AI) was a key trend in the industry. He said that the

company plans to focus on AI as a core direction for development, continuing to invest resources in enhancing the "AI + industry" scenarios and the MTel AI platform, with a view to empowering local sectors such as tourism, financial services, and commerce, ultimately reducing costs, increasing efficiency, and fostering innovation and transformation.

According to Choi, the company is currently collaborating with tertiary education institutions and high-tech enterprises to integrate open-source AI technologies like DeepSeek, aiming to develop a new generation of an AI metro network and optical communication network services in Macau.

MTel, during yesterday's banquet, received two ISO certificates from the China Quality Certification Centre (CQC). ■

\*The Internet Freedom Rate refers to the level of freedom individuals have to access, use, and share information online without censorship, surveillance, or restrictions imposed by governments or other entities.



Telecom operator MTel representatives, including Chairman and CEO Michael Choi Tak Meng (third from left), pose after receiving ISO certificates from a representative from the China Quality Certification Centre (CQC) during a Spring Festival banquet at L'Arc hotel in Nape. — Photo: Yuki Lei

## Police nab mainlander for theft, bust illegal inn

William Chan

During a regular press conference yesterday, Public Security Police (PSP) spokesman Cheong Heon Fan announced a theft case, in which a man from the mainland stole cash and a phone from a supermarket locker.

According to Cheong, the victim, an employee of a supermarket on

Rua de Santo António (花王堂街), reported to the police on Friday that 1,400 patacas in cash and a phone valued at 1,800 patacas had been stolen from his shoulder bag, which he had placed in a locker in the supermarket's warehouse.

Using CCTV footage, the police identified the suspect as a man surnamed Zhang, in his forties, who was apprehended on Saturday at the Horta da Mitra Municipal Market (雀仔園街市).

Under questioning, Zhang admitted to visiting the supermarket but denied stealing anything there.

The investigation revealed that the flat where Zhang and two other mainlanders stayed was a suspected illegal inn, with daily rents ranging from 150 to 300 patacas. Zhang claimed he rented his room from an acquaintance he met in a casino.

Cheong added that the police had notified the Macau Government Tourism Office (MGTO) for further action and were seeking the whereabouts of the flat's owner at the time of the press conference.

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



This undated photo provided by the Public Security Police (PSP) yesterday shows the theft suspect being escorted to a police station in Nam Van.

## 'Ne Zha 2' to have its cinema release in Macau on Saturday

Yuki Lei

The central government's National Film Administration announced yesterday that "Ne Zha 2" will have its cinema release in Hong Kong and Macau on Saturday, with the local premiere taking place in Macau tonight.

The announcement noted that "with the strong coordination of the Central People's Government Liaison Office in Macau and the relevant entities of the Macau Special Administrative Region (SAR) government, the premiere of 'Ne Zha 2' will be held in Macau on Wednesday, February 19."

According to the National Film Administration, the total box office, including point-of-sale and pre-sale, of the blockbuster, as of yesterday, had exceeded 12 billion yuan (13.26 billion patacas).

The local premiere will take place at Emperor Cinema of Lisboeta integrated resort in Cotai.



Audience members pose in front of the poster of the Chinese blockbuster "Ne Zha 2" at IMAX Sydney in Australia last Wednesday. — Xinhua

In the Chinese mainland, the mega-blockbuster's cinema release was on January 29, coinciding with the first day of the Chinese New Year (CNY).

As reported by CCTV News, the cumulative box office of the

animated film has surpassed that of "Inside Out 2," a US animated film released last year, placing it at the top of the global box office list for animated films and among the top 8 in the overall global box office rankings. ■ (More on p.7)

## Police bust 2 illegal currency exchange dealers

Ada Lei

The Judiciary Police have separately arrested a man and a woman from the mainland for engaging in illegal currency exchange deals, Judiciary Police (PJ) spokesman Cheong Sio Keong said during a regular press conference yesterday.

In the first case, the 44-year-old woman surnamed Li works as a personal shopper.

A personal shopper is someone who assists individuals in selecting and purchasing items, such as clothing, accessories, groceries, or gifts, tailored to their preferences, needs, and budget.

According to Cheong, the police received a report about an illegal

currency exchange activity from a casino in Cotai on Friday. Security staff of the casino discovered Li offering an illegal currency exchange deal to a male gambler. Li was apprehended by the security staff and transferred to the police; the gambler cooperated as witness in the investigation. Under questioning, Li admitted to exchanging HK\$10,000 with the gambler for 9,700 yuan, making a profit of 180 yuan on the deal. Li also admitted to having engaged in illegal currency exchange activities since 2023. The police seized HK\$21,000 in total.

In the second case, the 54-year-old man surnamed Pan told the police that he is jobless.

According to Cheong, PJ

officers on patrol saw Pan providing an illegal currency exchange deal to a male gambler in a casino in Cotai on Monday. Pan and the gambler were apprehended on the spot. The gambler then turned witness in the case. Under questioning, Pan admitted to exchanging HK\$20,000 with the gambler for 19,100 yuan, making a profit of 500 yuan in this deal. Pan also admitted to having engaged in illegal currency exchange activities since January, making a total profit of 9,000 yuan (9,940 patacas). The police have confiscated HK\$310,000 in total.

The suspects in the two cases have been transferred to the Public Prosecutions Office (MP), facing illegal currency exchange charges. ■

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### Macau Weather

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FORCE 4 TO 5 EASTERLY WINDS, OCCASIONALLY FORCE 6 WITH GUSTS.

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Source: SMG

# IAS receives 483 new applications for govt's seniors' rental housing flats

Yuki Lei

The Social Welfare Bureau (IAS) has begun vetting a new round of applications for the government's seniors' rental housing – and IAS President Wilson Hon Wai told reporters yesterday that the number of applications for the new phase stood at 483 when the application period closed last Friday, involving 600 senior citizens, expecting that the total number of households will reach about 900, an increase of about 300 compared to the previous phase.

Located on Rua das Coníferas (松柏街), the government's high-rise rental housing for senior citizens officially commenced service in mid-October last year, offering more than 1,500 residential flats in the first phase. Between November 6 and December 31, 2023, the government accepted 1,500 applications for the first phase of the project, with the first 759 flats having been allocated to eligible applicants in the fourth quarter. The new round of applications closed on Friday, with the bureau saying that between January 1 last year and February 10 this year it has received a total of 440 applications for the seniors' rental housing units.

"... we have learnt from the moving-in experience in October last year, making various detailed arrangements to ensure the safety of the elderly, including the rollout of relevant fire drills and other improvement measures," said Hon, according to whom, in terms of safety work, his bureau conducted an on-site fire drill last month in conjunction with the building's property management company and the residents, in the hope that

the property management company would take into account the needs of the specific environment.

Hon said the vetting of the new phase of applications was expected to be completed within the next month, "as it is necessary to sign a contract with each household and make specific arrangements", adding that arrangements for moving into the flats were expected to start around March: "Based on the experience gained last time, we are confident that we can complete the project expeditiously so that prospective elders can choose their flats and move in as soon as possible".

Regarding the odour problem along Avenida Norte do Hipódromo (馬場北大馬路) in Areia Preta as raised by residents of the seniors' rental housing a month ago, Hon indicated that the bureau has not received any further feedback on the issue recently. However, he was quick to underline that if any residents had concerns about their rooms or wished to change their flats, "we would try our best to accommodate their requests".

Hon went on to say that the bureau has made sufficient preparations and taken follow-up actions in anticipation of the possibility that some residents may wish to increase the number of household members due to personal reasons or special family factors. He highlighted the importance of ensuring the provision of appropriate services, noting that "such cases are rare".

Each of the studio-like units can house a maximum of two dwellers – a couple, relatives or friends.

Hon made the remarks when speaking



Social Welfare Bureau (IAS) President Wilson Hon Wai addresses yesterday's luncheon for social workers at Macau Fisherman's Wharf.

– Photo: Yuki Lei

to reporters on the sidelines of yesterday's luncheon for social service workers at Macau Fisherman's Wharf.

In his speech, Hon briefed the luncheon attendees about the bureau's priorities in social services, including establishing a comprehensive elderly care system, enhancing efforts to identify hidden elderly individuals in the community, following up on arrangements for admission to government flats for the elderly, and improving the living environment of these flats. His also emphasised the importance of deepening family education, fostering a social atmosphere that supports family

building and encourages childbearing, and setting the direction for a 10-year action plan on elderly and rehabilitation services for the period from 2026 to 2035. Additionally, he highlighted the commitment to safeguarding the rights and well-being of local women and promoting a healthy lifestyle among young locals, as well as establishing a "Macau-model" of community correctional services, among other initiatives.

Meanwhile, applications for the first phase of financial assistance under the bureau's Community Inclusion and Harmony Programme closed yesterday. Hon noted that each year, more than 5,000 families—including single-parent households, persons with disabilities, and chronically ill patients—apply for the programme, benefiting over 11,000 individuals. However, he was quick to add that the number of families applying for social assistance has been declining in recent years, analysing the trend as an indication that many families have been lifting themselves out of poverty as a result of their children being well educated and self-sufficient.

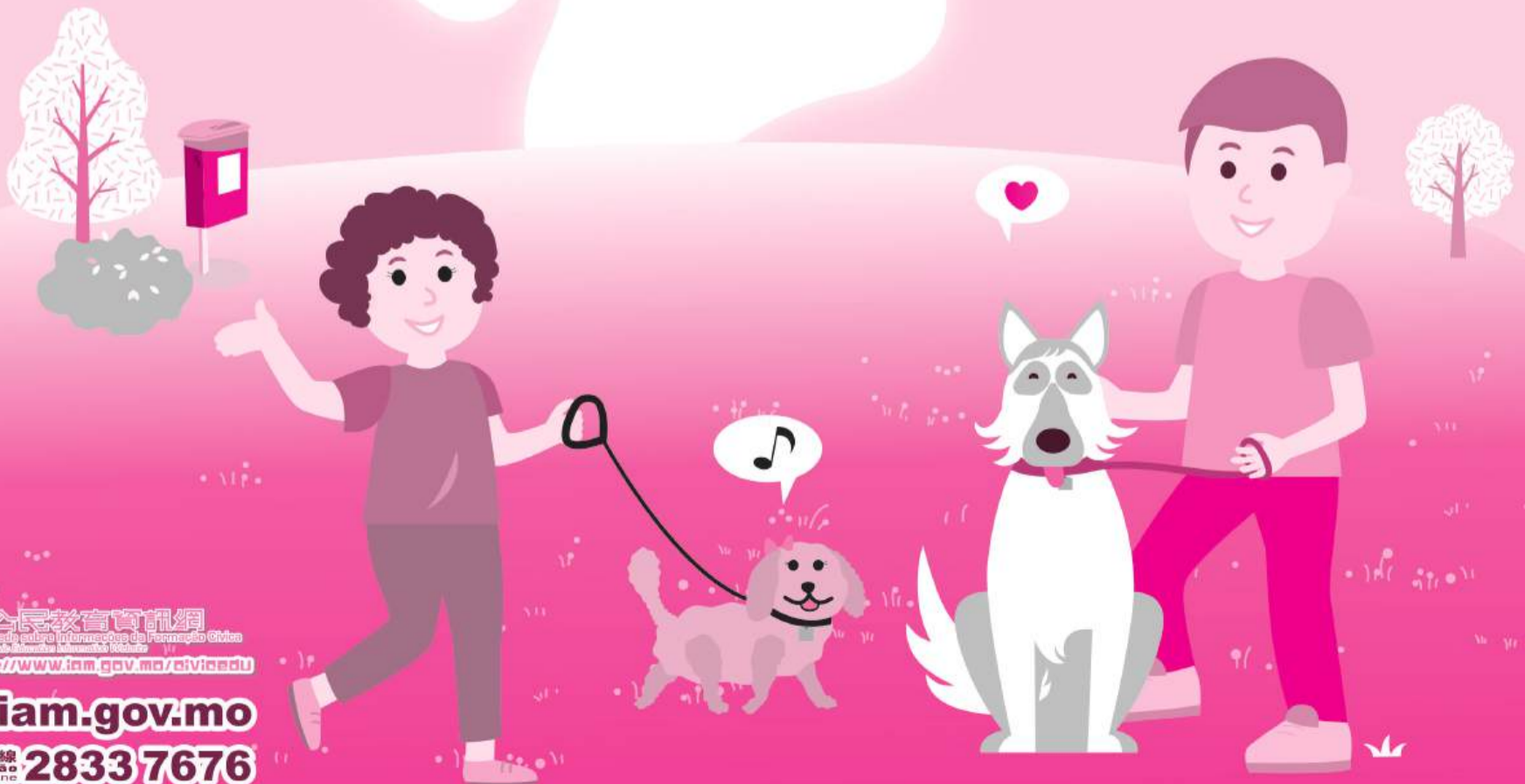
According to Hon, the criteria for granting social assistance are based on changes in the Global Health Security Index, while also considering the specific circumstances of individual families. For families who have moved away from Macau, such as to the Guangdong-Macau In-Depth Cooperation Zone in Hengqin, they may apply for social assistance if they face special circumstances, after which an assessment will be conducted. ■



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## Local jazz guitarist shares insight into album production

Interview by William Chan

Chan Hon Chong, a seasoned jazz guitarist with nearly two decades of experience in Macau's music scene, has recently talked to the *Post* in an exclusive interview about his upcoming album.

Chan is recognised for his contributions to jazz as both a performer and a composer, performing regularly in the Greater Bay Area (GBA). He graduated from the Collective School of Music in New York and Beijing Contemporary Music Academy. Chan has graced prestigious events, including the Macau International Music Festival and numerous jazz festivals worldwide.

In 2019, Chan recorded his debut album "Travelling Coffee" in New York, which was released the following year. Since 2020, he has been developing his second album, collaborating with Brazilian Grammy-awarded guitarist and producer Ricardo Vogt\*, who resides in Zhongshan.

The upcoming album, titled "The River of Inspiration" (川), reflects a more extended creative process. Chan said, "Most of 'The River of Inspiration' compositions I have written over a long period. In contrast to the improvisation-heavy style of my first album, which took only a couple of days to complete, the preparation and recording of this new album took two years from start to finish."

He expressed his gratitude for Vogt's meticulous efforts, noting, "Initially, I had a manuscript and general concept for my music, including chord changes, melodies, and rhythms. I discussed my ideas with Ricardo, who provided valuable advice on introducing the songs, instrumentation, and musician selection."

Thanks to Vogt's extensive experience and connections, the album features a talented roster of musicians, which pleasantly surprised Chan. The lineup includes Mike Tucker on tenor sax, Scott Thompson on bass, Nick Milo on piano, Rich Stitzel on drums, Ailton Moreira on percussion, the Moscow Studio Orchestra on strings, and Rafael Rocha for string arrangements.

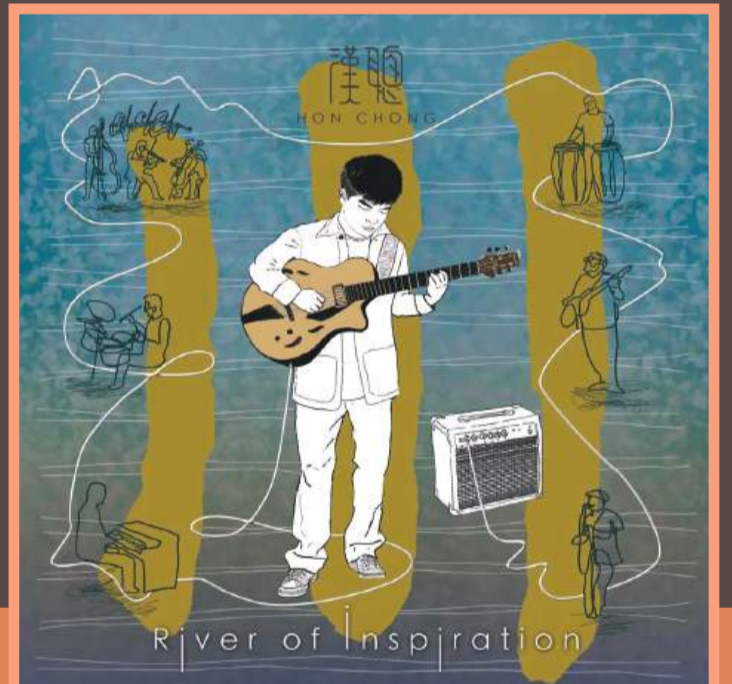
One of Vogt's notable contributions is the reimagined version of his piece "The Traveling Coffee," featuring a string orchestra. He expressed satisfaction with the result, emphasising the enriching impact of this new arrangement, with a heavy classical theme.

Another highlight on the album is "Art Garden," inspired by the local venue "Macau Art Garden," where Chan often collaborates with other musicians. He shared, "The venue's owner was kind enough to allow us to use the space for our recording session. The piece was created during that session and named in gratitude."

Additionally, Chan underlined that his album will be released in April on phonograph record. He acknowledged that while vinyl is pricier and requires a turntable, it offers superior sound quality and distinctiveness that sets it apart from digital formats like CDs and streaming services.

Chan also expressed appreciation for local artists Kent Leong and Humphrey Cheong, who assisted with design, typesetting, and the equipment used during recording sessions. Reflecting on his time in New York, he noted, "Most musicians publish their own records. For me, it's not only worthwhile but essential for any developing musician. Releasing an album acts like a business card, allowing others to understand my musical identity, particularly amidst the diversity of my gigs in pop, rock, and jazz."

\*Ricardo Vogt's introduction on National Immigration Administration website: [en.nia.gov.cn/n147428/n147508/c159824/content.html](https://en.nia.gov.cn/n147428/n147508/c159824/content.html)



Undated handout photo of the phonograph record cover of Chan's album "The River of Inspiration", designed by Kent Leong



Chan Hon Chong (right) plays guitar with his producer Ricardo Vogt during the making of his album in 2023. – All photos provided by Chan

# García, Reed to play at Wynn presented int'l series

Rui Pastorin

Next month will see Spain's Sergio García and American Patrick Reed among the pro golfers confirmed to compete at the four-day International Series Macau presented by Wynn.

Taking place at the Macau Golf and Country Club from March 20 to 23 and marking the second of 10 stops in the Asian Tour calendar, a statement from the organisers yesterday noted that the upcoming free-admission event was recently named as a tournament on The Open Qualifying Series for 2025, adding that the top three golfers will earn a spot in this year's fourth major. A prize purse of US\$2 million (16.01 million patacas) is also provided.

Expanding on the players, the statement said that 2017 Masters Tournament champion García had last year marked his maiden win on



This undated handout photo downloaded from the International Series website last night shows Spanish pro golfer Sergio García.

the LIV Golf League at LIV Golf Andalucia. The Fireballs GC team captain will be bringing his entire team for the tournament, namely Mexican Abraham Ancer,



This undated handout photo downloaded from the International Series website last night shows pro golfer Patrick Reed from the US.

the LIV Golf Hong Kong 2024 champion, along with Spaniards David Puig and Luis Masaveu. The team, according to the statement, has recently secured the team title at

the LIV Golf Adelaide.

Reed, meanwhile, was the 2018 Masters Tournament Champion and plays for 4Aces GC on the LIV Golf circuit, the statement said. He won

last year's Link Hong Kong Open on The International Series.

Other golfers to play are John Catlin from the US, who won last year's inaugural event and will be defending his title, and the 2023 World City Championship winner Taichi Kho from Hong Kong, along with others to be unveiled soon.

Head of The International Series Rahul Singh was quoted by the statement as saying: "The presence of globally recognised players alongside proven winners from The International Series and Asian Tour adds incredible depth to the competition, making this a must-watch event".

Registration for the free tickets can be found on [www.tixr.com](http://www.tixr.com), while more details on the event are available on [www.internationalseries.com](http://www.internationalseries.com). ■

## Over 1,500 MICE events held in Macau in 2024: IPIM

Rui Pastorin

Commerce and Investment Promotion Institute (IPIM) President Vincent U U Sang told reporters yesterday that 1,524 MICE\* events were held in 2024, achieving a year-on-year growth of over 31 percent and seeing a return to the 2019 pre-pandemic levels, being a "historical peak".

U made the remarks after yesterday morning's dissemination and clarification session on the



Commerce and Investment Promotion Institute (IPIM) President Vincent U U Sang speaks to reporters after yesterday morning's dissemination and clarification session on the CEPA Amendment Agreement II on Trade in Services, at the Macau Tower Convention and Entertainment Centre in Nam Van. — Photo: MPDG

CEPA Amendment Agreement II on Trade in Services at the Macau Tower Convention and Entertainment Centre.

U said that the number of MICE activities held in 2024 had exceeded their target of 1,500 events. Meanwhile, in terms of consumption, the average spending per exhibitiongoer dropped from 4,823 patacas in 2023 to 4,323 patacas in 2024, seeing a decline of over 10 percent.

U added that IPIM's biggest goal this year was to enhance internationalisation and professionalism. On the point of internationalisation, U said that IPIM hopes to achieve a specific target of a 15 percent increase in international exhibition visitors to Macau this year.

Moreover, on professionalism, U said there will be special emphasis on professional training for Macau's exhibition industry staff, such as by focusing on internationally recognised qualifications.

U also noted that IPIM is working to introduce more specialised conferences, noting that in recent years, it has been able to organise more medical conferences with the support of the Health Bureau (SSM), along with medical professionals.

\*MICE tourism stands for meetings, incentives, conferences and exhibitions, according to Wikipedia. ■

## Woman falsely accuses man of rape over gambling row: police

Ada Lei

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

The Judiciary Police received a referral from the Public Security Police (PSP) on Sunday about a suspected rape case at a hotel in Cotai.

According to Cheong, the 34-year-old suspect surnamed Zhou works as a salesperson. Zhou and the man, both mainlanders, met at a casino on Friday. Zhou went to the man's guestroom later that day. Zhou claimed to have been raped by him on Saturday morning and reported the case to the police on Sunday.

The police discovered that the information provided by Zhou was inconsistent with the details of the case. The police discovered that after Zhou claimed to have been raped, she still gambled with the man in a casino, and only reported the case on Sunday.

Under questioning, Zhou admitted to falsely accusing the man of rape because of a gambling dispute, in which the man allegedly owed her 5,000 yuan (5,500 patacas).

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

Cheong noted that Zhou has been transferred to the Public Prosecutions Office (MP) where she is facing a charge of making a false report. ■



Judiciary Police (PJ) spokesman Cheong Sio Keong looks on during yesterday's regular press conference. — Photo: Ada Lei

## USJ celebrates lifelong learning, 51 seniors are students for a day

Kristina Vallesteros

The "Silver-Haired Dreams Take Flight: A Journey of Dream Realisation" event has recently been held by the University of Saint Joseph's (USJ) Faculty of Health Sciences in collaboration with Casa para Anciãos da Paróquia de Santo António ("House for the Elderly of the Saint Anthony Parish") and the Dream Theatre Association.

The event was part of the private university's "Silver Blossom" community art project.

Held on the USJ Ilha Verde campus, the event promoted intergenerational engagement and lifelong learning, according to a statement on the USJ website.

The statement said that the event "successfully bridged the gap between generations, enabling 51 elderly participants to embrace their roles as 'students' for a day. The diverse group included seniors from the local community, elderly volunteers, young volunteers, and social work students from USJ".



This photo downloaded from the University of Saint Joseph (USJ) website last night shows guests and participants at the "graduation ceremony" held during the "Silver-Haired Dreams Take Flight: A Journey of Dream Realisation" event on the USJ campus on January 24.

The event was led by Faculty of Health Sciences Dean Prof. Jacky Ho Chong Kin (何鍾建), during which he presented a lecture on "Creating an Age-Friendly Community in Macao" ("澳門友善城市計劃"), followed by group projects that explored issues related to the "Macao Friendly City" initiative.

The statement added that the

elderly participants and young students were able to exchange ideas on topics such as transportation, housing and employment during the activity on January 24.

Afterwards, participants were given a guided tour of the campus and concluded their activity with a "graduation ceremony", according to the statement. ■

## STOCK MARKETS

### Hang Seng Index closes 1.59 pct higher

HONG KONG — Hong Kong's stock market ended higher yesterday with the benchmark Hang Seng Index up 1.59 percent to close at 22,976.81 points.

The Hang Seng China Enterprises Index jumped 1.82 percent to end at 8,475.40 points, while the Hang Seng Tech Index climbed 2.54 percent to close at 5,639.05 points. — Xinhua

# New CEPA upgrades to further ease curbs for Macau enterprises entering mainland

Ginnie Liang

A presentation session was held in Macau yesterday about an upgraded version of the Mainland and Macau Closer Economic Partnership Arrangement (CEPA), which will take effect next month.

The Second Agreement Concerning Amendment to the Mainland and Macau Closer Economic Partnership Arrangement (CEPA) Agreement on Trade in Services, aka Amendment Agreement II, was signed in October last year in Macau by the Ministry of Commerce (MOC) and the Macau Special Administrative Region (MSAR) Government.

The Amendment Agreement II will take effect on March 1.

The presentation session was held yesterday at the Macau Tower Convention & Entertainment Centre, with officials from the Ministry of Commerce and several other mainland ministries and commissions attending the event to explain the new CEPA amendments with the aim of enabling Macau's various sectors to gain a better understanding of the updated version of CEPA. About 380 participants, including officials from the local government's various public entities as well as those from trade associations, chambers of commerce and other representatives from the business community attended the session.

CEPA, a free-trade-agreement-like arrangement established

between two separate customs territories of a single sovereign state, i.e., the mainland and Macau, was officially signed on October 17, 2003, and implemented in January 2004, to further enhance the level of economic and trade cooperation between the two regions.

A previous statement by the Macau government pointed out that between 2004 and 2013, the two sides signed 10 supplements to CEPA, as well as the CEPA Agreement between the Mainland and Macau on Achieving Basic Liberalisation of Trade in Services in Guangdong, the CEPA Agreement on Trade in Services, the CEPA Investment Agreement, the CEPA Agreement on Trade in Goods, as well as the First Agreement Concerning Amendment to the CEPA Agreement on Trade in Services.

## Expanding opportunities for Macau enterprises

Fan Shijie, who heads the Ministry of Commerce's Department of Taiwan, Hong Kong and Macau Affairs, said during yesterday's session that the new CEPA amendments are expected to achieve positive results in terms of further expanding the scopes of the opening-up of sectors, lowering market access thresholds in areas such as telecommunications, finance, construction and tourism, and also proposing new opening-up measures for cross-border services.

Fan pointed out that the new



Secretary for Economy and Finance Anton Tai Kin Ip addresses yesterday's presentation session about the latest CEPA upgrade at the Macau Tower Convention and Entertainment Centre. — Photo: DSED

amendments will support Macau-funded enterprises registered in pilot cities of the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macau Greater Bay Area (GBA) in choosing Macau law as the one applicable when signing contracts, and also will provide more comprehensive legal protection and more diversified options for Macau enterprises investing in the mainland.

Moreover, Fan highlighted the central government's support for more Macau enterprises to participate in major exhibitions such as the China International Import Expo (CIIE), the Canton Fair, the China International Fair for Trade in Services (CIFTIS), and the China International Consumer Products Expo (CICPE).

Under the new arrangement, all

Macau-made products that comply with CEPA's specific rules of origin can enjoy zero-tariff policies when being exported to the mainland. Economic and Technological Development Bureau (DSED) Director Yau Yun Wah told reporters on the sidelines of yesterday's event that as of last year, Macau enterprises had exported zero-tariff goods to the mainland worth up to 1.5 billion patacas, saving tariffs of 100 million patacas. As of last year, the bureau had issued 8,833 certificates of service providers to help Macau companies expand business in the mainland.

## Macau's role in national development

Secretary for Economy and Finance Anton Tai Kin Ip said during

yesterday's presentation session that the signing of the amended agreement reflects the continuous expansion of the mainland's openness to Macau. He described it as a concrete practice of the country's high-level opening-up in the new era and an important measure to facilitate Macau's integration into the country's overall development.

Tai pointed out that the local government will strengthen publicity and promote CEPA policies through multiple channels, contributing to the modernisation of the country while enhancing economic and trade cooperation between Macau and the mainland.

Tai also emphasised the government's commitment to maintaining close communication and collaboration with the central government's relevant ministries and commissions, rallying efforts from all sectors in Macau to fully utilise the central government's policies benefiting Macau, including CEPA.

During the session, officials from various central government ministries and commissions held in-depth discussions on topics such as financial services, legal services, high-tech services, and other professional services. They addressed questions from the industry, helping Macau's business community gain a deeper understanding of CEPA's preferential measures and stay updated on the latest developments in mainland policies and regulations. ■

# Anti-flood dyke project off Coloane Village to start soon: govt

Tony Wong

The government has announced that its flood protection project off Coloane's western coast, including a 1,200-metre-long dyke in the coastal waters, will get off the ground in the near future, aiming to protect low-lying Coloane Village from flooding.

After Super Typhoon Hato hit Macau in August 2017, the government started to plan various flood protection projects for the short, medium and long terms, including one off Coloane's western coast.

The project off Coloane's western coast, one of the government's planned flood protection projects for the medium term, was proposed in 2019, with a dyke in the coastal waters as its main component, consisting of two sections to "form two lakes", one off the Coloane Village waterfront and the other off the waterfront of the Lai Chi Vun shipyards area located north of Coloane Village.

After completing its various feasibility studies and designs, the government hired Nam Kwong (Group) Company Limited — the only state-owned enterprise headquartered in Macau — late last year to carry out the flood protection project off Coloane's western coast.

Coloane Village, near the island's western waterfront, is a low-lying area susceptible to flooding. In



This photo taken yesterday shows a man sitting on the wall and using his smartphone at the Coloane Village waterfront. — Photo: Tony Wong

addition to floods caused by storm surges triggered by typhoons, the area can also be affected regularly by flooding when the special administrative region is affected by a high astronomical tide.

A statement by the Public Works Bureau (DSOP) announced on Friday that the flood protection project off Coloane's western coast will get off the ground in the near future. The statement noted that the project, one of the government's medium-term projects for its disaster prevention and mitigation plan, aims to solve the long-standing flooding woes affecting the island's western waterfront area.

The statement also said that DSOP officials held a presentation session in the neighbourhood on

Thursday, briefing community association representatives and residents living there about the project and the government's various special measures to be implemented during the project's execution.

## 'Two-lake proposal'

The main component of the project is a 1,200-metre-long dyke in the coastal waters off Coloane's western coast, consisting of two sections, with one section to run from near Tam Kong Temple at the southernmost tip of the waterfront Avenida de Cinco de Outubro (十月初五馬路) to the central part of Coloane Village, "forming a lake" between the dyke and the village's coastline, while the other section will run from near Coloane Pier



This satellite image downloaded from the Public Works Bureau's (DSOP) website yesterday shows the plan for the upcoming dyke project off Coloane's western coast.

to the northernmost part of Lai Chi Vun Village, "forming a lake" between the dyke and the waterfront of the Lai Chi Vun shipyards area.

Consequently, the dyke project is also informally known as "two-lake proposal".

In addition, the project will include four floodgates in the dyke, as well as a hydrographic observation station to be located near the coastline of Zhuhai's Hengqin island.

The Public Works Bureau announced in November last year the government's decision to get the project off the ground and to directly hire Nam Kwong to carry out the project without launching a public tender.

The bureau said in November last year that the project was slated

to take between two and three years.

According to the DSOP website, the project has a price tag of 566 million patacas.

Friday's statement also underlined that the project can now get off the ground thanks to the completion of various design processes, research studies and geotechnical investigations last year. Moreover, the statement said, the local government has improved its plan for the project's execution in compliance with suggestions raised by experts from the mainland authorities.

According to the DSOP website, the dyke project is designed in a way that will be capable of preventing floods with a level of a 200-year recurrence interval. ■

## Cultural Affairs Bureau calls for exhibitors for the Macao Pavilion at HK FILMART



This handout photo taken by the Cultural Affairs Bureau (IC) last year shows the "Macao Pavilion" at the 2024 Hong Kong International Film and TV Market (FILMART).

### Ginnie Liang

The Cultural Affairs Bureau (IC) is calling on the participation of local film and TV production entities in the "Macao Pavilion" at the 2025 Hong Kong International Film and TV Market (FILMART), and applications will be accepted until tomorrow, according to an IC statement yesterday.

The bureau said it decided to extend the application process by three more days, i.e., until tomorrow because of the "enthusiasm" shown by potential applicants.

In order to promote the local film and TV production industry and attract non-local film and TV projects to film in Macau, the bureau will organise the participation of local film and TV production entities in the "Macao Pavilion" at FILMART, offering a good platform for the industry to explore exchange and cooperation opportunities, and boosting the synergy between the cultural and creative industries and the tourism sector, the statement said.

Applications are open for Macau companies with experience in assisting a minimum of six non-local film and TV projects shot in Macau between 2014 and 2024, the statement said, adding that the bureau will select a maximum of eight companies to participate in the "Macao Pavilion" based on the following criteria: past experience in assisting film and TV projects from places other than mainland China, Macau, Hong Kong and Taiwan to be produced in Macau, the scale of non-local film and TV projects to be produced in Macau, and the tasks they plan to be in charge of.

The application rules and the application form are available at [www.macauccei.gov.mo](http://www.macauccei.gov.mo), the statement said, adding that applicants can submit the required documents via email to [SIF@icm.gov.mo](mailto:SIF@icm.gov.mo) before tomorrow.

For enquiries, interested individuals can contact the bureau's staff members on 8399 6256 or 8399 6295 during office hours. ■



A researcher tests a helicopter airborne magnetotelluric detection (HAMT) system in Hetian, Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region, last month. China's first helicopter airborne magnetotelluric detection system has been successfully applied to a plateau railway construction project, the Chinese Academy of Sciences' Aerospace Information Research Institute (AIR) said yesterday. The HAMT system is a geophysical survey technology used in mineral exploration, geological mapping, and environmental studies. "Telluric" refers to phenomena related to the Earth. — Xinhua/Poe

## Andrea Bocelli to perform at Galaxy Arena next month

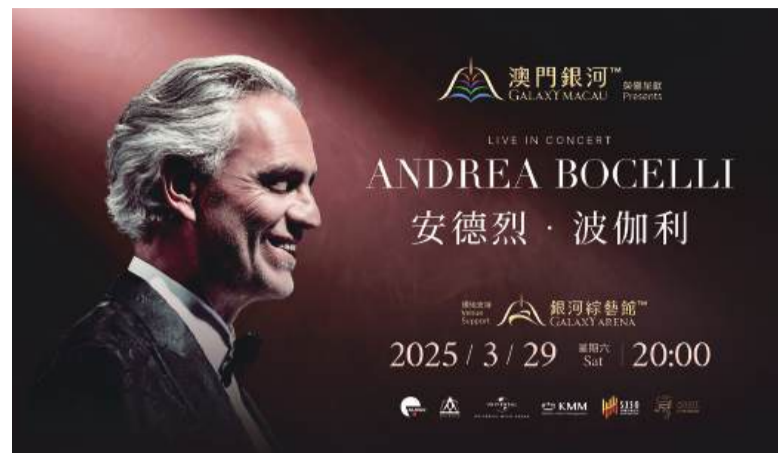
### Rui Pastorin

Italian tenor Andrea Bocelli is set to perform at the Galaxy Arena in Cotai on March 29 for a concert entitled "Galaxy Macau Presents: ANDREA BOCELLI Live in Concert" that will feature a "unique setlist", integrated resort operator Galaxy Macau said in a statement last night.

The statement noted that Bocelli, who has achieved significant international success over his 30-year career, is the biggest-selling artist in the classical genre, having sold over 90 million albums and having more than 16 billion streams.

The statement said that Bocelli, 66, is celebrated for his ability to blend Italian folk, opera, and pop music, earning acclaim for his "distinctive crossover style". The statement added that he is one of the most recognisable voices globally, with Canadian singer Céline Dion dubbing him the "Voice of God".

Bocelli, who is visually impaired, has performed for four US presidents, three popes, the British royal family, and numerous prime ministers, according to the statement. He has



This undated handout photo provided by Galaxy Macau yesterday promotes the Galaxy Macau Presents: ANDREA BOCELLI Live in Concert slated for March 29.

also performed at landmarks such as the Pyramids of Egypt, the Eiffel Tower in Paris, the Statue of Liberty in New York, and Milan Cathedral. The UEFA Euro 2020 Opening Ceremony and the Beijing 2022 Winter Olympics, are also among the high-profile events that he has performed at, and he was also part of the opening act for the World Expo in 2010, 2015, and 2021.

He also drew worldwide attention for his record-breaking

Music for Hope event in 2020 and had also joined Lady Gaga's One World: Together at Home concert.

Bocelli also performed at the CCTV New Year's Gala in 2021, while he has also collaborated with stars such as Sarah Brightman, Céline Dion, Ed Sheeran, Jennifer López, and Christina Aguilera.

The concert at the 16,000-seat arena is slated to start at 8 p.m. on Saturday, March 29, with tickets to be available soon. ■

## 'Ne Zha 2' premieres in HK as box office surges

HONG KONG – The much-awaited Chinese mainland's animated blockbuster "Ne Zha 2" premiered last night in Hong Kong and was scheduled to officially hit Hong Kong cinemas on Saturday.

A sequel to the 2019 hit "Ne Zha 1," "Ne Zha 2" continues to build on the beloved Chinese mythology surrounding the character and has been celebrated as a milestone for Chinese animation. It has already garnered significant attention in both

Hong Kong and Macau, breaking records for the number of distributors and daily screenings for a Chinese mainland film in Hong Kong.

"We are honored to bring this world-class, phenomenon-level animation to Hong Kong and Macau, allowing viewers to experience the charm of Ne Zha in theaters," said a representative with Emperor Motion Pictures, a co-distributor of the film, hoping that "Ne Zha 2" will be loved here as much as in the

Chinese mainland.

Since its release in the Chinese mainland during the Chinese New Year, "Ne Zha 2" has proved a smashing success at the box office, with total earnings worldwide, including pre-sales, surpassing 12.3 billion yuan (US\$1.72 billion) as of yesterday evening.

This figure positions the film ahead of US-made "Inside Out 2," making it the highest-grossing animated film globally. — Xinhua

## China Film Night lights up Berlinale, bridging East, West

BERLIN – As the 75<sup>th</sup> Berlin International Film Festival continues to captivate global audiences, a special evening dedicated to Chinese cinema brought together over 150 international filmmakers, industry leaders, and cultural representatives on Monday for a vibrant collaboration.

At the "China Film Night – 2025 Shanghai International Film Festival (SIFF) Reception," Cao Yin, deputy managing director and deputy general manager of Shanghai International Film & TV Festivals, Co. Ltd. highlighted the robust growth of the Chinese film market.

Cao noted that the enthusiasm of Chinese audiences for high-quality films is not only fueling the industry's expansion in the country but also creating fresh opportunities for outstanding international productions to enter China.

"We welcome everyone to join SIFF and experience the charm of the Chinese film market and the passion of Chinese audiences," she said.

Jerzy Skolimowski, who was jury president for the 25<sup>th</sup> SIFF in 2023, described Shanghai as a city "brimming with magic." He praised SIFF's film selection and highlighted the enduring friendships he has developed in Shanghai.

"I attend SIFF every year," said Shozo Ichiyama, programming director of the Tokyo International Film Festival and a jury member for SIFF's Asian New Talent section in 2010. He noted that there is a long-standing partnership between the Tokyo International Film Festival and SIFF, with the two festivals recommending films to each other.

"Every path in filmmaking leads to Shanghai," said Marco Mueller, jury member for the main competition of the Golden Goblet Awards of SIFF in 2021. "If you want to connect efficiently with the Chinese film industry, then come to SIFF."

Florence Girot, senior director of the International Federation of Film Producers Associations (FIAPF) also shared her thoughts

at the event. "Since its inception, SIFF has maintained a close relationship with FIAPF for over 30 years. As one of the world's leading film festivals, it holds great importance for both the Chinese film industry and international filmmakers," she said.

Founded in 1993, SIFF has evolved into a prestigious international event, demonstrating Shanghai's growing role in global film and television collaboration thanks to China's booming film market. In 2024, the festival featured over 1,600 screenings of more than 460 films from 105 countries and regions. The 27<sup>th</sup> Shanghai International Film Festival will take place from June 13 to 22, 2025.

"China's film market has become an unmissable hub for global filmmakers," Cao told Xinhua. "We look forward to inviting more international talent to our festival while bringing exceptional Chinese stories to the world stage." — Xinhua